



The World Today

LESSONS FROM/FOR T&T & UGANDA AS ASPIRING 'DEVELOPMENTAL STATES'

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I have just celebrated my first Emancipation Day in St Augustine. But, I have marked several Independence Days in Kampala, as a graduate student at the University in Makerere before the traumatic era of Idi Amin. Some almost four decades later, I am a visiting professor at two the country's better universities, including its Business School, other than the mushrooming Makerere, my *alma mater*.

So, I closely observed the official visit by the Ugandan president. Why did President Museveni fly half way around the world to celebrate 200 years of the abolition of slavery when Uganda is located far from the West African sources of enslaved labour? Aside from national diplomacy and personal commitment – as President, Yoweri Museveni (better known in Uganda as M7) has insisted that state universities in Uganda teach what he studied in Dar- es- Salaam, namely development studies, hence my ongoing role as Bank of Uganda Chair in Development Studies at Mbarara University .

I would suggest that there are two primary sets of reasons for his safari aside from prestige. First, most importantly, like Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) Uganda aspires to be a 'developmental state' at the start of the new century; i.e. one like Singapore or South Korea which has a vision for 2020 & beyond and how to get there. T&T may have suffered cyclical shifts in its economy, but never anything like the meltdown which Uganda endured under Amin and his successors. Now, having rebuilt its infrastructure, Winston Churchill's 'Pearl of Africa' grows by 10% each year, a function of national & regional entrepreneurship in several sectors including new ones like fresh flowers, fruits and vegetables for the European Union. By contrast, the boom in T&T is energy-based, related to US demand for its LNG as well as the 'developmental' policy of diversification into related downstream sectors like gases and metals, initially based on offshore resources. Also, both countries have significant tourist industries which could also assist each other.

While in town, M7 related how he failed to persuade Nestle to invest in a facility in Uganda for instant coffee... but India's Tata Corporation, owners of the iconic Tetley tea brand, is now building one. South Africa has also become a major investor in Uganda

post-apartheid as in much of the rest of the sub-continent: banks, fast-food, supermarkets, satellite TV, mobile-phone network, shopping malls etc such DStv & MTN. T&T already has its own national icons like Republic Bank and Caribbean Airlines. T&T could help Uganda further diversify its sources of investment and technology. Moreover, Commonwealth companies from Australia and Canada are important in the energy sector in both economies.

Both political economies are also regional centres for a variety of communications (Uganda being landlocked in the Great Lakes Region (GLR)), logistics, manufacturing, services etc. Inherited intergovernmental regional relations are yielding to regimes which are friendlier to stakeholders like local to global MNCs & NGOs. Emerging regional governance arrangements include more attention than before to areas such as democracy, ecology, security. There could also be mutual inter-regional South-South learning between the resurrected East African Community & well-established CARICOM & fledgling ACS as Uganda's leader envisaged.

In addition, Uganda has just discovered oil in its rift valley and thus seeks to learn from T&T's century of experience with the sector. Museveni denies that the 'resource curse' will plague Uganda, rejecting any idea that Uganda would become corrupted. Rather, the Bank of Uganda already manages an Oil Fund similar to Trinidad's Heritage Fund (modelled after similar structures in Canada & Norway). Uganda, along with T&T, should sign-up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) as the mining industry's best effort to minimise individual corruption & maximise human development.

Yet the developmental aspirations of both are undermined by 'new' security threats, not just Islamic fundamentalism with which Port of Spain is all too familiar, but also drug and gun mafias with their regional networks and global connections. Furthermore, both are threatened by climate change as Lake Victoria is shrinking which will affect Uganda's capacity to generate electricity from its dam. Trinidad is warmer than before, requiring more air-conditioning.

But secondly, & less importantly in terms of achievement of Human Development Index and Millennium Development Goals, Uganda hosts Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting and parallel Commonwealth conferences, especially for civil society & private sector later this November; T&T does likewise two years later. The Ugandan towns of Kampala and Entebbe, especially the latter's airport, along with resorts on the shores of Lake Victoria are in the middle of a construction boom, including a new five-star Serena hotel & conference centre comparable to downtown POS: roads, hotels, malls etc. In other words, both regimes have an interest in communication about the inter- and non-state Commonwealth, from parliaments to universities; hence the imminent new T&T High Commission in Kampala. As a legacy of empire, both countries play the same sports as well as speak the language of globalisation: English!

I conclude with a trio of final points. First, the roles of distinctive yet heterogeneous 'Asian'/'Indian' communities in the two states have been quite different. Some opinion in Trinidad was critical of the invitation to Museveni seemingly unaware that he had brought 'old' Indian corporations back – Mahdvani, Mehta etc – and welcomed a range of new investors such as Tata. India's place in the global economy is now transformed as one of the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India & China). The global Indian diaspora, which is several generations old in some parts of the world, with its related remittances, investments and the global reach of Bollywood, is one distinctive feature of India's 'emerging economy'.

Second, Visions 2020 constitute self-identification and ambition: advancement over the next decade from pre-industrialized to post-industrialized status. It also ensures that such aspiring developmental states are democratic as well as sustainable. Some of my Ugandan colleagues would hope that T&T would encourage M7 to exit gracefully given prevailing sentiments, as his current third term follows a dozen post-transformation years in the country. They don't want him to emulate the 'Last King of Scotland'!

And third, the streets of both capitals and cities are clogged because of construction booms but also because of Japanese, and now Singaporean, reconditioned imports...or in local Trini parlance 'roll-on/roll-offs'. Such second-hand Japanese trucks, mini-buses as well as cars, rebuilt the transportation industry in Uganda post-Amin & Co. Indeed, African artisans know how to transfer technology when old resources die.

As we remember the meaning of Emancipation day, the visit by the Ugandan President captured the essence and promise of the day: indeed 'there is much that T&T and Uganda can learn from each other in developing our economies.'