

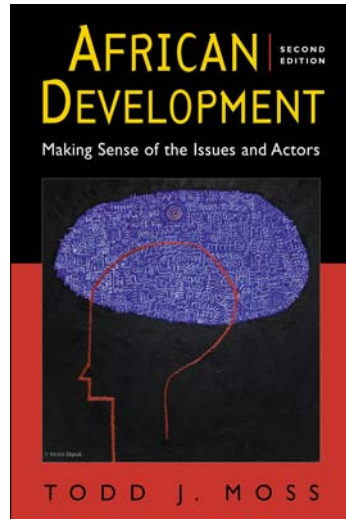
EXCERPTED FROM

African Development:
Making Sense of the
Issues and Actors

SECOND EDITION

Todd J. Moss

Copyright © 2011
ISBN: 978-1-58826-769-6 pb



LYNNE RIENNER PUBLISHERS

1800 30th Street, Ste. 314

Boulder, CO 80301

USA

telephone 303.444.6684

fax 303.444.0824

This excerpt was downloaded from the
Lynne Rienner Publishers website
www.rienner.com

Contents

<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
1 The Complexities and Uncertainties of Development	1
Part 1 The Domestic Context	
2 History and the Legacy of Colonialism	21
3 Big Men, Personal Rule, and Patronage Politics	39
4 Violent Conflict and Civil War	57
5 Political Change and Democratization	75
Part 2 Core Development Questions	
6 Africa's Growth Puzzle	91
7 Economic Reform and the Politics of Adjustment	105
8 The International Aid System	121
9 Debt Burdens and Debt Relief	157
10 Poverty, Human Development, and HIV/AIDS	171
Part 3 Regionalism and Globalization	
11 The African Union and Regional Institutions	197
12 Africa and World Trade	211
13 Private Investment and the Business Environment	233
Part 4 Conclusion	
14 Some Concluding Themes	253
<i>List of Acronyms</i>	257
<i>Bibliography</i>	261
<i>Index</i>	275
<i>About the Book</i>	283

1

The Complexities and Uncertainties of Development

Africa's half-century of independence is ending on an exuberant high. As I write this, the so-called Afro-optimists are again on the ascendancy. Economic growth rates are up nearly everywhere, poverty is dropping, and democracy seems to be stronger than ever before. Investors, who have usually ignored Africa as a marginal backwater, are now scouring for ways to capitalize on new opportunities. Most African nations, once dependent on Western governments for cash, now have a range of financing options from the private markets, Asia, and the Middle East. Indeed, a resurgence and growing confidence in Tanzania, Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Botswana, and many other countries all seem to point to a bright future. Even the long and seemingly hopeless quest for regional cooperation and unity, a dream repeatedly crushed on the rocks of political self-interest, is looking more possible than anyone could imagine a decade ago. Maybe talk of an "African century" doesn't sound so far-fetched?

The Afro-pessimists have a case, too. Unconvinced, they might point out that Africa is mostly exporting the same old commodities, it is still vulnerable to the vagaries of a whirlwind global economy, and the illusory comforts of formal economic growth figures are hardly better than a generation ago. Dictatorships are still common, and many darlings of the recent past—Uganda, Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal—seem to be backsliding. Coups d'état, thought by many to have been finally relegated to the dustbin of history, have made a comeback—in Guinea, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania, Madagascar, Togo. Maybe the optimists are deluding themselves again and the continent is still stuck in a developmental malaise?

So, who is right? Both, and neither. These divergent views of Africa's path are, on closer inspection, neither schizophrenic nor necessarily contradictory. They merely reflect the complexity of a continent that defies simple characterization as either Nirvana or Hades—and a development process that

is never linear, always messy, and usually unclear. Acceptance of uncertainty is simply a requisite for studying and working on African development.

On one level, the optimists and pessimists can coexist because of the continent's tremendous diversity—another key theme of this book. Although the portrayal of Africa as a monolith is slowly (and rightly) dying, there is still a tendency to accept that whole swaths of Africa are more or less the same. This book discusses big trends that span the region, but the real story of Africa is one of accelerating variation among countries and even between parts of different countries. Namibia and Angola are neighbors, but could hardly be more dissimilar. Nigeria is the home to both the megacity of Lagos and the sleepy state of Sokoto.

