



*African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 8, Nos. 1&2, 2005, pp. 23–43  
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(ISSN 0850-7902)

## **Reinventing the African State: Issues and Challenges for Building a Developmental State**

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### **Abstract**

Academic discourse and development policy debates have grappled with the contentious issue of the state–market interactions in Africa’s development agenda and processes, particularly since the 1960s independence era. At the heart of this debate has been the contestation over the agency for development. The global wave of democratisation that swept through most parts of the developing world in the late 1980s and early 1990s revived this debate on the linkage between democracy, sustainable development, and state capacity in Africa (Leftwich 1996). The twenty-first century is witnessing a resurgence of confidence in a new type of activist state: democratic and developmental in character and content. The fundamental concern of this study is whether the exigencies of globalisation can be reconciled with democratisation and sustainable development. This provokes further questions such as: how can fragile democratic regimes improve their prospects for consolidation at a moment when the distributive impact of concurrent programmes of economic liberalisation and adjustment are highly contestable? Are the economic reforms prescribed by Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI) and bilateral donors compatible with democratisation and developmental processes? How can the state’s systematic loss of capacity to manage the economy be reconciled with demands for a more democratic polity? Finally, this paper examines the strategies for building the capacity of the African state as agent of development and partnership in the democratisation process.

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### Résumé

Le discours académique ainsi que les débats relatifs aux politiques de développement se sont attaqués à la délicate question des interactions entre l'état et le marché au niveau de l'agenda et des processus de développement africains, particulièrement depuis les années 60. La vague mondiale de démocratisation qui a soufflé sur une grande partie des pays en développement à la fin des années 80, début des années 90 a ravivé le débat sur les liens entre la démocratie, le développement durable et les capacités de l'état en Afrique. Le vingt-et-unième siècle a vu la résurgence d'une certaine confiance en un nouveau type d'état activiste, démocratique et promouvant le développement de par son caractère même. La question fondamentale que pose cette étude consiste à savoir si les exigences de la mondialisation sont compatibles avec la démocratisation et le développement. Cela soulève d'autres questions : comment est-ce que les régimes démocratiques fragiles peuvent améliorer leurs perspectives de consolidation à un moment où l'impact des programmes concurrents de libéralisation et d'ajustement économiques sont hautement contestables ? Les réformes économiques recommandées par les Institutions de Bretton Woods (IBW) et les bailleurs bilatéraux sont-elles compatibles avec les processus de démocratisation et de développement ? Comment est-ce que la diminution systématique des capacités de l'état peut-elle être compatible avec l'exigence d'un état plus démocratique ? Enfin, cet article examine les stratégies de renforcement des capacités de l'état africain en tant qu'agent de développement et de partenariat dans le cadre du processus de démocratisation.

### Introduction

Academic discourse and development policy debates have grappled with the contentious issue of the state-market interactions in Africa's development agenda and process, particularly since the 1960s independence era. At the heart of this debate has been the contestation over the agency of development: what is the key locomotive or engine of development? Two contrasting positions have emerged in this debate. One propounded mainly by the nationalist political elite, and couched in terms of economic nationalism, maintained that the state should play a central role in directing the development agenda. The far-reaching consequences of the triumph of the Russian revolution, the social degradation caused by the great depression of the 1930s and the political impact and outcomes of the two world wars led to the first serious pendulum shift towards a more activist and interventionist role for the state.

From the mid-1940s up to the mid-1970s, most states assumed greater functions and responsibilities in the provision of public services,

policy coordination and macro-economic management and involvement in sectors of the economy through state-owned enterprises. In the name of state-led development or state intervention, different models of state intervention emerged, such as the social-democratic state, the socialist state, the national democratic state and the benevolent authoritarian state. What is common among these states is that they privilege state-led over market-driven development. This strand of development thinking, thus, opted for a centralised development path, which has not really succeeded in Africa.

