

Growth and development a tricky blend

THE Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) has come up with a useful contribution to the debate about the potential and challenges of turning South Africa into a developmental state.

The book's biggest benefit must be its usefulness as an anchor for a debate that has so far generated much hot air and less substance.

Edited by Ormano Edigheji, research director in the Policy Analysis Unit and co-founder of the Centre for Africa's Social Policy at the HSRC, the book, *Constructing a Democratic Developmental State in South Africa: Potentials and Challenges*, provides a solid platform on which further debates about what the architecture of South Africa's developmental state should look like.

SA is one of two countries – Ethiopia is the other – that have declared themselves developmental states. Countries today cited as successful cases of state intervention – South Korea, Japan, Malaysia – did not announce their candidature; they

Second Take Jabulani Sikhakhane



just did it and analysts labelled them developmental states afterward.

Edigheji correctly points out in his introduction that announcing one's candidature for a development state is one thing, constructing and acting like one is another.

The challenge for SA is how to design the requisite institutions that will formulate and implement policies that will enable the country to achieve its developmental goals.

“By a democratic developmental state, we mean a state that could act authoritatively, credibly, legitimately and in a binding manner to formulate and implement its policies and

capacity to transform industry and adjust to global economic conditions; to provide basic public services; and to redress historical injustices.

Edigheji echoes Atul Kohli, professor of international affairs and politics at Princeton University, who recently gave a lecture at the HSRC.

Two weeks ago, Kohli said at the HSRC that economic growth was best promoted by a political elite that prioritised economic growth and worked closely with business to produce that growth.

To implement its policies, the elite relies on a capable bureaucracy.

Redistributive goals, however, are best pursued by states where leaders' political roots reach down into society, “either through political parties or via well constructed local bureaucracies that respond to central directives”.

To combine the two – growth and distribution – requires political parties that simultaneously incorporate the interests of business and the working poor. This is hard to pull off, and sustain, as the ANC has

learnt in recent years.

The analysis by Edigheji and 13 contributors to the book paints a dismal picture. Critical to SA's success in creating a developmental state is the creation of an effective bureaucracy, one appointed on merit. But creating such a bureaucracy would challenge one of the key instruments of political control by the ruling party: the deployment of members in key state positions as a reward for political loyalty.

Then there are the ANC's own weaknesses: it has a mostly dysfunctional branch infrastructure, which limits its ability to mobilise society behind its developmental goals. State capacity for development can only be enhanced if politicians are able to mobilise support for clear policy preferences and use an effective bureaucracy to implement policies.

The ANC's current leadership shows no signs of being able to mobilise support for clear policy choices. Nor does it command an effective civil service.

