

**ID Lunchtime Research Seminars 2024-25**  
**Wednesdays 12.30-2pm**  
**CON.7.03**

**Myfanwy James and Mahvish Shami**

Autumn Term

**October 9<sup>th</sup> – Eyob Gebremariam, Perivoli Africa Research Centre, University of Bristol**

Thandika Mkandawire's Model for an African Developmental State, and the Ethiopian Experiment (2001–2018)

This article offers a theoretical and empirical examination of Thandika Mkandawire's model of an African developmental state. The driving question is: what does the Ethiopian experiment mean for Mkandawire's model, and what lessons does it hold more broadly? The analysis focuses on the ideology of the Ethiopian ruling party (1991–2018) and a review of two policy documents on rural development and execution capacity-building. Developmentalist ideology, effective state capacity and relative autonomy of the state are observed in the Ethiopian case. The rural development policy aimed for structural transformation and achieved a modest result. At the same time, the execution capacity-building policy is a fascinating example of how the Ethiopian model defied the 'institutional monocropping' and the 'institutional monotasking' approach of donor organisations by pursuing institution-building not as a technical but as a political mission. However, the Ethiopian experiment was not without limitations. The most drastic structural impasse was in the inherent contradiction between sociocultural and ethnolinguistic-based federalism and the centralising drive of developmentalism. This created irreparable fractures within the ruling elite, which brought the developmentalism experiment to an end in 2018. I argue that the Ethiopian case is a relevant example demonstrating the vital features of the African developmental state that Mkandawire theorised and promoted.

**October 16<sup>th</sup> – David Jackman, University of Oxford**

*Syndicates and Societies: Criminal Politics in Dhaka* (Cambridge University Press). Book Talk.

When you work on the streets of Dhaka, crime is part of everyday life. Rackets are ubiquitous, political muscle widespread, and territory often fought over. Locals refer to the syndicate that lie behind the façade of the city, controlling who works where, how services are delivered and who profits. Based on years of research *Syndicates and Societies* reveals how syndicates shape life in Kawran Bazar, the largest marketplace in Bangladesh, and offers a new approach to understanding the nexus of crime and politics. The book traces the bazar's history from a heartland of gangsters to being dominated by ruling party leaders and state officials. It follows a group of labourers as they seek a place in this world, aligning themselves to leaders, orchestrating bombings and fighting off rivals. *Syndicates and Societies* thus explores the relationship between crime and order, revealing a world of extortionists and informers, political muscle and union leaders.

**October 30<sup>th</sup> – Amogh Sharma, University of Oxford**

*The Backstage of Democracy: India's Election Campaigns and the People Who Manage Them*  
(Cambridge University Press). Book Talk.

Over the last decade, election campaigns in India have undergone a dramatic shift. Political parties increasingly rely on political consulting firms, social media volunteers, pollsters, data-driven insights, and hashtag wars to mobilize voters. What is driving these changes in the landscape of electioneering? *The Backstage of Democracy* takes readers to the hidden arena of strategizing and deliberations that takes place between politicians and a new cabal of political professionals as they organize election campaigns in India. The book argues that this change is not reducible to a story of technological innovations alone. Rather, it is indicative of a new political culture where ideas of political expertise, the distribution of power within parties, and citizens' attitudes towards political participation have undergone a profound change. Marshalling an eclectic range of data sources, the book breaks new ground on how we understand the workings of India's electoral and party politics.

**November 13<sup>th</sup> – Margot Tudor, City University of London**

Anti-UN protests in peacekeeping missions  
[confirmed, abstract to follow]

**November 27<sup>th</sup> – Ann Kelly, Kings College London**

[confirmed, abstract to follow]