

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN SMALL STATES

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Abstract: What are the human development opportunities and challenges for small states in a multi-polar world? An answer to this question must consider human development strategies at large, the constraints imposed by neoliberal globalism and better practice in recent times. Small states have particular vulnerabilities but may also benefit from realignments within new regional blocs. There are already a number of relevant and important “post Washington Consensus” themes and lessons from the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) groupings. These have much to do with redefined human development policies and less to do with extraction of natural resources. The best examples of human development come from those which are relatively resource poor but which have invested heavily in human capacity. This article considers the strategic opportunities and challenges for small states within the new forms of integration presented by an emerging multi-polar world with its new regional blocs. Best practice has come from sustained and focussed human capacity building, while the range of possible integration strategies in the new global environment could be characterised as passive integration, avoiding capture, counter-leverage and regional realignment, within and between the emerging blocs.

Key words: human development; small states; development strategy

The human development opportunities and challenges for small states have shifted with the recent growth of strong, independent regional and what we might call post-globalist organisations. Many of the priorities of the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) bloc and of the Latin American blocs (the CELAC, Union of South American States [UNASUR] and the Bolivarian Alliance

for the Peoples of Our America [ALBA]) for example, are quite distinct from those of Washington and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Engagement or integration with these new currents opens up new options in “south-south” finance, trade, technology, health and education. Yet taking advantage of these opportunities requires states strongly committed to investing in their people and to resisting globalist pressures. These cannot be the minimalist, weak states facilitating open markets, of neoliberal ideology.

Small states (including small island states) have particular vulnerabilities but may also benefit from counter-leverage and realignments within new regional blocs, given appropriate priorities and sufficient political will. Many international development reports (e.g., Bass and Dalal-Clayton 1995; Krausmann, Richter, and Eisenmenger 2014; UN-OHRLLS 2011) focus on sustainable resource use (and in the case of small islands states, climate change) yet the relevant and important post-globalist or “post Washington Consensus” themes and lessons have more to do with strengthened human capacity building, and less to do with simple extractivism. In fact, there are no real examples of strong human development in small states built on resource extraction strategies. Many of those, including most petro-states, are notorious failures. On the contrary, there are several examples of relative success among small and island states which are resource poor but which have achieved some notable successes by investing heavily in human capacity.

Appropriate priorities and long-term commitment to sustained and focussed human capacity building are critical (Anderson 2013). This article considers the strategic opportunities and challenges for small and island states within the new forms of integration presented by an emerging multi-polar world. Much has been written about the particular vulnerabilities of small states, and in particular “small island developing states” (e.g., Briguglio 1995). However, a focus on the ecological fragility of islands tends to distract attention from wider human development concerns. This article places greater emphasis on what is required for small states to take advantage of the new international opportunities. It begins with a review of the underlying shift from globalist unipolarity to multi-polarity, revised ideas of the developmental state, in light of the “right to development,” and then presents some thoughts on broader development strategy.

1. From Unipolarity to Multi-polarity

The unipolar world that seemed to emerge after the collapse of the Soviet Union helped reinforce the World Bank “structural adjustment” programmes and limited options for independent development. Many small states faced the end of preferential trade agreements yet pressure to continue their focus on extractive industries, with greater integration in global value chains. The rising chorus for investor

privileges ran through “free trade” agreements, then into the “trade and investment partnerships” of the 21st century. Self-sufficient strategies in agriculture came under attack, public enterprises and institutions were targeted for privatisation and user pays policies were promoted as state economic capacity was eroded. These globalist pressures were reinforced by unipolarity.