On another level, Africa is a place that seems at ease living simultaneously in different worlds. One of the first lessons I learned about Africa is that bridging—the urban and the rural, the traditional and the modern, foreign customs and African ways—is not so much a strenuous tension as simply the norm. The middle-class family living in the suburbs of Nairobi also keeps a home in the rural Rift Valley. The businessman who negotiates with Chinese investors, has a cell phone, and goes to church every Sunday may also speak with his ancestors through a traditional healer and pay homage to illiterate village elders. These different lives are not contradictions, but rather an acceptance of irreconcilability.

The wild swings in views of Africa's direction and fate also reflect real and dramatic changes. For most of the past five decades, the continent has been on a roller coaster of outsized expectations and terrible disappointments. The early, heady years—starting with independence for Sudan in 1956, Ghana in 1957, and the collapse of the French African empire in 1960—were a time of great hopes. It was widely believed that the continent would use its newly found political freedom to take off as an economic power. The ensuing experiments with forced industrialization were a disaster, and the political gains were, almost everywhere, replaced with repression, this time not by outsiders but by Africa's own political elites. The euphoria of independence gave way to despair. Africa's leaders appeared to be stealing, eating, and wasting its future. At various points over the proceeding half-century, things started to look upbeat, often quickly followed by a return of anguish. However, the bigger picture is of one country after another slowly, erratically opening up, changing course, passing the baton to the next generation. Progress has been uneven and halting. At the turn of the twenty-first century, few countries looked back with much to celebrate. Many had become even poorer.

All along Africa's postcolonial journey, a key player has been the international "development industry," the army of outsiders coming to "help." By no coincidence, just as independence was dawning, new agencies started

to form—a new wing of the World Bank for poor countries in 1960, USAID in 1961, a British colonial department became an overseas aid agency in 1962. These agencies—abetted by growing legions of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), think tanks, advocacy groups, and more—emerged to support the continent on its quest to end the blight of poverty and deprivation and assist African countries in taking their rightful place among the community of nations.

Depending on your perspective, the international development community has enabled Africa's disappointments, merely mitigated the worst effects of its crises, or really helped to put the continent back on the road to recovery. Without a doubt, some international development efforts have saved lives. Just as doubtlessly, other efforts have created more problems than they have solved.

But one thing is beyond dispute: development is big business and a growth industry. The current development community (of which I, usually proudly, consider myself a part) has never had better times, with new resources, tools, ideas, and energies. And attention is focused on Africa like never before, both on its opportunities and its bewildering array of challenges. Nowhere on the planet is the concentration of poverty greater, or the problems so complex. This is why so much of the development community is focused on Africa—and where its efforts are going to be judged in the future. Yet the model for the development business—the world of donor and recipient, of the Western rich bequeathing alms to the African poor—is dying. Changes in the global economy, the rise of new economic powers, and a diffusion of decisionmaking—all trends hastened by the financial crisis of 2008–2009—mean that the traditional donors no longer have a monopoly on resources and ideas. Africa too is transforming, a new generation of business and political leaders are asserting themselves like never before, seizing upon these new opportunities. It is undoubtedly an exhilarating time to be entering the field of African development.

The Purpose of This Book

Responding to the growing interest in Africa, more and more students are taking courses on the economics or politics of Africa, development studies, public health, and the business of emerging markets. This book aims for a simple, but hopefully not simplistic, introduction to the main themes, trends, and players in contemporary African development. It is intended for readers approaching these issues for the first time, budding activists, and new practitioners getting started in their careers. By no means is this book intended as a survey of the academic literature, a primer on economic development theory, or a how-to guide. (Indeed, by the end, I hope you will be highly suspicious of anyone promising a magic formula.) Instead, it is supposed to

give the reader some basic facts, information, and words of caution *before* they approach development for study or work.

Working in this field is wonderful (I highly recommend it!) but the Hippocratic Oath applies: first, do no harm. When teaching at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, I have found that a constructive way to start a course is to hold a no-question-is-too-dumb session where students could ask fundamental background questions, such as “What is really the difference between the World Bank and the IMF?”; “Why are Africans still so poor if they get so much aid?”; or “What does the WTO actually do?” Given the cross-cutting, multidisciplinary nature of development, there are also usually great differences in baseline knowledge: some students might know about HIV/AIDS, but not about trade, or they might know a lot about debt relief, but not much on new ways that countries borrow money. This book brings that introductory session to a wider audience, to discuss broad trends in a frank and accessible way, to encourage the reader to think critically about the complicated issues at hand, and to help students ask informed questions about Africa’s development challenges. It offers no answers.

