

Articles

The Notion of the Nation-State in Southern Africa: A Theoretical Exploration

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Abstract

The 'nation-state' is a contested term in the vocabulary of students of international political economy. This makes it a daunting task to apply the concept to an analysis of developments in the political economy of a region such as Southern Africa. Three paradigms, namely liberalism, Marxism and realism are dominant in existing attempts at a theoretical exploration of the notion of 'nation-state'. A close scrutiny of the modern 'nation-state' project in Southern Africa, in terms of its historical metamorphosis, suggests that its roots are weak and fragile, because it emerged as a colonial imposition. The 'nation-state' is currently besieged by nationalistic impulses and by economic decline from within and by the twin processes of globalisation and regionalisation from without. These processes and factors have combined to pose serious challenges to the 'nation-state' in Southern Africa, putting its future in doubt.

Résumé

L'Etat-nation est un terme controversé dans le vocabulaire des étudiants d'économie politique internationale. A telle enseigne qu'appliquer le concept à une analyse de l'évolution de l'économie politique d'une région telle que l'Afrique australe, relève d'une redoutable entreprise. Trois paradigmes – le libéralisme, le marxisme et le réalisme – dominent les tentatives actuelles d'une exploitation théorique de la notion d'Etat-nation. Un examen attentif du projet d'Etat-nation moderne en Afrique australe, au regard de sa métamorphose historique, donne à penser que ses racines sont pour le moins fragiles, du fait de son émergence en tant qu'imposition coloniale. L'Etat-nation subit de plein fouet les pressions nationalistes et le déclin économique de l'intérieur, et à l'extérieur le double processus de la mondialisation et de la régionalisation. Ces processus et facteurs se sont combinés pour poser de formidables défis à l'Etat-nation, en Afrique australe, hypothéquant ainsi son avenir.

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Introduction

The nation-state project in Southern Africa is currently facing immense challenges, imposed by both internal and external processes of social change. This article outlines the theoretical ramifications of the notion of the nation-state and reviews the challenges confronting the nation-state project in Southern Africa. It concludes that the historical metamorphosis of the nation-state in the region was problematic from the outset, because it was not rooted in the local political economy, but imposed by external colonial forces. It was characterised by social turmoil, economic decline and political instability, all of which marked the steady disintegration of this political entity. When these features of the modern nation-state in the region are combined with the current sea change involved in globalisation and regionalism, the acute crisis of the nation-state in Southern Africa is brought into sharp relief.

The section following these prefatory remarks outlines the perspectives of the essential concepts used in this essay. Section two grapples with the notion of the nation-state within the framework of contending approaches to the study of the international political economy. It introduces the three main theories of the international political economy—liberalism, Marxism and realism—and shows how each of these views the state. Section three investigates the evolution of the nation-state in Southern Africa. Section four highlights the internal and external challenges confronting the nation-state in the region. The concluding section sums up the main arguments.

Perspectives of the Basic Concepts

The notion of the nation-state has been central to various scholarly attempts to understand social change in Southern Africa. The application of the concept in the region implies that there are distinct nations in Southern Africa, defined by and confined within geo-politically specific states. While at first glance, this perception may seem straightforward and unproblematic, it has given rise to many theoretical controversies concerning the regional political economy. The simplest level of controversy revolves around

the definitions of the terms 'nation' and 'state'. Definitions of a 'nation' are probably as many as there are writers on the subject. Seton-Watson defines a nation as 'a community of people whose members are bound together by a sense of solidarity, a common culture, a national consciousness' (1977:1). For Joseph Stalin, a nation is 'a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture... None of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation' (1975). Baradat maintains that 'a nation exists when there is a union of people based on similarities in linguistic patterns, ethnic relationship, cultural heritage, or even simple geographic proximity' (1997:45). Of all the definitions of a nation, the most interesting and complex, yet cogent one is provided by Benedict Anderson (1991). For him,

a nation is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is **imagined** because the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 1991:6-7).