The other position, which has been driven mainly by foreign capital and industrialised nations, propounded a neo-liberal orthodoxy, giving as it were, pride of place to a market-based economic system in tune with economic liberalisation. By the end of the 1970s right up to the early 1990s, conservative parties in the UK and the USA led a systematic and sustained ideological and policy agenda to dismantle the capacity, scope and role of the state that developed in the post-Second World War period and urged a return to the 'free market' dogmatism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From the 1980s onwards, large-scale neo-liberal public sector reforms were introduced with the aim of systematically dismantling state capacity in favour of the market. Under slogans such as 'lean and mean state', 'less government', 'rolling back the frontiers of the state', a neo-liberal alliance of conservative governments, neo-liberal policy think tanks and the Bretton Woods institutions recommended structural adjustment reforms for African states (Olukoshi 1998).

The structural adjustment policy framework for economic reform in Africa was underpinned by the assumption that the state and state interventionism were the sources of economic distortions to which African economies were exposed after independence was won (Olukoshi 1996). During the first stage of market reform implementations, the wholesale abandonment of the state-led mode of development and the rolling back of the state, therefore, became the flip side of getting prices right (Lensink 1996). During this phase of the adjustment agenda, the African state became, as noted by Mkandawire (1998), one of the most vilified and demonised institutions on the continent. Conceptually and ideologically, the state was presented as the millstone that hampered the quest for development in Africa, obstructing the free functioning of markets, consuming a disproportionate share of investible resources, extending its reach beyond what was desirable or necessary, over-

centralising the development process, and stifling private initiative (Olukoshi 1996). Thus, liberalisation of the market and the promotion of private enterprise that were central to structural adjustment, came to be seen as being fundamentally incompatible with state interventionism. The African state became the objective of punitive actions, and various negative adjectives were used to describe it by different scholars such as 'failed', 'over-bloated', 'neo-patrimonial', 'prebendal', 'over-extended', and 'predatory' (Jackson and Rosberg 1982; Rothchild and Chazan 1988; Barkan 1998; Fatton 1991; Bayart 1993; Bratton and van de Walle 1997). Taming this state by cutting it down to size and preventing it from further intervening in the smooth functioning of the market was defined as the key intellectual and policy challenge facing Africa (Bates 1981; World Bank 1981, 1995).

The collapse of both the central planning model of the bureaucratic Soviet type as well as the retreat of the discredited neo-liberal perspective at the end of the twentieth century has marked a decisive return of confidence in state-led development. The twenty-first century is witnessing a resurgence of confidence in a new type of activist state: democratic and developmental in character and content. The new developmental state draws important lessons from the undesirable dependency fostered by the European welfare states, the undemocratic practices of the East Asian developmental states, and the failures of bureaucratic Soviet-style centralised planning. The centrality of the state in nation-building and socio-economic development is being reaffirmed, while at the same time asserting participatory democracy and a culture of human rights as key features of the new state. In a highly publicised Report in 1997 titled 'The State in a Changing World', the World Bank claimed that, contrary to all suggestions, it had never in fact (completely) discounted the role of the state in the economic process. That publication appeared on the face of things to signal an attempt at seriously revisiting the persistent question of the role of the state in the policy-making and developmental processes. While in earlier publications, the Bank had variously called for a minimalist state which was later gradually tasked with the sole responsibility of creating the requisite 'enabling environment' for the free functioning of the market, the flowering of the private sector, and the attraction of (foreign) investments, the 1997 report carried suggestions that the state might play a more pro-active role in their logical conclusion by proclaiming the need for an 'effective state'.

However, considering the reckless manner in which state capacity was eroded during the structural adjustment years, and the challenges posed for the modern state system by the processes and structures of globalisation, it is clear that the demands for democratisation and sustainable development cannot side-track the question of the re-legitimation of the state as an actor in the developmental process and the restoration and enhancement of its capacity.