What Is Development?

It may seem silly, but there is no real agreement on what exactly “development” means. The narrowest economic definition is to make poor people less poor by raising their incomes. For individuals, this entails helping them to find greater opportunities to be more productive so that they can live better and longer lives. For an economy as a whole, this involves generating economic growth to raise incomes and reduce the number of people living below a defined poverty line.

A focus on income measures and on economic growth rates has been criticized as too confined, so some have preferred to define “development” more broadly using welfare or quality-of-life measures, such as indicators of health (infant mortality, access to doctors, clean water) or education (average years of schooling, literacy rates). The United Nations, for example, combines these into its annual Human Development Index, which includes income, school enrollment, literacy, and life expectancy to rank all the world’s countries. The UN also has a new “multidimensional poverty index” that uses ten indicators (see Chapter 10). An even more expansive view that largely originates in the work of Nobel laureate Amartya Sen considers the mark of economic development and social progress to be the freedom of people to participate in and make choices about their own future.

Different definitions of development are far from mutually exclusive, however. Although this book uses a mostly orthodox economic perspective—promoting development on the African continent is about increasing economic growth rates—it treats income as a means to a better life rather

than an end in itself. This approach assumes some universal goals: more income is better than less, living longer is preferable to early death, and education is superior to ignorance. At its broadest, the development question asked here is “How can the standards of living be improved in Africa?” At the same time, it must also be recognized that such questions are not merely technical. Development is ultimately not about bricks and budgets but about social change.

Digging Holes vs. Capital Flows

One divide worth mentioning up front is, as was once caricatured by a colleague, the “digging holes vs. capital flows” notions of development. The former perspective thinks about development as organizing a series of activities such as digging wells, building schools, or teaching children how to read and grow new crops. For a “hole digger,” development is about delivering more services, executing projects, managing logistics, and imparting knowledge. The “capital flows” viewpoint is that promoting development is about getting the environment right so that people do such things naturally. This view of the world thus scrutinizes policies, incentives, available resources, and institutions and how they interact with the global economy. By this perspective, promoting development is not so much what you do for other people as it is what you help to leave behind. The right metric for this view of development might not be “How many kids did you vaccinate yesterday?” but rather “What kind of vaccination system would be there if you left tomorrow?”

Whichever outlook one chooses—and there are pros and cons to each—the international community’s role in promoting development is always going to be secondary to efforts by Africans themselves. And where external players are active, their role encompasses much more than simply aid. This book treats the international aid system as central, but only in the context of the evolving ideas about policy, political organization at the national and international levels, and global economic issues such as trade and investment.

What Is Africa?

This book is about contemporary Africa. It focuses primarily on the post-colonial period of roughly the past five decades with an emphasis on issues and debates most prominent in the early years of the twenty-first century. “Africa” is sometimes used to refer to all the countries on the mainland continent plus the six island nations of Cape Verde, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Seychelles. In much of the literature, however—including this book—the term “Africa” and even “the continent” is instead used synonymously with what more accurately is called sub-Saharan Africa to mean the forty-eight African countries, excluding Morocco,

Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. Such a distinction is surely arguable, but in the development world the countries of North Africa are typically placed in the Middle East (for example, by the World Bank) because they are in many ways more a part of the cultural and political life of that region. (Confusingly, Sudan and even Djibouti are sometimes also considered North African.)

African Diversity

Every book on Africa opens with a caveat about its great diversity (see Table 1.1). This stance is predictable but also exists for good reason: the continent is a varied amalgamation of countries, societies, and people that makes generalization difficult. Hundreds of languages and thousands of dialects are spoken on the continent. Many of Africa's cities are crowded, bustling hives of activity with high-rise buildings, the latest technology, and many of the same stresses and strains of modern life elsewhere on the planet. At the same time, vast stretches of the continent are sleepy, underdeveloped places that seem not to have changed for millennia.