Yet multi-polarity in its strategic and economic sense had been spoken of at least since the 1960s, responding to the supposed “bipolar” order of the cold war. “We are now told that ‘bipolarity’ on the one hand or ‘multipolarity’ on the other are practical answers to major current difficulties,” wrote Rosecrance (1966, 314). Reacting to cold war rivalry, the “Non-Aligned Movement” of nations was formed; then reaction to the Washington and Europe-dominated General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) project helped drive an alternative trade and development forum, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Unipolarity as a desirable goal was argued by North American neo-realist scholars in the 1970s and 1980s. The notion of “hegemonic stability” helped give a kindly gloss to Washington’s ambitions, while deflecting the distasteful accusation of “imperialism.” Kindleberger (1974) and Keohane (1982) stressed the “public goods” (of stable currencies and “free trade”) which could be provided by a benevolent hegemon, as they pointed to the altruistic sacrifice seen in post-war US military spending. This “Pax Americana” had universal benefits, but those benefits would only be realised in full through unipolarity, they claimed. Even though early proponents recognised limits (Snidal 1985), this “general good from a single superpower” theory remains popular in North America to this day, although it is often criticised (e.g., Desai 2013, chap. 5).

However, reactions to neoliberal globalisation in the 1980s—with its “austerity,” privatisations, and globalist ideology (Hoogvelt 1997)—helped open wider discussions of a “new regionalism” and multi-polarity. According to Hettne (1996), this “new regionalism and multipolarity are, in fact, two sides of the same coin . . . whereas the old regionalism was created ‘from above’ . . . the new is a more spontaneous process from within the regions.” That is, “new regionalism” was identified as groups of states searching for greater autonomy in the construction of their own development strategies, beyond the packages prepared by the big powers, and in particular by the “Washington Consensus” (Williamson 1993). Towards the end of the 20th century, the relative decline of US power, the economic rise of East Asia and a shift towards greater independence in Latin America helped foment these ideas.

Even though the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s seemed to vindicate the unipolar, “hegemonic stability” ideas, some North American scholars had begun to speak of the fragility of such a system. Huntington (1999) linked multi-polarity to the old European system, assuming that all “poles” were

necessarily imperial, seeking domination. “There is now only one superpower. But that does not mean that the world is unipolar,” he said. The contemporary world was “a strange hybrid, a unipolar system with one superpower and several major powers” (Huntington 1999, 1–2).

Multi-polarity is not in itself a strategy, rather a type of global political environment within which more independent development strategies might emerge. Nevertheless, multi-polarity does enter into the strategies of some powers. Russia, for example, has developed the idea of resuming its role as a “normal great power,” but not an overlord. Tsygankov (2005) explains the argument of former Russian Minister Yevgeny Primakov, in the late 1990s, that post-Soviet Russia should be “a pole of independent power in a multipolar world,” to counter-balance the United States “by entering into alliances with non-Western nations” (Tsygankov 2005, 136). While this was opposed by some Russian “balancers,” who saw it as expensive and “potentially confrontational,” much of Primakov’s approach was picked up by President Vladimir Putin. Yet Putin also stressed the economic modernisation and development side of the idea, the need for Russia to advance in the “geo-economic” sphere (132).

In Latin America, site of US military interventions for more than a century and the “laboratory” for Washington Consensus packages in the 1970s, the need for greater independence was felt even more keenly. The late Hugo Chávez, President of Venezuela for 14 years, until his death, began to speak of multi-polarity as a key element of liberation. In 2009, recognising the 36th anniversary of “the Chilean Tragedy,” he said, “if we do not bring down the imperial hegemony, the world will collapse into barbarism . . . we must create new forms of association and encourage our own resistance strategies . . . [in] the transition to multipolarity” (Chávez Frías 2009). That is, no independent state—such as those represented by the governments led by Salvador Allende in Chile and of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela—could survive while their great northern neighbour maintained hegemonic dominance at every level. That power had to be offset by some form of united countervailing power.