The concept of a 'developmental state' raises serious issues about the relevance, capacity, and potential of the African state as an agent of development and partnership in the democratisation process. This in turn provokes some questions such as: how can the state's systematic loss of capacity to manage the economy be reconciled with demands for a more democratic polity? Can the exigencies of globalisation be reconciled with democratisation and sustainable development? How could the African state be reconstituted to serve as a bridge between democracy and development? What kind of partnership can exist between the state and civil society in the developmental project? These are some of the specific issues discussed in this paper.

### **The African State in Historical and Theoretical Perspective**

With rare exceptions, the African states, like states in most parts of the world, are conglomerations of groups, thrown together by the vagaries of colonial boundaries. There is certainly some truth to the claim that the European nation-state model has been imposed upon Africa during the past century, first through colonial rule and then through a process of decolonisation governed by a global order in which nation-state status is mandatory for becoming a recognised member of the international system (Basil 1992). As an 'entity' brought into being by the instrumentality of foreign military force, and administered for close to a century by a combination of coercion and co-option, the colonial state did not represent the sovereignty of the people but rather the abrogation of it. In essence, colonialism put the African state in place for the realisation of its imperial objectives. The colonial state in Africa was therefore a state lacking in natural legitimacy since it was an external imposition. Given its primary objectives of subjugation and exploitation of the people, the 'state' relied on force and violence, especially due to its monopoly of the instruments of coercion for the realisation of its imperialist objectives. The colonial state was governed by the principle of amorality since the people did not accept the state in terms

of the society's morality (Ekeh 1975). This created a duality in citizenship commitment and consciousness formation. The primordial identification became primary over 'national allegiance'.

The colonial authorities' attempts to bureaucratise and rationalise authority were uneven in both their implementation and their effects. For example, indirect rule facilitated the practice by indigenous agents of 'straddling' between administration and business, between 'official duties and lucrative activities'. The fusion of public and private spheres upon which these straddling practices were predicated has led to the privatisation of many state functions in post-colonial Africa. Indeed, an outright 'criminalisation' of the state has occurred: 'police preying on the civilian population they are supposed to protect, financial institutions falsifying the extent of their insolvency and the likes' (Bayart et al. 1999).

The attainment of independence, however did not fundamentally transform the structure of the African states. The political class that supplanted the colonial officers were committed to the protection of the 'colonial legacy'. The emerging nationalists whose political tutelage was under colonialism continued to operate with a 'bureaucracy trained and tested in the authoritarian habits and practises of the departed colonialists'. The African state thus retained its forceful and authoritarian character. The basic point about the post-colonial state in Africa is that it originated under colonial rule and that the perceptions and the attitudes which attended the latter subsist in various ways in the post-colonial period despite the structural transformations that have taken place since independence.

Instead of transforming the state and making it relevant to the satisfaction of the needs and interest of the people, the emergent post-colonial leaders in Africa were content with using the enormous authoritarian structures of the state to appropriate economic gains for themselves. The desperation that characterised the competition for the control of state offices resulted in violent struggles, recrimination, bitterness and the polarisation of civil society along ethnic lines. In this environment, politics was conceived as a zero-sum contest in which victors lacked magnanimity and losers were bereft of gallantry, whilst rulers relied on force and manipulation of the legislative instrument of the state to enfeeble and destroy opposition. To facilitate its regulatory and extractive roles, the post-colonial state centralised the production and distribution of national resources, and in the context of state capi-

talism, this encouraged the perception of the state as an instrument of accumulation and patron-client ties as the dominant mode of political relations. Thus, politics as a 'struggle' to gain access to 'the national cake' became a fierce battle.