Africa's political diversity is just as stark. Botswana and Senegal have been mostly stable democracies since independence, but Equatorial Guinea and Angola have been perpetual dictatorships. Ghana and Mali have gone from military rule to open and fairly free societies, while Zimbabwe has plunged in the opposite direction. Malawi and Zambia have no modern experience with war, but Angola and Sudan have seen almost no peace over the past three decades. Uganda, Mozambique, and Burkina Faso have all managed to recently increase growth and reduce poverty rates, but Guinea, Niger, and Burundi have seen disappointing growth and rising poverty (see Figure 1.1).

Indeed, the most glaring trend is the rapid divergence among African countries facing opposing economic and political trajectories. A number of countries—Tanzania, Ghana, Mozambique, Botswana, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Rwanda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa, to name a few—seem to be gaining strength and national confidence and appear poised to join the

Table 1.1 Snapshot of Sub-Saharan Africa

Number of countries	48
Total population	840 million
Life expectancy	52 years
Infant mortality rate	81 deaths per 1,000
Literacy	54% of adult women, 73% of adult men
GDP	US\$926 billion
Average GNI per capita	US\$1,096

Source: World Bank; all data are for 2009, except literacy data are for 2008.

Figure 1.1 Map of Africa



global economy as full participants. But others—Eritrea, Chad, Malawi, Côte d’Ivoire, Central African Republic, Niger, Mauritania, The Gambia, and Congo-Brazzaville all come to mind—may find themselves falling further behind unless something drastic changes.

While Africa’s diversity is indisputable, much of the continent nevertheless shares related problems and has faced similar misfortunes. (The challenge of a book on all of Africa is to try to get this balance right.) Nearly all of Africa’s nations are fairly young, just a few generations since independence, and are still going through what might be called the early growing pains of nation building. Several have their very first president still in power.

After widespread establishment of one-party states, a wave of political openness swept across the continent in the 1990s, leaving few countries untouched (if many far from fundamentally changed). The attempt—and failure—of state control of the economy has also been a nearly universal postindependence experience. Almost all African countries have since undergone some attempts to free up the economy and reorient the government’s activities over the last two decades. Yes, the details and results of these political and economic trends have varied tremendously, but the paths taken have mostly been roughly in the same direction. Africa may indeed be extremely diverse, but some essential and discernible trends dominate the story of contemporary Africa.

How Little We Know

Despite the vast changes that Africa has undergone, often with the involvement of outsiders, a striking conclusion is actually how little is really understood about the development process. Although the current consensus about the right way to proceed may seem fairly reasonable, so too did all the other previous strategies at the time of their popularity. Forcing poor people at gunpoint to live in collective villages (as happened during *ujamaa* in Tanzania) is unthinkable today, but was once thought a practical way to promote development. The international donors in particular are prone to a continuously evolving mea culpa with hubris, what might be called the “yes, but *now* we have it right” syndrome.

A recurring theme in the progression of development thinking is that past strategies had mistakenly overlooked some crucial aspect, but the missing link has now been identified and everything can be fixed this time around. Africa was initially thought to just lack infrastructure and capital. When providing those things did not work, investing in basic education and health was added. When that strategy also failed to generate growth, it was thought that bad policies must be the problem. After some policies were corrected (but many were not) and the results were still disappointing, the next answer was governance and institutions—essentially where we are today. Yet in at least three decisive areas the development “experts” admittedly still have little clue:

- *The growth process.* Economists simply cannot say what exactly causes growth and thus are unable to come up with clear remedies to generate faster growth. There are lots of ideas and many hints, but no unambiguous answers that apply universally.
- *Institutional change.* A lot of talk takes place about “institutions” and “capacity,” but actually very little agreement exists on what these terms exactly mean, much less on how to change or build such things.

- *The politics of development.* Development economists have belatedly recognized that local politics are the reason that the paths chosen so frequently appear illogical and self-destructive. Yet much of the real politics in any country happen beneath the surface, out of view and poorly grasped by external donors or analysts. But acknowledging that politics matter is not the same as understanding the incentives to promote development.

Given these sizable holes in confidence, humility seems appropriate. The continent has in many ways been a laboratory of both good and bad ideas, perhaps the unavoidable outcome of its political and economic weakness. But the generally sorry record of African development so far suggests that any ideas and fads pronouncing to have found the magic bullet to resolve an inherently complex problem, such as quickly eradicating poverty in a scantily understood foreign land, should be viewed with extreme skepticism.