Chávez proceeded to build on this underlying idea, joining first with Cuba and then Bolivia in the ALBA. After that bloc had attracted nine members, the “alternative” was renamed an “alliance.” The ALBA was quite specifically a counter project to Washington’s “Free Trade Area of the Americas” (FTAA) (Linares 2011). It was said to be “a socially-oriented trade block . . . [which] appeals to the egalitarian principles of justice and equality . . . the well-being of the most dispossessed sectors of society, and a reinvigorated sense of solidarity toward the underdeveloped countries” (Arreaza 2004). New principles of integration were spelled out in December 2004 and the flagship programme was a state-to-state swap of Venezuelan energy assistance for tens of thousands of Cuban doctors and educators (Anderson 2014a). Washington’s FTAA was effectively dead by 2005, due to

the bad image of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA; the “free trade agreement” signed in 1994 between the United States, Canada, and Mexico) and strong Latin American dissent. The ALBA soon included associate and observer members, including Russia and Argentina.

Several small Caribbean island states (Dominica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis) gradually signed up to the ALBA, seeing practical benefits in the strong education and health programmes from Cuba and valuable energy assistance from Venezuela. Not all found it so easy. Trinidad and Tobago (with its own petroleum resources) was said to have been “caught between” the US-driven plan for an FTAA and the Cuba-Venezuela ALBA project (Shah 2005). The centre right government in Honduras, led by Manuel Zelaya joined in, seeing practical benefits. However, a US-backed military coup in 2009 toppled that government and withdrew the country from the ALBA (Ahmed 2009). This illustrated, once again, the dire problems of hegemonic power for small countries wishing to pursue a more independent path. Political consolidation at home and strong allies would be essential to the sustainability of any counter-hegemonic project.

If the ALBA was Latin America’s left block, the UNASUR (created in 2008) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC, created in 2011) were the broader regional groupings, which built on the region’s common history, crossing political lines. Chávez drove all these new alliances with his political will and Venezuela’s weight in natural resources (Anderson 2014a). Venezuela and Cuba had worked hard to include even the most right-wing, pro-Washington governments, in particular that of Colombia. The creation of CELAC in 2011, which included all the countries of the Americas except the United States and Canada, was said to mark “a significant step toward consolidating a system of regional integration that will operate as an alternative to the U.S.-dominated Organization of American States” (de la Barra and Dello Buono 2012). As one sign of its new weight, this 33 nation, 600 million person bloc quite rapidly held its first bi-regional summit with the European Union, in Chile (EEAS 2013).

To some extent, these Latin American achievements were eclipsed by the larger BRICS bloc, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (Wilson and Purushothaman 2003). This grouping developed its own financial institutions, while spelling out principles of development quite distinct from the OECD. For example, in health the OECD group has focussed on private “participations” or public-private partnerships (PPPs) and strong intellectual property regimes which, among other things, meant very expensive new medicines (Flinders 2005). However, the BRICS countries, with 50% of world poverty, committed themselves to universal health coverage, stronger public systems, cooperation in health and low-cost medicines and vaccines (Barbosa da Silva et al. 2014).

There is now a great deal of literature both predicting and advocating greater international multi-polarity, in one author's words, a shift towards "keeping the field free of an overlord" (Hiro 2010, 12). The significance of this shift for small states is that the emerging environment can provide opportunities to refocus on development strategy and its necessary human development elements. Parallel ideas and experience allow small states to reflect on the important role of the state in development, alongside the new international engagement and integration opportunities.

2. The Right to Development and a Revised "Developmental State"

In the mid-1980s, neoliberal ideology urged a smaller role for the state, or at least a smaller role for peripheral states. Market ideas were used to push the state to one side and facilitate corporate privilege (Harvey 2005). Robert Cox (1987) pointed out that the state was losing its function as a "buffer" against international shocks. Similarly, in the late 1990s, Fantu Cheru concluded that the debt crisis had been "a convenient excuse to open third world markets and curtail the role of the State in national development." The "most crucial impact" of the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 1990s had been precisely to weaken state agency in development (Cheru 1999, 11).