Over time, as African economies deteriorated and state institutions lost legitimacy and a sense of purpose, the routines of state-society relations were disrupted. Economic deterioration increased state weakness (i.e., the inability of the state to regulate society and to implement public policies in an effective manner) and societal demands on the state. Though perceived as the key distributor of resources, the state lacked the capacity to satisfy public demands. Overstaffed, over-bureaucratized, and itself a major consumer of scarce revenues, the state found itself unable to implement its own developmental programmes, particularly in the hinterland (Olowu 1990). A gap between expectations and performance weakened connections between the state and society, causing the state to assume authoritarian powers, while in fact exerting less and less control over society. As the state failed to meet public expectations, its legitimacy was eroded and the public began to perceive it as an alien institution, 'suspended, as it were, in mid-air above society' (Rothchild and Chazan 1988: 34).

Political theorists have argued that neo-patrimonialism is a common feature of politics in the developing world. Robin Theobald, for example, argues that 'some of the new states are, properly speaking, not states at all; rather, they are virtually the private instruments of those powerful enough to rule' (Theobald 1982: 559). Christopher Clapham also maintains that 'neo-patrimonialism is the most salient type of authority in the Third World because it corresponds to the normal forms of social organisation in pre-colonial societies' (Clapham 1985).

In traditional African societies, chiefs or village heads were expected to guarantee the livelihood of the community, typically by entreating the spiritual powers to provide adequate rainfall and bountiful harvests. Leaders who persistently failed to satisfy community needs could be removed from office. Patrimonialism provides an accurate description of the political systems of small, isolated communities with rudimentary economies, including African chiefdoms in the pre-colonial era. In patrimonial political systems, an individual rules by dint of personal prestige and power; ordinary people are treated as an extension of the 'big man's household', with no rights or privileges other than those bestowed by the ruler. The personal interaction between the 'big man'

and his extended retinue defined African politics, from the highest reaches of the presidential palace to the humblest village assembly. Authority is entirely personalised, shaped by the ruler's preferences rather than any codified system of law. In return for the loyalty of his clients, the ruler provides security and distributes favours according to his will.

A similar sort of performance-based political compact was struck at the time of independence. African nationalist leaders staked a claim to political authority not only through a pledge to break the political shackles of foreign domination, but also with the promise to deliver the material advantages that ordinary people had observed but never enjoyed under colonial rule.

Max Weber distinguished patrimonial authority from rational-legal authority, in which the public sphere is carefully distinguished from the private sphere; written laws and bureaucratic institutions control the exercise of authority and protect individuals and their property from the whims of capricious leaders. Yet, it is clear that some nations in the developing world, particularly in Africa, still retain in modified form some of the characteristics of patrimonial rule. Thus, political scientists have found it useful to characterise as neo-patrimonialism those hybrid political systems in which the customs and patterns of patrimonialism co-exist with, and suffuse, rational-legal institutions (Theobald 1982: 548-549). Under neo-patrimonial regimes, the right to rule is ascribed to a person rather than to an office, despite the official existence of a written constitution. An individual dominates the state apparatus and stands above its laws. A relationship of loyalty and dependence pervades a formal political and administrative system. Officials occupy bureaucratic positions less to perform public service, their ostensible purpose, than to acquire wealth and status. Although state functionaries receive official salaries, they also enjoy access to various forms of illicit rents, bribes and petty corruption, which constitute an important entitlement of office.

The fact that the post-colonial states in Africa have been formally constituted on the model of the western state is not itself evidence of the degree of their institutionalisation. Above and beyond the public display of the attributes of the modern state – such as ministries or civil service – the reality of the exercise of power on the continent points to caution when it comes to assessing the degree to which such formal bodies do amount to a modern state based on the western model, that

is, one that relies on a significant distinction between the public and private spheres.