For Anderson, a nation is limited by internationally recognised and well-defined boundaries beyond which lie other nations. The sovereignty of a nation is, therefore, conceived in terms of its relative autonomy in running its general affairs and in its interactions with other nations globally. The concept of national sovereignty in international relations finds its niche in this context. By sovereignty is meant

the recognition and legal acceptance of the legitimacy of the assertion of nationality and of its statehood. Recognition and legitimacy are dialectically related because change in the one directly affects the other. The legitimacy of a particular nationality at a particular moment in history depends both on the extent to which it is shared by the population at large and on the extent to which it is recognised outside. Conversely, the recognition of a particular nationality depends on its domestic and international legitimacy. Where there is no outside recognition of a legitimate nationality (...) there is no sovereignty for that nationality. Where there is no domestic recognition of an

internationally accepted nationality (...) that nationality loses legitimacy (Chabal 1994:122).

The state, as a concept, has been at the centre of theoretical and policy debate about the African political economy since the 1970s. As Chabal rightly says,

almost all accounts of post-colonial African politics take as their starting point an examination of the state. There are probably more books on the state in Africa than about any other political issue. To talk about politics in Africa is virtually to talk about the state (1994:68).

Two schools of thought have dominated the debate over the nature and character of the African state. These are the liberal school and the political economy perspective. Within the liberal school of thought, a state is seen as a politically benevolent institution that mediates the competing economic and political demands of the masses in the context of scarce resources. Closer to this mode of thought is a perception where a state is taken to refer to as

the organised aggregate of relatively permanent institutions of governance. The state is seen as a set of associations and agencies claiming control over defined territories and their populations. The main components of the state are, consequently, decision-making structures (executives, parties, parliaments), decision-enforcing institutions (bureaucracies, parastatal organizations, and security forces), decision-mediating bodies (primarily courts, tribunals, and investigatory commissions) (Chazan *et al.* 1992:39).

From this viewpoint, it is fairly easy to differentiate a state from a government, which refers to the occupants of public office within the state system and institutions. According to Plano and Olton, 'states legally come into being when they are recognised by other individual members of the international community' (1988:277).

The political economy perspective maintains that a state is a distinct political institution representing the broad interests of the dominant classes in society. Poulantzas argues that the state 'is the organ of public coercive force that organises the political domination of the ruling class and disarticulates the unity of the subordinate classes' (cited in Williams 1997:152). Fatton corroborates Poulantzas' thesis by arguing that

while the state serves the interests of the ruling class, it claims to embody the general interest, expressing particular corporate concerns as if they represent universal ones... the state is firmly grounded in society and reflects necessarily society's class relationships (cited in Williams 1997:153).

The state, in Marxian terms, is thus, 'an organ of class rule, an organ of oppression of one class by another' (Nnoli 1986:28). It is, therefore, not a benevolent entity standing above society and mediating conflicts over scarce resources as the liberal school would posit, but is itself very much part of the societal conflicts between the rich and poor classes. Specifically, the ideological project of a state is to promote and protect the class interests of capital in its continuous conflicts with labour. Another important theoretical facet of the Marxist conception of the state is the base-superstructure metaphor, which denotes that the economic (means of production) and social/class (relations of production) systems determine the nature of the political and state systems in all societies. The primary function of 'the superstructure is to assure the rulers' continued dominance and to keep the ruled in their place' (Baradat 1997:175).

A state, seen through the lenses of either liberal or radical theorisation, is, therefore, a well-defined and internationally recognised institutional entity, designed to serve the needs and demands of a specific population with a common heritage of nationhood. Herein lies the centrality of the concept of the nation-state. A nation-state, according to Robertson, 'describes a context in which the whole of a geographical area that is the homeland for people who identify themselves as a community because of shared culture, history, and probably language and ethnic character, is governed by one political system' (1993:332). While a state exists because it has a specific nation to provide for in terms of basic needs of survival including food, shelter, health, education, employment, security etc., a 'nation can exist even though it is not contained within a particular state or served by a given government' (Baradat 1997:45). The interconnectedness of a nation and a state may suggest, at least in theory, that there cannot be a nation without a state and vice-versa. This is one of the reasons why

the concept of a nation-state has occupied centre-stage in the study of international political economy. This is bound to be so, too, in the study of the regional political economy of Southern Africa. In practice, however, there can be nations without states, especially given the colonial imposition of the nation-state in Southern Africa. In their own different ways and to varying degrees, various paradigms that have driven international political economy as a specific discipline have given attention to the notion of the nation-state, as the next section will illuminate.

