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# A proposal for a three months visit to a university community in the Peoples Republic of China

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*Boston University*

A Proposal for  
A THREE MONTHS VISIT TO A UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY  
IN THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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Social Change, Clark University; and Professor Robert B.  
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PURPOSE: We are two U.S. scholars who have spent the last 25 years. 11 of them in African universities, teaching and conducting research relating to development, primarily in Africa. Believing that theory and practice must go together, we are particularly interested in the theory of the state and law as they affect political economic change development. We believe that the post-liberation experience of the Peoples Republic of China may offer valuable lessons in this area. We seek an opportunity to deepen our own understanding of that experience through a three month stay in China, hopefully including an opportunity to visit industrial and agricultural projects, as well as to participate in discussions about relevant issues with Chinese theoreticians and practitioners. In exchange, we would be happy to provide seminars and lectures relating to what we have learned of the nature of the state, law and economic change in Africa.

We outline below a proposal for a three month seminar on the State, Law and Development, in Africa. The seminar could be held in whichever institution and for whatever audience deemed most appropriate by the relevant Chinese authorities. We wish to emphasize that this proposal is subject to changes in light of the particular interests and concerns of the particular group of participants selected.

During the three months of our stay in the Peoples Republic, we would of course be willing to speak at additional lectures and take part in other academic activities suggested.

METHODOLOGY: We propose using a problem-solving methodology to examine the evidence relating to alternative explanations and the consequences of proposals for solutions to the problems of poverty and vulnerability in Africa, especially Southern Africa. The seminar would first describe the dimensions of the problems of poverty and vulnerability in Africa. It would outline the alternative theoretical explanations (explicit or implicit) that have given rise to the solutions attempted to overcome those problems in independent African states. The seminar would then critically review these alternative theories in light of the evidence from the countries in which we have worked -- Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia Zimbabwe -- as well as the rest of Southern Africa (especially South Africa and Namibia).

PROPOSED OUTLINE OF SEMINAR SYLLABUS: For convenience, we

outline the proposed seminar in terms of topics covered each week. We wish, however, to underscore the flexibility of this proposal. We would be happy to revise it in terms of the time spent and issues considered in light of the availability of the participants' time and interests.

Week 1: The nature and scope of continuing poverty and vulnerability of the mass of the people in Africa, despite the attainment of political independence, particularly during the crisis of the late 1970s and 1980s.

Week 2: Methodology: The problem-solving approach (in contrast to the means-end approach widely adopted in Africa), which focuses on the use of experience to test theories that purport to explain and provide solutions to the problems plaguing the people of Africa.

Week 3: Alternative theoretical economic explanations and proposed solutions, including western "neo-classical" and various forms of socialist theories, as espoused on the level of government policy in Africa.

Weeks 4 and 5: Alternative theories of law, state and development and how these relate to economic explanations and proposed policies offered in Africa.

Weeks 6 and 7: The differences and similarities of resource allocation and institutions affecting agriculture, industry, trade and finance in several African states claiming to accept as a guide one or the other of the alternative theories of law, state, and development.

Week 8: Planning and the role of the state in African countries, focusing on the way planning institutions and state corporations function and why in most cases, regardless of the theoretical perspective proclaimed, they have not worked very well.

Week 9: The African state and the world economic order, including the way African governments have sought to deal with transnational corporations, and the role the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Week 10: The nature and effect of state measures relating to desegregation and Africanization relating to the productive sectors as well as housing, education, and health facilities.

Week 11: "Legality", including the devices introduced to ensure government officials obey the law as they affect procedural freedoms, officials' discretion, decision-making institutions' procedures, courts and ombudsmen (or procurator generals), etc.

Week 12: The growth of a "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" and efforts

to prevent it through leadership codes, anti-corruption institutions, and so forth.

Week 13: The lack of participation and denial of fundamental freedoms resulting from elite and class interests; and efforts to increase participation through elections, public hearings on public issues, use of courts, rights of association, press, and speech, and the emergence of peoples' organizations.

Week 14: Constitutions as means of drawing lines between public power and private right versus organization of government for specific tasks, including a survey of African constitutions and their utility for development purposes.

Week 15: Summary and review: The implications of the African experience for a general theory of the state and its role in solving problems of development.