In the context of modern bureaucracy, appointments and advancement are supposed to be based on merit, where salaries are commensurate with responsibility and the existence of a bureaucratic career structure. However, the state in Africa has not been properly institutionalised, because it was not significantly emancipated from society. This has to do partly with historical factors linked to the specific development of the colonial state – a state both arbitrary and poorly bureaucratised – and partly with important cultural considerations, that is, the personalised nature of prestige and status in traditional African societies. The logic of state service in Africa is resolutely particularistic and personalised – far removed from the bureaucratic norms as they operate willy-nilly in most western societies. Thus, holders of state office, however lowly, are rarely ‘impartial’. Either they pursue their own ‘business interests’ – that is, the negotiation of their service for a fee, or else they provide the favour, which is expected, for clearly understood patrimonial reasons.

As a result of neo-patrimonialism, the majority of African political regimes were distinctly non-bureaucratic, despite the fact that they possessed a large state apparatus with all the outward trappings of a formal-legal order. African leaders rarely used bureaucratic formulas to construct authoritative institutions and seldom granted subsidiary spheres of influence to occupational interest groups within civil society. Rulers dominate their political systems to a much larger extent than is the case in bureaucratic polities. Legal niceties or systems of checks and balances did not restrain power. Rulers and their closest cronies were not bound by the dictates of the law, and in most cases, tried to emasculate or eliminate formal institutional checks on the executives. The independence of the legislative and the judiciary branches was severely limited because neo-patrimonial rulers are deeply suspicious of any form of institutional pluralism. In most cases, state revenues are stashed into personal accounts at home and abroad, to be spent as the ruler deems fit.

Moreover, like a traditional monarch, the neo-patrimonial leader often cultivated a ‘paternal’ image, directly responsible for people’s welfare and willing to entertain and redress individual grievances personally, without the intermediation of the state apparatus. As Schatzberg has argued, ‘the imagery and language of father and family are wide-

spread in Africa because they strike a resonant and deeply embedded cultural chord' (Schatzberg 1993: 451).

In political analysis, the state in Africa is no more than an artificially 'modern' political edifice. In the post-colonial context, political legitimacy derives from a creatively imprecise interaction between the 'ancestral' norms and the logic of the 'modern' state. Hence, it is a neo-patrimonial system. The edifice conforms to the western template, while the working derives from patrimonial dynamics. Within this system, public service remains personalised by way of clientelism and nepotism; on the other hand, access to the public institutions of the state is perceived as a means of personal enrichment.

In neo-patrimonial systems, appointments to position of 'public' responsibility, even at fairly junior levels, are made largely according to the wishes of the political leaders. The overriding criteria for selection are kinship, communal or blood-ties, and loyalty to the ruling elites rather than qualification or competence. Under the neo-patrimonial rule observed in Africa, the operation of the 'state apparatus' is largely informal, the rule of law is feebly enforced and the ability to implement public policy remains very limited. Also, the maintenance of 'state control' is substantial as the chief instrument of patrimonialism. In effect, the state is 'strong and powerless', 'overdeveloped in size and underdeveloped in functional terms' (Migdal 1998).

And if post-colonial states sought initially to consolidate and enlarge a distinct institutional domain of state operation, similar to the European model, they have not succeeded. The centralisation of authority has been systematically misconstrued as a deepening of state power, and efforts to extend state control and manufacture clearer boundaries between state and society have been consistently subverted by the 'capture' of the state by local social forces, and by the non-cooperation of local populations, notably through engagement in 'second economy' beyond state control (Olowu 1990). This prevents any hard cleavage opening up between state and society, replacing it with a porous, graduated continuum that stretches out and away from the political centre. In short, the state becomes less a bounded institution, and rather an 'absent presence' that disperses itself in varying directions into the component publics that make up its national constituency.

By the 1980s, with massive social dislocation brought by famine, civil war, systematic exclusion of groups from access to power, and ac-

celerating economic decline, a pessimistic tone increasingly marked analyses by Africans and African specialists. Withdrawal from the state became a central theme. Only by turning to the protection of kinship groups or similar institutions could persons cope with decline. The African state, in short, lost legitimacy.