The Nation-State in International Political Economy: Theoretical Perspectives

Like many other fields of study, the international political economy has been a subject of heated theoretical debate concerning epistemological supremacy over the discipline. Before introducing the key theoretical strands in the study of international political economy, it is important to define the nature of this discipline. International political economy refers to:

the study of the interplay of economics and politics in the world arena. In the most general sense, the economy can be defined as the system of producing, distributing, and using wealth; politics is the set of institutions and rules by which social and economic interactions are governed (Frieden and Lake 1991:1).

This field of study has been shaped and moulded by three key paradigms, with mutually exclusive tenets aimed at influencing scholars to view international political and economic relations in different ways. These are liberalism, Marxism and realism.

Liberalism

Traceable to the works of Adam Smith, liberalism is a mode of thought that became the stock-in-trade of the modernisation paradigm which dominated the development debate during the 1950s and 1960s (Harrison 1995; Webster 1990). This theoretical construct, according to Frieden and Lake (1991), is based on three basic assumptions. First, liberals maintain that individuals are the primary actors within the political economy and, thus, the proper

unit of analysis. Secondly, borrowing from the rational choice approach, this school of thought also assumes that individuals are rational, utility-maximising actors. Rational action means that individuals make cost-benefit calculations across a wide range of possible options. Actors are utility maximisers, when, given a calculated range of benefits, they choose the option which yields the highest level of subjective satisfaction (Frieden and Lake 1991:6).

Thirdly, and more important, liberals have a strong faith in the supremacy of markets over states as rational allocators of scarce resources. On the basis of this belief, they argue vehemently for a *laissez faire* economy and for state minimalism (Streeten 1993). According to this theory, state intervention in the economy is undesirable, as it distorts the free play of market forces which are supposed to regulate the allocation of resources. States should only provide those social goods and services that markets could not offer. For instance, states should provide the infrastructural and legal framework for markets to operate efficiently. States 'must provide for the defence of the country, protect property rights, and prevent unfair collusion or concentration of power within the market' (Frieden and Lake 1991:7). In this way, liberals argue for the creation and sustenance of a market-driven state. Linked to this is the assumption by liberals that politics and economics are inherently independent from each other. As will become clear later in this essay, the current orthodoxy of economic adjustment in Southern Africa, driven by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, owes its parentage to liberal economic thought and represents a threat to the nation-state.

Marxism

Marxism originates from the classical works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Lenin. It comprises three major theoretical tenets. First, Marxists and neo-Marxists assume, unlike liberals and neo-liberals, that classes, not individuals, are the principal actors in the political economy and thus the key unit of analysis. The dominant social forces in a capitalist-oriented society are seen to be capital and labour, whose constant interaction is marked by incessant and protracted conflicts. Secondly, classes normally act

to maximise their own material benefits. So, as Frieden and Lake argue, 'just as liberals assume that individuals act rationally to maximise their utility, Marxists assume that each class acts to maximise the economic well-being of the class as a whole' (1991:8). Given these class divisions and conflicts, Marxists argue that the foundation of the capitalist economy is the 'exploitation of labour by capital' (Frieden and Lake 1991:8). Thirdly, Marxists and neo-Marxists argue the case for state intervention in the economy. But the form of state intervention preferred by Marxists is not the one that brings about state capitalism, but the one that brings about socialism and the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' (Lenin 1918:254). It is no wonder, therefore, that in the two countries in Southern Africa—Angola and Mozambique—where attempts were made to organise society along the ideology of scientific socialism, unbridled statism and one-party rule became the order of the day until fairly recently. Frieden and Lake conclude that

while Liberals perceive the political economy as inherently harmonious, Marxists believe conflict is endemic. Marxists adopt different assumptions and derive a very different understanding of the world. For Marxists, economics determines politics. The nature of politics and the fundamental cleavages within and between societies, in other words, are rooted in economics (1991:9).