What We Do Know

The case for modesty does not mean that we have learned nothing about development. In fact, a massive endeavor to extract lessons from different development experiences continues, with thousands of economists, sociologists, anthropologists, public health specialists, and other assorted experts dedicated full-time to flying around the world, collecting data, interviewing people, monitoring, evaluating, consulting, and in every possible way thinking about how to make Africa less poor. The World Bank alone has more than ten thousand staff (a large portion of whom work on Africa), while the major donor agencies each employ thousands more, plus there are hordes of contractors, university researchers, and NGO workers. Even if no clear solution is available for poverty and the puzzle of slow economic growth, some unmistakable lessons are evident, especially about necessary prerequisites and things *not* to do. A few of the least controversial examples of these lessons include:

- Peace and security are preconditions for development.
- High inflation is bad for the poor and for economic growth.
- Vaccinations are an effective way to save lives.
- Governments are very inefficient at doing some things, such as running factories and farms.
- States must do some things, such as protect property and deliver basic services.
- Transparency is preferable to secrecy, especially for public budgets and government contracting.

Misconceptions and Misinformation

While there is still much uncertainty and debate about development ideas, there is perhaps just as much misinformation about what international agencies actually do in the development arena. Street protestors have found the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) easy targets, painting them as puppets of a global conspiracy to keep developing countries poor and in their place. These institutions do have major faults, and numerous reasons exist to critique them and what they do. But much of the criticism heard on the streets and on the Internet (and, sadly, in many classrooms) is simply wrong. The World Bank may be a behemoth and is occasionally bumbling, but it rarely “imposes” anything on any unwilling government. (In fact, Chapter 7 argues that the governments usually have power over the Bank.) Similarly, the IMF can be inexplicably narrow-minded in its mission and often heavy-handed, but it does not, as is frequently claimed, set limits on health spending in poor countries. On the flip side, the saintly reputation in some circles of non-governmental organizations is often undeserved. Some NGOs loudly demand to be heard and claim to speak for “the people” but are themselves accountable to no one.

Political Elites: Champions or Charlatans?

Based on the caricatures common in much of the debate about development, African governments and leaders seem to have split personalities. In many parts of the literature, the role of the state is thought to be fairly benign, with poverty reduction and promoting the public good assumed to be the goals of government leaders. By this view, taken by some antipoverty activists, the main barriers to development are technical problems or the outside world, which is placing impossible demands upon well-meaning but beleaguered African officials. The other caricature, more common in the political science literature and among salty development skeptics, is that the problems are mostly political and that African elites are mainly out to help themselves and keep their grip on power. By this view, the state is little more than a tool for theft while the development agenda is mostly a facade masking a series of rackets being perpetrated upon the donors and the African people. To take one example, is the Republic of Congo’s president a respected statesman, the leader of a poverty-stricken country coming back from years of debilitating war, and deserving of debt relief so he can use the savings to better help his people? Or is he a mere thug who came to power at the head of a vicious gang called the Cobras, who could care less about his own people and blows \$300,000 of his country’s money living it up for a week at a swanky New York hotel when attending UN poverty meetings?

Behind much of the debate about development and the appropriate role of the state, international organizations, NGOs, corporations, and other players are often deep ideological convictions, especially over whether market capitalism is a force for good or evil. Despite what is commonly asserted, there is no secret nefarious plot against the poor being hatched in a smoke-filled room in the basement of the World Bank. The methods and results of the international agencies may not always be pretty or successful, but their intentions are indeed to build a better world.

The Various “Languages” of Development

The discourse on development also operates in different circles using different—and often unintelligible—languages. The advocacy community is typically looking for simple emotional messages and short-term answers as part of its efforts to boost public awareness, lobby politicians, and (of course) to raise money. An example is the frequent calls to “double aid to halve poverty,” a catchy phrase that helped to boost aid budgets but inconveniently turns out to be incorrect. Academics think largely about long-term theoretical relationships and statistical models that can find associations, for instance, between the prevalence of conflict and an economy’s growth rate. Aid workers, researchers, and policymakers working in the development business are a third set. This crowd is often process-obsessed and driven by internal bureaucratic dynamics, such as trying to figure out which kind of loans are best used under which kind of circumstances. But the development business is also infused with cynics who have been working in the field for a long time and have been chastened by past experiences. (Before embarking on a career in development, you must get to know lots of these!) All three groups talk about similar things (like the efficiency of aid, the importance of politics, and the need to do better in the future), but they all use completely different words and often have their own indecipherable lingo. Here is one hypothetical example, all talking about basically the same thing:

Advocate: “The donors must cooperate better if we are going to lift more people out of poverty.”