The political and economic implications of this loss of legitimacy were readily apparent. The public reaction ran all the way from a 'culture of silence' in national affairs to open resistance and disengagement from activities in the formal economy (Adu 1989). A variety of informal economic activities (hoarding, currency exchanging, smuggling, etc.) spread and took place outside of state control, indicating a decline in the state's capacity to regulate social groups.

#### **Globalisation and State Capacity in Africa**

The crisis of legitimacy of African states was further exacerbated by the collapse of supposedly monolithic Eastern European regimes, the demonstration effect of which underscored the fragility of African governments. The end of the Cold War entailed the rapid collapse of external supports for many authoritarian regimes, thereby greatly weakening them, and making them vulnerable to attacks from 'popular forces'. The end of the Cold War significantly reduced the relevance of the tyrants and decadent political rulers of the Southern hemisphere to their erstwhile patrons. Since alliances with developing nations could no longer be based on Cold War ideologies and interests, 'democracy' became the basis for forging new relationships in the post-Cold War order. As the struggle for democracy got underway in a particular region, nearby authoritarian states found the costs of 'isolation' too great a price to pay since the Great Powers no longer considered it necessary to invest in the political 'stability' of bankrupt autocratic regimes in Africa. Thus, the end of the Cold War resulted in the withdrawal of support for African autocratic regimes, exposing their weaknesses to dissident groups. This led to the fall of dictators like Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, Said Barre of Somalia, Mobutu Sese-Seko of Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) and Samuel Doe of Liberia (Akinrinade 1998).

Autocratic regimes, thenceforth, could no longer explain away internal struggles for reforms as Soviet or Western-sponsored 'subversion' (Akinrinade 1998: 75). Increasingly, progress towards democratisation was set as a condition for economic assistance, giving birth to the curi-

ous marriage of the economic conditionality of structural adjustment with political conditionality of good governance (ibid).

The simultaneous occurrence of globalisation and political liberalisation has raised a number of questions among policy makers and researchers. Fundamental among these concerns is whether the exigencies of globalisation can be reconciled with the process of economic liberalisation and democratisation. How can fragile democratic regimes improve their prospects for consolidation at a moment when the distributive impact of the concurrent programme of economic liberalisation and adjustment may be highly contested? More relevant to this study is how economic reforms prescribed by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI) and bilateral donors are compatible with the democratisation process. Globalisation, by eroding national sovereignty, undermines a central tenet of liberal democracy, for liberal democracy was premised on the sovereignty of nation-states and assumed that the state has control over its own fate, subject only to compromises it must willingly make (Held 1995:141).

In the current wave of massive movements of capital to the emerging markets, Africa remains marginalised. Growing empirical evidences suggest that the segmentation in the global market is such that certain regions may not benefit from capital movements, regardless of the improvement in the 'fundamentals'. In this case, sub-Saharan Africa is invariably cited. For example, in 1995, of the total US \$112 billion lent to the developing countries, only \$5 billion went to Africa (Joseph 1999: 141). The policies that are touted as preparing Africa for a much more rewarding integration into the world system come in the form of stabilisation and Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). A major question raised in most debates is whether SAPs can be sustained under conditions of democratic transition and consolidation.

African analysts see the relationship between structural adjustment programmes and democratisation as inherently contradictory, or at least, problematic.<sup>1</sup> The assumption of this school is that economic policy must address a much larger range of fundamental issues than merely the allocation of resources. However, by side-stepping other important issues involved in democratisation like better economic management, greater equity, respects of human rights, and national sovereignty, SAP may undermine democracy, which has perforce to address these issues. It is also argued that SAPs as currently constructed threaten nation building and democratisation by exacerbating social conflict, weaken-

ing the capacity of the state to respond in a political way to the many demands on it, and riding roughshod over public opinion without due respect for democratic process (Joseph 1999: 141). As Bjorn Beckman argued, 'the political crisis of the African state is also the crisis of SAP' (Beckman 1992: 23). In some cases, it was the intense austerity demanded of populations by the structural adjustment programmes that made regime de-legitimisation and crises inevitable.