Marxist and neo-Marxist interpretations of the political economy of Southern Africa remain the major countervailing force against the current neo-liberalism that aims to recast the form and content of the nation-state in the region.

Realism

For the realists, the nation-state is the dominant actor in the political economy and hence the critical unit of analysis. Contrary to Marxist theorists, realists believe that politics determines economics. For them, 'economic relations are to be understood in terms of competition for the distribution of wealth and power among states' (Walters and Blake 1992:11). Central to all actions of nation-states is the pursuit of power and security. Susan Strange emphasises that power has two dimensions: relational and structural. She

further argues that the four main sources of power are (a) control over security; (b) control over production; (c) control over credit and finance; (c) control over information, knowledge, beliefs and ideas (Strange 1988:26). For Kegler, the realist worldview is that states are the superordinate actors on the world stage. The purpose of statecraft is national survival in a hostile environment. No means is more important to that end than the acquisition of power. And no principle is more important than self-help... . State sovereignty, a cornerstone of international law, enshrines this perspective, giving heads of state freedom—and responsibility—to do whatever is necessary to advance the state's interests and survival (1995:4).

Concern with power, sovereignty and security has driven most realist writers to view states as critical actors within the international political economy. No wonder that Ray says:

For at least three hundred years, sovereign states have been the most important political organizations in the global system. They have claimed a monopoly on legal violence within their boundaries and freedom from interference by forces from outside their boundaries (1990:185).

The first assumption of realism, therefore, is that nation-states are central to our understanding of internal and external dynamics of political economy in all societies, Southern Africa included. Reynolds corroborates this point as follows:

The most common way of conceptualizing international systems is in terms of the supposedly significant units, the states. It is postulated that since state decision-makers are the source and target of most significant international actions, a system conceived as consisting of states as units and interactions among them will, if skilfully defined and analysed, assist in understanding the greater part of international occurrences (1980:197).

It is assumed that the international system is marked by anarchy, 'a condition under which nation-states are sovereign, the sole judge of their own behaviour, and subject to no higher authority. If no authority is higher than the nation-state, realists also believe that all actors are subordinate to the nation-state' (Frieden and Lake 1991:10). The second theoretical tenet of realism is that all actions of nation-states aim at maximising power and minimising

threats to their survival in an anarchic world. Frieden and Lake remind us that:

for Realists...each nation-state must always be prepared to defend itself to the best of its ability. It must always seek to maximize its power; failure to do so threatens the very existence of the nation-state and may make it vulnerable to others. Power is a relative concept. If one nation-state (...) expands its power over another, it can do so only at the expense of the second. Thus, for Realists, politics is a zero-sum game and by necessity conflictual. If one nation-state wins, another must lose (1991:10).

The third assumption of realism emanates from the concept of 'hegemonic stability', which postulates that stability within the anarchic world system can only be ensured through the recognised hegemony of one single power (Frieden and Lake 1991:11). Exercising its power in either a benign or malign fashion, the hegemony ensures the stability of the regional or global order, with a view to ensuring its security, first and foremost, and presumably that of the regional or global system. Deliberate efforts towards evolving hegemonic stability are evident in Southern Africa, since the political changes in South Africa which ushered in majority rule in 1994 (Oden *et al.* 1995).

The Nation-State in Southern Africa

Unlike its European counterpart, the nation-state in Southern Africa is a political entity constructed and imposed by external forces whose motives were less the quest for nation-building than self-serving economic and strategic interests. It was not driven by an industrial revolution, as it had been in Europe (Davidson 1992; Vale 1996). Three main colonial powers helped shape this process in Southern Africa, namely, Britain, Germany and Portugal. These European powers created mini-states, in the form of colonies, out of disparate nationalities, for purposes of administrative convenience and to minimise conflicts over the spoils of colonial expansion. Since the Berlin Conference, European powers decided to divide Africa into various colonial possessions, separated by boundaries, under the jurisdiction of specific colonial powers. As this served the economic and strategic interests of colonial forces

rather than those of the African peoples, it was tantamount to a zero-sum game wherein the colonised were generally the losers.