At much the same time, defence of the state came from two currents: industrialisation in East Asia and a 1986 United Nations resolution on a "Right to Development" (RTD). The growth of "human development" ideas at the UNDP in the 1980s did not, at first, pay too much attention to the overall means by which superior human development could be achieved. The RTD began to correct that.

Industrialisation in East Asia in almost all cases, certainly in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, had come from strong states which engaged directly with large domestic corporations in industrial and export planning. Observers began to speak of a "developmental state," where the state leads the process of development, through coordinating councils with well-established private companies and long-term plans which included future industries and, at times, integrated state enterprises such as in the defence industries. This was far from the Anglo-American "liberal market" ideas. It has been said that an authoritarian state is required for this sort of process (Johnson 1987), and indeed authoritarianism could be seen clearly in militarised South Korea and civilian Singapore (Kim 1997). Yet at the core was active engagement of a state committed to greater "value added" production.

The World Bank's "East Asian Miracle" report spelled out some of this, modestly challenging open market ideas. That report noted the key role of state

coordination in industrial development and the key economic role of East Asian states (World Bank 1993). Joseph Stiglitz (2002) tells us that this report was watered down due to opposition from Washington and only appeared at all because Japan funded it (see also Wade 1996).

Reaction to the unipolar “Washington Consensus” ideas helped drive revised development notions at the United Nations. In 1986, a UN resolution of the “Right to Development” was passed (UNGA 1986), comprising a mix of individual rights, collective and participatory rights, along with a central role for the state. Individuals were said to have rights to “participate” in the process of development (Articles 1, 2 and 8); to have “equal opportunity of access” to resources (Article 8); and to be entitled to a “fair distribution” of the benefits of development (Articles 2 and 8). States maintained the primary responsibility for “the creation of conditions favourable to the realization of the Right to Development” (Article 3). This was not neoliberal ideology, where markets were said to arbitrate production and distribution. Some years later, a UN expert called “rights based” development “a participatory, non-discriminatory, accountable and transparent process with equity in decision making and sharing the fruits of progress.” The “primary responsibility for this . . . belongs to states,” which have the duty to “cooperate with each other in ensuring development” (Sengupta 2002, 846).

These ideas reflected and helped confirm a variety of non-neoliberal conceptions of development and the state. They were not necessarily “statist” or state-centred notions, but they did begin to restore legitimacy to broad, central state functions. They could then be linked to the rising “human development” criteria, which became popular at around the turn of the century. This trend, with a focus on institution building, was called the “Post-Washington Consensus” (Kolodko 1999), yet that, in turn, was criticised as being “inchoate” and essentially a softer version of market opening (Fine, Lapavitsas, and Pincus 2001, xii–xiii). Nevertheless, in parallel with these shifts, the state was being required, by international agreements, to guarantee and underwrite the process of human development (Anderson 2014b, 64).

If we bring together the East Asian experience of the state in development with the redefined role of the state in the “Right to Development,” we can see an emerging social democratic notion of the character of the state, especially as regards enabling human development. This implies the need for a strong “human development enabling” state. This is not to speak of a strong state, which imposes its will (or the will of elites) on society, rather a state with the commitment to foment participation and ensure long-term investment in human capacity building. This state must also cultivate the resilience to defend its strategies and gains from external predators. Those states which do not exercise sufficient political will to invest in human development and promote social participation will lose legitimacy.

I have previously argued that, despite problems of corruption, elite agendas and various forms of dysfunction, “independent public institutions must be built and defended. The idea that, in the former colonies, strong states and substantial public sectors are antithetical to human development and social participation is misguided” (Anderson 2014b, 71–72).