The political consequences of globalisation, as far as nation-states are concerned, can be considered from two perspectives. First, are those who argue that globalisation has led to the erosion of the sovereignty of the state (see Kenichi 1992). According to this school of thought, the power, authority and influence of the state are all on the decline as the process of globalisation advances. This suggests that the state is effectively in 'retreat' as a result of the increasing internationalisation of activities formerly performed by the state within their domestic national jurisdiction. The growing autonomy of global capital market means states are no longer able to control the parameters within which they could chart or map their economic fortunes. Second, there are those who insist that globalisation, rather than resulting in the weakening or diminishing of the sovereignty of the state, has only brought about changes in the way states function (see Grugel 2002). To this school of thought, the fundamental role of the state has not changed but rather the environment in which states function, collaborate and interact. Even with globalisation, the sovereignty of the state, according to this viewpoint, remains intact. The fundamental power and authority of the state have not changed; instead, globalisation has only altered the way nation-states function just as the changing role of the state itself has influenced the process of globalisation.

However, as global actors invest and expand their activities, especially related to industrial, agricultural, mining, forest exploitation and fishing, the regulatory capacity of public administration in African countries, which is already limited in many respects, is becoming overstretched. The state is getting caught in the middle of its need to speed development through industrialisation, agricultural modernisation, exploitation of natural resources, etc., and the pressure of local and global environmentalist groups. Global forces in this respect, rather than putting too much pressure on governments to do what is beyond their capacity, should first and foremost concentrate on strengthening the capacity of these governments in relevant aspects. Most African governments are

finding themselves in a situation of 'fait accompli' when it comes to making certain policies and decisions. International agencies such as the World Bank, IMF, and the United Nations World Trade Organisation take decisions that are binding on countries. The impact of globalisation's aggression on the state in Africa was enormous. First, governments, by the 1980s had lost their ability even to protect national interests against further encroachments on their sovereignty. Second, the state bore the hallmarks of a predatory one. That is, the pillars of the state were expropriation, extortion, the inflation of taxes, and corruption. And, of course, the predatory state was obviously inconsistent with economic development because it discouraged productivity and led inexorably to the misallocation of resources, culminating generally in its collapse as a rogue state. The collapsed state was not one that failed to do the right things, but one that failed to do much of anything effectively - even maintaining repressive order. Three broad and overlapping pathologies of state collapse could easily be identified: (a) States that lost (or failed to establish) legitimacy in the eyes of most of the population, and were unable to exercise that authority like Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia; (b) States that were run into the ground by leaders and officials who were corrupt, negligent, and incompetent, like Cameroon, Nigeria, Sudan, and Congo; (c) States that were fragmented by civil war and in which no party was capable of re-establishing central authority, like Liberia, Somalia, and Sierra-Leone.

#### **Building a Developmental State: Issues and Challenges**

In the 1980s, the orthodoxy admonished 'the rolling back' of the state giving free rein to supposedly 'free market forces and civil society'. The state was to be cut off almost completely from the economy and all its facets were to be 'streamlined and disciplined' to make it functional. However, although there was a substantial restructuring of state institutions, this did not necessarily translate into appreciable growth. Indeed, some of the adverse consequences of that 'restructuring' included diminished access to key social services such as education, and health (which are central to human development). The orthodoxy on 'rolling back the state' came under challenge as the 1990s progressed, leading to a major revision of the state's role by none other than the World Bank itself, which candidly acknowledged:

As so often happens with such radical shifts in perspectives, countries sometimes tended to overshoot the mark. Efforts to re-balance government spending and borrowing were un-coordinated, and good was often cut as the bad. To meet their interest rate obligations, countries in debt squeezed critically important programmes in education, health and infrastructure as - or more than - they cut low-priority programmes, bloated civil service and money-losing enterprises. Reductions came primarily in capital budgets and, in Africa, in operating and maintenance outlay, further reducing the efficiency of investment. The result, seen most starkly in Africa, was neglect of the state's vital functions, threatening social welfare and eroding the function of market development (World Bank 1997b).