The process was driven more according to administrative convenience 'rather than pre-colonial social and political arrangements. Consequently, '... African peoples were thrown together with other ethnic groups with which they had few, if any, prior relationship' (Keller and Rothchild 1996:4). This made the task of state-making, nation-building and political integration after independence extremely difficult, if not well nigh impossible. Ohlson and Stedman argue persuasively that 'colonial patchwork borders produced states without nations, often encompassing multiple ethnic and language groups into different countries. The fact that borders have not corresponded to nations has contributed to the prevalence of internal conflict in the region' (1994:233). In the process, the colonial powers divided people that belonged to the same ethnic groups and mixed ethnic groups that had historically been at loggerheads. This is easy to fathom, because language, culture, religion, just to mention a few social bonds that tie nations together, were not considered necessary determinants, as colonialists 'set themselves to the work of inventing tribes for Africans to belong to' (Davidson 1992:11). Although in the minds of colonial and post-colonial state functionaries, Southern Africa was seen as comprising distinct nation-states with sacrosanct boundaries, the ordinary people disregarded the so-called borders as they struggled for survival. This is shown clearly in the all-pervasive migrant labour system and informal cross-border trade in the region. Undoubtedly, labour migrancy 'strengthened an instinctive understanding that the region belonged to all its people' (Vale 1996:6). Olukoshi and Laakso outline in detail what the outcomes of the arbitrary delineation of colonial boundaries and the facile process of nation-building during the post-independence era have been, as follows:

driven by an overwhelming economic logic, European colonialism resulted in the creation of nation-states which were largely multi-ethnic from the outset, with many ethnic groups finding themselves divided among the different jurisdictions which the principal powers of the colonial conquest (...) carved out for themselves during the scramble for territory on the continent....

At independence, most African governments set themselves the task of undertaking a vigorous process of nation-building with the aim of welding their multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious countries into 'one nation'.... Another key element of the nation-building project was the assumption that the diversity of ethnic identities was inherently negative and obstructive and that it was a requirement of successful nation-building that the different identities be eradicated, sub-merged under or subordinated to the identity of the group(s) that dominated state power (1996:12-3).

There is no gainsaying, therefore, that the nation-state in Southern Africa is a colonial invention with artificial attributes derived from the European historical model. This colonial invention was mediated by the coloniser over the colonised through conquest and brute force, as African kingdoms initially resisted colonial occupation. So it was that the colonialists used violent means to construct nation-states in Southern Africa; yet ironically, these turned out to be weak political entities, marked by social turmoil, economic stagnation or decline and political instability. As Vale aptly argues,

these states were weak. Poorly rooted in indigenous society, and resting on unstable socio-economic systems, they were unable, and not very willing, to rupture the region's integrated economy which provided a framework for their security, in what a generation of scholars described as 'neo-colonial' independence (1996:7).

Another important political ingredient in the evolution of the modern-day nation-state in Southern Africa was the role played by nationalism in the struggle for self-rule and in the nation-building project after independence. Nationalism refers to

the political belief that some group of people represents a natural community which should live under one political system, be independent of others and, often, has the right to demand an equal standing in the world order with others. Although sometimes a genuine and widespread belief, especially under conditions of foreign rule, it is equally often a tool used by political leaders to control their citizens (Robertson 1993:333-4).

Nationalism provided critical psychological ammunition for the liberation movements, as they strove to dislodge colonial rule. This was made possible by the fact that nationalism, according to Prah, became a 'populist idiom uniting all classes opposed to colonialism. For as long as colonial power needed to be superseded, populist nationalism has been able to unite classes and ethnicities sharing common colonial borders' (1997:9).