A far easier course for a state without the political will for long-term investment in its peoples’ human capacity is simply to rely on resource extraction. This is promoted by many international agencies and is an attractive option to attract short-term income for immediate needs. However, where extractive industries are relied upon as the centre-piece of development, priorities are distorted and human capacity building is usually crippled. This “extractivism” must be distinguished from the simple use of extractive industries; the latter can be used to help build more sustainable industries and human-centred capacity (Svampa 2013). However, the inefficiencies and dangers of extractivism, especially in small states, are notorious. The small Pacific island state of Nauru is a good illustration. A fund was set aside for investment of the revenue from phosphate mining, but those investments were squandered and the environmental damage was extensive. Observers have pointed out that, “as a result of phosphate mining, most of the island’s indigenous flora and fauna have become extinct . . . its resource degradation is a concrete example of how economic wealth can be ultimately destroyed by resource degradation” (Gowdy and McDaniel 1999).

Similar and more widespread damage can be seen in oil and gas extractivism (leading to what is often called the “oil curse”), which shows up in the UNDP’s gross national income (GNI) minus human development index (HDI) data. These indices demonstrate the best and worst use of resources for human development. In subtracting the HDI ranking from GNI ranking, positive numbers show the relative efficiency of income for human development, while negative numbers show the reverse. Most of the oil rich countries show strong negative figure outcomes, indicating inefficiency in the use of income. In Table 1, we see, from the UNDP’s 2013 report, the best- and worst-performing small island states.

The best results come from Cuba, followed by Samoa and Tonga, all of which have quite high levels of adult literacy and general education (UNDP 2013, Table 8). On the other side, Timor-Leste and Trinidad and Tobago, both oil exporters in recent years, showed great inefficiencies. Timor’s GNI-HDI rank in 2005 (before oil revenues) was +16, but this had crashed to –29, after oil and gas revenues came on stream from about 2007. Given the limited components of the HDI (income, education and longevity), we can say that this fall mostly represents a failure to invest in education, proportionate to increased oil and gas revenues. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, despite its sovereign wealth fund and high literacy, the relative inefficiency in human development is also clear. Basic literacy is an essential

Table 1 GNI-HDI Rank—Use and Misuse of Resources for Human Development

<i>Best-performing small island states</i>	<i>GNI-HDI rank (adult literacy)</i>	<i>Worst-performing small island states</i>	<i>GNI-HDI rank (adult literacy)</i>
Cuba	44 (99.8)		
Samoa	28 (98.8)	Timor-Leste	–29 (58.3)
Tonga	26 (99)	Trinidad and Tobago	–28 (98.8)

Source: UNDP (2013, Tables 1 and 8). GNI-HDI rank is for 2012; adult literacy is for 2005–2010.

Note: GNI = gross national income; HDI = human development index.

but insufficient pre-condition for development. Table 2 shows “gross enrolment” across all three sectors of education, a follow through which is important for building any sort of superior capacity in industry and services.

Cuba’s high performance on the comparative rankings in Table 1 is reinforced by an exceptional enrolment across all levels of education, as detailed in Table 2. Why is this important? Developing the world’s leading doctor training programme and a world-class bio-medicines industry, for example, required a strong follow through in education and training. The “resource endowment” relied on here came from the country’s sustained investment in human capacity. It is significant that the average “gross enrolment” for small island developing countries (SIDC) is also substantially higher than the world average. Clearly, a number of small island states decided that education was essential compensation, at least, for their limited resources.

Perhaps the most striking illustrations of development through long-term commitment to human capacity building can be seen in three quite different island nations (although the first is hardly “small”): Japan, Cuba and Singapore. None of these three have significant energy reserves, and all are substantial food importers. Their histories and political systems are all quite different, yet all have made great advances through strong states committed to investing in human capacity.