Academic: “The real per capita GNI growth rate and the log of ODA/GDP (lagged t-2) are robustly and positively correlated once the indices of donor proliferation and aid fragmentation developed by Acharya, de Lima, and Moore (2006) are added as independent variables.”

Practitioner: “Donor coordination is being implemented in the context of the international consensus reached at Monterrey on the actions needed to promote a global partnership for development and accelerate progress toward the MDGs through the OECD’s High Level

Forum on Joint Progress Toward Enhanced Aid Effectiveness (Harmonization, Alignment, and Results) with monitoring by the Joint Venture on Monitoring the Paris Declaration.” (I am embarrassed that I understand this one!)

Ten Tips for Sensibly Studying African Development

With all these caveats in mind, here are some tips to avoid disillusionment and despair as you plunge into the dilemmas of African development.

1. *No silver bullets.* Development is about the complex and usually messy evolution of societies and economies. Single solutions are tempting—more aid, more democracy, eradicate corruption, get prices right, deliver more bednets—but inevitably leave the true believers disheartened. Africa is the graveyard of panaceas; be wary of those peddling the latest one.

2. *Don't believe the (good and bad) hype.* Africa is the object of wild swings of extreme optimism and pessimism. Those seeking attention or raising money invariably invoke emotional appeals to crisis, usually with pictures of adorable yet sad children (“flies on the eyes” is an immediate red flag). While the continent has its share of real crises and people in need, the imperative of fund-raising by some groups encourages continual publicity of “emergencies.” At the same time, beware the salesmen for Africa who are blindly optimistic, claiming all is now well and dismissing any problems as mere media misrepresentation.

3. *Resist the temptation to exoticize.* Perhaps it is the accumulation of wildlife documentaries or news reports of famine and war, but many Westerners seem to think of Africa as if it were another planet. My first visit to Africa (to Zimbabwe’s capital Harare in 1990) was a shock not because it was so strange but rather because it seemed so normal. Sure, the people were poorer than in the United States, but the lives of Zimbabweans mostly revolved around issues similar to mine back home: family, jobs, schools, going to the doctor, traffic, the cost of gasoline, and the local sports teams. For many Africans, daily life is indeed a tenuous struggle. But Africa is just a place on earth like any other.

4. *It's always political.* As much as outside donors and activists sometimes like to think of development as a technical exercise about delivering better seeds or fixing a mechanical problem, it is always a deeply intrusive and political act to get involved in another country’s development trajectory. The World Bank, for instance, likes to dress up its governance agenda in apolitical terms such as “transparency” and “accountability,” but changing the way government works intimately affects the distribution of power within a country. Indeed, all interventions—even the most seemingly benign act such as child nutrition programs—have implications for the allocation of influence and resources within a village or a family.

5. *Development is more than money.* Excessive attention is paid to how much money is spent, as if that were a good measure of development effort. (Economist Bill Easterly once said that judging success by the size of aid flows is like reviewing films based on their budgets.) It is of course true that money is required to build schools or pay civil servants. But development is often not at all about money. There is little relationship, for example, between spending on healthcare and actual health. In fact, money may frequently be secondary to bigger issues such as markets, opportunities, and incentives. If there is little reason for children to attend school (maybe because they are needed on the family farm or there are no jobs after graduation) and teacher expectations are low (perhaps their wages are paid six months late and there is no oversight, so they never bother to show up), then all the money in the world will not create a functional education system.

6. *Beware the "facts."* Development is absolutely rife with myths that get repeated often enough that they eventually are accepted as facts. One example is the urban legend that Tanzania writes twenty-four hundred reports for donors every year. This has been cited regularly and even by the president of the World Bank once in a speech calling for less red tape. But the source of this fact is a hypothetical story from a 1996 book on aid that suggested *if* a country had to write quarterly reports for every project and had six hundred different donor projects (a not unusual figure), then it would result in twenty-four hundred reports. Although Tanzania undoubtedly prepares many reports for its many donors, there is no evidence whatsoever that twenty-four hundred is the right figure. There are similar stories, such as a "fact" peddled by some campaigners that debt "kills nineteen thousand children per day," a figure arrived at through a convoluted series of errors and dubious assumptions.