Nationalist movements were led by the African elite, themselves products of European education, ethos and cultural moorings, whose notion of an African nation-state derived from the European model. Although they glorified their anti-colonial struggle by constant reference to Africa's pre-colonial history of 'social harmony' and 'communalism', 'they never seriously doubted that an African nation-state ought to be like its modern European counterpart' (Chabal, 1994:123). It thus followed that after independence, the ruling African elite, which had spearheaded the liberation struggle, would not challenge the colonial boundaries. Although it played a progressive role to the extent that it challenged and effectively dislodged colonial rule, nationalism accepted colonial borders which had created mini-states with disarticulated economies, disjointed social organisation and moribund political systems.

During the 1960s liberation struggles, leaders uncritically accepted the nation-state model invented by colonialists along the European model, which had little historical and political specificity to the region. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) put its seal of approval to this arrangement by adopting the principle of *uti possidetis juris* which 'asserted that colonial boundaries inherited by individual states at independence would remain inviolable' (Keller and Rothschild 1996:5). The nation in Southern Africa does not comprise a homogenous population, but is a social organisation, articulated through class stratification, driven by the ownership of the means of production. The means of production (mainly land, livestock, mining, manufacturing, commerce) are owned by the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, while the workers and peasants form the poor social strata. Although the notion of the nation-state is still moulded on the European model, and territorial boundaries have been accepted and regarded as sacro-

sanct by the OAU, old and new challenges have always buffeted the nation-state and have resulted in the current apparent disintegration of this political entity.

Challenges to the Nation-State in Southern Africa

The old and new challenges facing the nation-state in Southern Africa are many and varied. First, the crisis of the modern nation-state project in the region emanates 'essentially from the construction of the project on the basis of European models rather than on the basis of Africa's own rich and varied history and experience' (Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996:9). Corroborating this point, Kwesi Prah reminds us that

the 'nation' or 'nation-state' or nation-building in Africa has not been successful as the leaders of independence or former colonial powers had envisaged. In one country after the other, fissiparous tendencies are ripping the politics apart (1997:9).

The major obstacle to the construction of a post-colonial nation-state in the region was, therefore, 'the national integration of the various ethnic, racial, religious, regional and cultural groups which formed the population of the country' (Chabal 1996:128). Secondly, the post-colonial nation-state project lacked a solid economic base. This was a general problem for the whole African continent. As the ruling elite lacked a sound economic base, it saw its capture of state power as a licence to accumulate as much wealth as possible for its own class interest, even at the expense of the nation-building project which has, thus far, remained an embarrassingly hollow rhetoric. This trend has seen political decay, economic stagnation and social strife in the region, from which no single country is immune. The tendency to use state power for accumulation

was associated with the weak material base of the new political leaders, who had been economically marginalised by discriminatory economic policies of the colonial regime. Even when they came to power, they had little experience of entrepreneurial activity and little or no capital. Invariably, they were obliged to explore the one leverage they had: control of state power to strengthen their material base (Ake 1996:6).

Thirdly, the problems of nation-statism were compounded by continued political repression, by authoritarianism of both civilian and military varieties, and by the lack of democratic culture and practice, as the political elite sought, through fair or foul means, to dominate the political marketplace for its own class interest. In this context, pride of place was given to coercion rather than consensus and legitimate authority, as the bullet reigned supreme over the ballot. Linked to this worrying tendency was the ascendancy of pork-barrel politics, as the ruling elite reckoned they had to buy rather than canvass for votes from the electorate in order to reproduce themselves (Herbst 1990).

Fourthly, the centripetal forces of globalisation and regionalism, which are features of the new post-Cold War era, are now pitted against the centrifugal forces of nationalism and the nation-state project in Southern Africa and other parts of the African continent. Globalisation and regionalism have effectively torn apart the erstwhile sacrosanct borders that shielded nation-states and have also shattered the long-held mythology of territorial integrity and national sovereignty. Great powers can now intervene with impunity in what would conventionally have been regarded as the domestic affairs of a nation-state in the region. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are currently the key policy-makers in a majority of the region's states. These two powerful international financial institutions have imposed what seems like a globally accepted orthodoxy of the supremacy of markets over states, and this neo-liberal doctrine is the driving force of the new globalisation (Tsie 1996).