Japan became the text book example of East Asian industrialisation, despite being devastated by war, with almost no energy resources and very little arable land (Johnson 1987). It still imports almost half its food. Singapore, a former colony with very few natural resources (it even has to import fresh water), became a key financial and commercial hub, with very high per capita incomes. The small island was authoritarian, but invested heavily in education and directed the build-up of a skilled labour force, as the basis for its successful industrial development (Grice and Drakakis-Smith 1985). Likewise, socialist Cuba, with limited natural resources—and a hostile superpower which banned all economic relations with its island neighbour for more than 50 years—maintained a strong priority for public education and health. Cuba built up a strong industry in medicines and health

Table 2 Key Educational Indices

	<i>Primary enrolment</i>	<i>Secondary enrolment</i>	<i>Tertiary enrolment</i>	<i>Adult literacy</i>
World average	107.9	71.2	28.7	81.3
Small island SIDC average	97	77	45.2	na
High human development	110.5	91	48.7	92.7
Very high human development	104.2	100.4	75.8	na
Cuba	103	89	95.2	99.8

Source: UNDP (2013, Table 8).

Note: SIDC = small island developing countries.

services, through its large and well-trained health workforce. It now has many of the best health indicators in the developing world, is the world's top provider of health aid and health training programmes and has developed considerable commercial advantage from the human capacity of its health sector (Kirk and Erisman 2009; Spiegel and Yassi 2004). These three very different countries had something in common: they built distinct futures through well-organised states committed to sustained, long-term investment in their own people. Unique “comparative advantages” were shaped from their superior human capacity (Anderson 2014b, 71).

Before we get to the question of distinct opportunities in regional and international integration, we should recognise that states with significant, long-term commitment to key human development goals show some remarkable achievements and promise. A strong state is often counter-posed to liberal freedoms, but the reverse may also be the case. If a weak state which has managed to build social achievements cannot also defend them, in face of external pressure for “market openings,” important freedoms in health, education and democracy can be seriously damaged. We have seen precisely that in the US-backed coups and interventions across Latin America, over the past century.

3. Development Strategy and Strategic Integration

There is no quick fix for superior human development. The small and island nation states that have managed significant achievements have done so through cautious use of their limited physical resource base and long-term, sustained investment in their peoples, building distinct strategies on that base. However, the contemporary shift in the global political environment towards a more pluralist multi-polar system can open up new opportunities. So, without discounting the need for strong domestic policy and practice, what engagement and integration options are available? Which might best assist with chronic deficits in critical areas such as health, education, housing and food security? And which approaches might best help small nation states construct new “comparative advantages”?

Let us first review the limited options available under the hegemonic regime, general acceptance of which we might call “passive integration.” This means acceptance of “market” imperatives, an open door to foreign capital and reliance for handouts from the \$100 billion global aid industry, often called “development cooperation” and with increasingly embedded corporate “development partnerships.” There is little difference here from the older, neoliberal structural adjustment programmes, discussed above (Cheru 1999; Flinders 2005; Harvey 2005; Williamson 1993). The development focus of this regime has more to do with resource extraction and market integration than human development.

One thing to be added to this consideration is the failure of most bilateral and multi-lateral “aid” programmes, especially in human development terms. These failures are often blamed on corrupt local elites, but that is only part of the story. Nevertheless, based on that criticism, an influential study suggested that aid should be conditional on “good governance” programmes (Burnside and Dollar 1997), yet another contradicted the claim that aid quality depended “on the quality of state institutions and policies,” as aid failed across all manner of recipient regimes (Easterly, Levine, and Roodman 2003). After the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) gave greater legitimacy to human development benchmarks, two International Monetary Fund (IMF) studies looked at the impact of aid on infant mortality. Masud and Yontcheva (2005) found that bilateral aid did not reduce infant mortality while “only government education expenditures” reduced illiteracy. A subsequent study found that “doubling health aid” could be linked to a 2% reduction in infant mortality (Mishra and Newhouse 2007). This increase was tiny compared with the targets of the MDGs. We can safely conclude that “development cooperation” has less to do with human development and more to do with the needs of a global industry, with all its embedded and often corrupt elites. Importantly, this aid also forms part of broader political relations, including strategic advantage.