7. *Beware the numbers.* Much of the development agenda is driven by quantitative analysis as part of the push to make the process more rigorous and "scientific." While this may be well intentioned, the problem for Africa is that the data are almost always unreliable. Even basic information such as gross domestic product (GDP), exports, the number of children in school, or how much a country spends on hospitals is often little more than an educated guess. Sometimes formal surveys are done through a census or by an external agency, but these are fairly infrequent, and people have lots of reasons for not telling a surveyor the truth when one shows up at the door demanding all kinds of personal information. Most of the time models are used to make estimations, but usually with very large margins of error, making comparison, especially across countries or where differences are small, extremely difficult to do with much confidence. In Ghana, a recent exercise found that GDP was actually 63 percent larger than everyone thought. (Whoops!) Given the data problems, should we interpret that one country is really twice as well-off as another because its GDP figures are slightly

larger? If a country's reported primary school enrollment rate jumps from 40 percent to 43 percent the next year, should we really believe that more children are in school? (Keep in mind that many budgets are based on showing "results," so there are plenty of incentives to fiddle.) Next time you read about changes in access to clean water in Niger, you should consider how that number was determined.

8. *Keep perspective on Africa's size.* Africa may loom large in certain development circles, but it is still a tiny player on the global stage. Twenty African countries each have a total population of less than 5 million people, about the size of metropolitan Washington, DC. Botswana features prominently in the development literature (including in this book), but it is a small country of mostly desert and swamps with fewer than 2 million people. African economies are even more minuscule relative to the global marketplace. South Africa may be a regional giant, but its economy is about the same as the state of Indiana. The other forty-seven economies' total are about the same size as metropolitan Chicago. The county in which I live (Montgomery County, Maryland, next to Washington, DC) has a larger GDP than forty-six different African countries (only South Africa and Nigeria are bigger). These comparisons are worth recalling the next time you hear that a multinational corporation just cannot wait to pry open some untapped African market.

9. *Go deep.* Cross-country comparisons and understanding regional trends can be useful, but one must complement this approach with some in-depth country cases. Learning about the history and cultures of a country can help give context to current development efforts and make sense of what can seem at first glance irrational. Consider picking some lesser-known countries, too. There are more than twelve thousand books in print about South Africa and nearly one thousand on Ghana, but very few on Burundi, Sierra Leone, Zambia. Why not try Burkina Faso or Mali?

10. *Go!* Reading and learning about Africa are fine, but nothing beats going there in person. If you have the opportunity, travel around as much as possible, talk to people, see how they live, and you will probably find that much of what you expect is dead wrong. And you can trust your own eyes. On a recent trip to Tanzania, I had been reading reports on the plane about robust economic growth, but when I visited the main port in the capital, Dar es Salaam, I noticed almost no activity. Nothing was being loaded or unloaded, even though it was a Tuesday afternoon at the only port for a huge swath of the hinterland. To me, this was a hint that Tanzania's economic success story was probably less widespread than advertised. But more important than checking out the facts, going to Africa is an enriching and often inspirational experience. You may even catch the "Africa bug," a compulsive attraction to the continent that infects many of its visitors and keeps them coming back. Zimbabwe certainly did that to me.

Structure of the Book

The book is organized into three sections—looking at the domestic context, a set of core development questions, and finally at regional and international linkages. In each chapter, the intention is to provide some basic background information, analysis of the trends, and an explanation of the contemporary issues, actors, and institutions that students may encounter as they delve deeper into the subject. I have intentionally avoided using footnotes to keep the text as readable as possible. At the end of each chapter are some suggested readings to learn more about the topics covered, but the recommendations are far from exhaustive. Full citations are listed in the bibliography.

The next section provides context for Africa's development, starting with its history and the effects of colonialism in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 examines the nature of political authority and gives background on some of the most influential leaders, including ten "Big Men" that readers probably know of and another ten that they probably do not but should. Violent conflict is dealt with in Chapter 4, including a brief description of some of Africa's recent conflicts, plus some ideas on the causes and effects of civil wars, as well as efforts to prevent and end conflict. Political trends, including the unsteady rise of democracy in recent years, are the focus of Chapter 5.