Since the political changes in South Africa in 1994, the reformulated Southern African Development Community (SADC) has now assumed the role of a regional policeman to quell intra-state conflicts, as the cases of Lesotho and Swaziland have clearly illustrated (see Vale and Matlosa 1996; Matlosa 1998; Venter 1997). Given all the above challenges, which have effectively eroded the cultural, economic and political glues that were supposed to bind disparate elements of the nation-state project together, the sustenance and future of the nation-state in Southern Africa, as in the whole continent, is now 'being called directly into question'

(Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996:9). The severity of this crisis of the nation-state project is encapsulated by *Africa Confidential* in the following words:

there are signs everywhere that the era of the nation-state is fading.... The awkward marriage of the 'nation' in the sense of an ethnic coalition and the 'state' as the principal source of political authority is coming under pressure from above and below (cited in Olukoshi and Laakso 1996:8).

In the face of these challenges to the nation-state in Southern Africa, Du Pisani proposes that

nation-building is perhaps a project whose time has passed. Eclipsed by both global and regional developments, the current task faced by the region is one of building a sense of transnational community, emancipating civil society, protecting human rights and localising democracy (1996:29).

To this end, the nation-state has to adapt or die.

Contrary to Du Pisani's option of the development of a transnational community as one of the possible solutions to the crisis facing the nation-state in Southern Africa, Ali Mazrui has also made various proposals, including the recolonisation of weak states, either under the United Nations Trusteeship system or benevolent self-colonisation, whereby some regional hegemony take over control of these weak states (*CODESRIA Bulletin* 1995). Mazrui's proposal of recolonisation has provoked a heated debate on this subject. This proposal suggests an externally imposed order and is clearly devoid of the democratic principle that is supposed to be at the heart of all attempts towards solving the problems of the nation-state. Olukoshi and Laakso rightly caution us against such proposals and argue that:

those who are genuinely interested in addressing Africa's political future must premise themselves on options that are democratic and which do not tolerate the subjugation of one people by another in any form or under any guise. That, after all, has been the essence of all human struggles over the ages for a better, more just and egalitarian society (1996:37).

Mazrui's proposal is, therefore, insensitive to the democratic ideal, which is the concern of Du Pisani and Olukoshi and Laakso.

Conclusion

Unlike its European counterpart, the nation-state in Southern Africa has evolved from a political process that was externally imposed. It was invented, moulded and imposed by the colonialists, without regard to pre-colonial political arrangements in the region. The colonialists used coercion to create weak and fragile nation-states in Southern Africa. The post-colonial leaders only put on the boots of their erstwhile masters and failed to change the status quo. This confirms Ake's contention that 'although political independence brought some change to the composition of state managers, the character of the state remained much as it was during the colonial era' (1996:2). Not surprisingly, the nation-state was to be enmeshed in a deep-seated crisis, which currently threatens its very survival. There are conflicting ideas about the best options that could contribute to the political solution of the crisis of the nation-state. Of all the proposals, Mazrui's suggestion of the recolonisation of Africa is the most bizarre. Proposals by Du Pisani, Olukoshi and Laakso are worth exploring further. Du Pisani propounds the idea of a transnational community, and Olukoshi and Laakso come up with the idea of delinking citizenship from one's ancestral origin. For Olukoshi and Laakso, citizenship and citizenship rights must be linked to the place of residence and the site of labour. This idea presupposes free movement of labour across borders throughout the region, an idea that has been resisted by some states, including South Africa and Botswana. Although movement of labour across borders is being restrained by various factors, including electric fences, security checks and xenophobia, capital and commodities flow freely through liberalised trade regimes. This is the character of the current twin-process of globalisation and regionalisation: free movement of capital and restrained labour flows across national boundaries.

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