A second approach might be thought of as “avoiding capture,” developing international relationships, which lessen dependence on any one large “partner.” This has been a problem for many of the Pacific islands, where Australia and New Zealand dominate aid, trade and regional organisations such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). Papua New Guinean policies, including “look north,” were designed to offset Australian dominance, particularly by the incorporation of Asian partners (Crocombe 2007). A Caribbean version of this in Trinidad and Tobago suggests looking to both the north and the south (Shah 2005).

The similar concept of “balancing” was broadened by Chong (2003) when he wrote that ideas of “band-wagoning and balancing,” mainly in relation to North American power, were inadequate to understand the options available, suggesting alternative strategies of “buffering, bonding, binding and beleaguering.” I suggest that

diversifying to avoid capture is also a useful way to see it. Timor-Leste, for example, has drawn on some natural pluralist advantages by maintaining and building relations with its large neighbours (Indonesia and Australia), with symmetrical and asymmetrical regional groups such as Melanesian Spearhead Group and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and with the international Portuguese speaking (Lusophone) network, including Portugal, Brazil and Mozambique. Timor-Leste since 2003, and many of the Pacific islands since 2006, also took advantage of Cuban doctor training. The Caribbean nation trained well over one thousand doctors from Timor and the Pacific islands, in little more than a decade (Anderson 2010). Nothing on that scale had ever been available from Australia and New Zealand.

A third, stronger approach encompassing counter-leverage and regional realignment can be seen in the creation of a Pacific Island Development Forum (PIDF), by the Government of Fiji. The aim of the PIDF was to create a small island state organisation, a counter-weight to the PIF, and excluding the regional powers Australia and New Zealand. Its purpose is to drive “transformative changes by focusing exclusively on the sustainable and inclusive development of the Pacific small island developing countries and territories and peoples” (PIDF 2016). This is reminiscent of the recent Latin American groups, in particular the CELAC which includes all the states of the Americas except the United States and Canada.

The position of the Caribbean islands in relation to the new counter-hegemonic groups, the ALBA, PetroCaribe and CELAC, deserves attention. There were some obvious advantages to engaging with what has been called “post-hegemonic regionalism” (Tussie and Riggiorozzi 2012). The UN’s Economic Commission on Latin America observed that “the CARICOM members view ALBA as another source of diversifying their foreign relations and reducing their dependence on a few traditional partners” (ECLAC 2012, 35). The ALBA linked them into Venezuela’s energy assistance programmes, Cuban health and education programmes, along with ALBA’s Caribe Fund and the ALBA Bank. ECLAC noted the human development component: “cooperation in health and education is also central to ALBA . . . Dominica [for example] sends over 100 students for training as doctors and nurses and 75 others for other training” (ECLAC 2012, 35). Prime Minister Denzil Douglas of St. Kitts and Nevis described the ALBA as “an example of cooperation to improve health care, education, culture and finance and to show that there is an alternative way for human development” (CARICOM 2014).

4. Conclusion: Human Development–Enabling States and Multi-polarity

This article has tried to show that greater multi-polarity at a global level may open new spaces for small states through a wider range of development partners and, at

times, engagement or integration with counter-hegemonic groupings. Yet development strategy will remain dependent on the socio-political commitment of the small states themselves, to invest in their own people and defend their often-limited natural resources. A quite strong state is required to apply sustained emphasis to public education and health policies, social inclusion and participation, resisting privatisation pressures. The best practice examples can be seen among those small states which are relatively resource poor but which have invested heavily in human capacity. Without such long-term domestic commitment, new external alignments will be of limited assistance. Contrary to several decades of neoliberal ideology, the state cannot remain an outsider in effective development. International jurisprudence now tends to reinforce best historical practice in requiring the state to guarantee individual as well as social rights, while leading a process of participatory and inclusive development. A strong human-development-enabling state therefore remains the central player in long-term human capacity building and superior human development. Linking such states to the new counter-hegemonic or “post-globalist” groupings could enhance that process.

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