Chapters 6 through 10 cover some of the most central development issues, beginning with the puzzle of Africa's economic growth. Chapter 7 follows with a look at the politics behind economic reform, including why some of the problems identified in Chapter 6 appear so resilient. Chapter 8 outlines the major ideas, institutions, and current controversies in the aid industry. Debt relief, a leading issue for antipoverty activists for much of the past three decades, is the subject of Chapter 9. Chapter 10 explains the various definitions of poverty, including income and other measures. The second half of Chapter 10 also briefly addresses the role of public services in reducing poverty and the special case of HIV/AIDS in development.

The final section looks at Africa's regional connections and its relationship with the rest of the world. The African Union and the plethora of regional institutions are laid out in Chapter 11. Chapters 12 and 13 explore the main issues and debates around the movement of goods and capital, respectively, across borders. Chapter 14 concludes with a very brief summary of some of the broad themes of the book.

Emergency relief, gender, the environment, technology, migration, demographics, and culture are all important development-related topics that might deserve their own chapters but don't have one here. This book also only briefly touches on public health and education issues, which are often the primary focus of many students approaching Africa for the first time.

This approach is deliberate; public health and schooling are admirable fields and are of course central to the development story, but the purpose of this book is partly to help students with that perspective also understand some of the political, economic, and financial issues that unavoidably intrude on a more technical approach to development.

For Further Reading

Some of the best books for understanding African development include Nicolas van de Walle's *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979–1999* (2001) and *Africa's Stalled Development: International Causes and Cures* by David Leonard and Scott Straus (2003). Two must-reads on development that are not Africa-specific but highly relevant are William Easterly's *The Elusive Quest for Growth* (2001), and Paul Collier's *The Bottom Billion* (2007). Two highly recommended classics are Goran Hyden's *No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective* (1983) and Robert Bates's *Markets and States in Tropical Africa* (1981). A recent book making the case that seventeen African countries are pulling away from the pack is Steve Radelet's *Emerging Africa* (2010). A terrific new book, which argues that global development is making headway even in places without economic growth, is Charles Kenny's *Getting Better: Why Global Development Is Succeeding—And How We Can Improve the World Even More* (2011).

For an overview of the history of dominant ideas about development, see Colin Leys's *The Rise and Fall of Development Economics* (1996) and Deepak Lal's *The Poverty of Development Economics* (2000). To read Amartya Sen's ideas about development, see, among many, his *Development as Freedom* (1999). For another take on the divide between development approaches, in this case between the “finance ministry” and “civil society” tendencies, see Ravi Kanbur's “Economic Policy, Distribution, and Poverty: The Nature of Disagreements” (2001). For a highly readable history of economic thought, look no further than Robert Heilbroner's *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times and Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers* (1953).

The best Africanist journals are *Journal of Modern African Studies* and *African Affairs*. The leading journals for development economics that are accessible to nonspecialists include *World Development*, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *Development Policy Review*, and the *Journal of Development Studies*. The *Journal of Economic Perspectives* also often covers development economics in a nontechnical format, as does the *World Bank Research Observer*. *Finance & Development* is a free quarterly magazine from the IMF that summarizes some of the best research coming out of the international institutions.

The Economist Intelligence Unit provides regular *Country Reports* on every country in Africa, plus annual *Country Profiles*. *Africa Confidential* is a wonderful, and usually reliable, source for the inside buzz on African politicians. There are now multiple websites for gathering African news, including many in Africa itself. *AllAfrica.com* aggregates news articles from more than one hundred news organizations in Africa.

The most authoritative source for economic data is the World Bank, especially its *World Development Indicators*. Also useful are IMF country reports, especially the statistical annexes that are produced regularly on each country. A growing number of central banks in Africa are also producing regular information and posting it on the Web.

When looking for information about African development, a lot can also be learned from novels, and there are a huge number from which to choose. Some classics are Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988), Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), V. S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* (1979), and the writings of Wole Soyinka (who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1986). A few more recent novels worth considering are Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), *The House of Hunger* (1993) by Dambudzo Marechera, and Norman Rush's *Mating* (1991). One of the most amusing books on the World Bank's relations with Africa is Michael Holman's witty satire *Last Orders at Harrods* (2005). There are many novels about South Africa and the apartheid era, including Alan Paton's classic *Cry the Beloved Country* (1948) and the huge bodies of work by Nobel literature prize winners J. M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer. For a sarcastic essay on stereotypes used in writing on Africa, see "How to Write About Africa" by Binyavanga Wainaina (2006).