This view is largely influenced by the success of the state's role in the 'miracle' economies of East Asia where the rules and institutions allow markets to flourish, while people's lives substantially improve. There has therefore been a paradigm shift regarding the state's role in sustainable development; it is now being recognised that development without an effective state is almost impossible.

A major problem facing the consolidation of democracy in Africa is the translation of the state apparatus from one that served an 'oppressive state' to that of developmental project. This is not a question of 'dismantling the neo-colonial state' as suggested by some analyses, but involves the construction of efficient state institutions that will have the capacity to implement developmental goals and forge a cordial relationship with the private sector in the process of economic growth.<sup>2</sup> In essence, what Africa needs has been aptly described as a 'developmental state'.<sup>3</sup> A developmental state is that which is essentially democratic in orientation and sets as its primary goal the task of development. Such a state will facilitate rapid process of capital accumulation and industrialisation, while not compromising the goal of social welfare for the people (Adejumobi 2000).

As the issues facing the world community become more complex, the African state by its nature, its place and the condition of the global environment within which it exists, is characteristically enmeshed in a far more serious, challenging and sometimes impossible process of charting an interest-defining and interest-promoting course on the global stage. Although the African state, like its counterparts in the rest of the world, is preoccupied with contemporary issues such as security, health care delivery and HIV/AIDS, it is at the same time focussed on a more demanding task of economic development, state building, nation build-

ing and democratisation. The burden imposed by these problems as well as the prevailing internal socio-economic and political decay as recently demonstrated in Darfur in Sudan, the Niger Delta, Sierra Leone and Liberia, to mention just a few, pre-empts any afro-optimism regarding the state of affairs and the prospect for immediate socio-economic and political development on the continent. However, there has also been a shift in scholarly debates on the study of problems facing the continent. The focus is more and more on internal deficiencies within the African state such as the failure of leadership and the question of good governance; this is contrary to earlier studies attributing the undeniable African problems to both colonial and neo-colonial legacies.

The question of state building revolves around the effectiveness of the state and its ability to discharge its responsibility to its citizenry. And democratisation concerns the process of institutional governance which facilitates the effective allocation of resources within a particular geo-political entity and socio-economic development. All these take place within an environment characterised by globalisation which focuses on the ability of the African states to engage in and the extent to which it influences or is influenced within the global infrastructure. In its totality, the impact of the global system and the direct participation of Africa in global transformation remain important factors in determining the capability of the African state in a world in which its underdevelopment is a by-product of its incorporation into the metropolitan economy in the first place.

The current wave of democratisation faces a tremendous challenge because of the direct connection between the process and the degree of legitimate authority within the state. In order for the state to successfully develop the right conditions within which to sustain democracy, it must be perceived by the population as the protector of their interests and in order for the state to sustain the process it must also establish a level of trust between itself and the people. This dilemma is compounded by global transformation which imposes additional stress on the legitimate authority of the state. The effective participation in the global environment promotes sustainable growth, which is impossible to attain because of the nature of the African states.

The African state is limited in its ability to compete. The African state is not soft or weak nor has it collapsed, but it is a state in the process of being. It is in the process of re-inventing itself but is compromised by the changing nature of the global system and the speed of the

change. Many Africanists contend that the current spate of global transformation is nothing but a re-colonisation process that has not only disempowered the state, but facilitates the sustenance of the status quo (Ake 1996). The question of nationhood has not been about how to define 'nation' per se but how to effectively utilise the state to recreate or redefine itself as a representative of all.

For the African state, the pre-colonial state was terminated by the colonial state, which represented a disconnection between the people that it dominated and had no interest in ever protecting them, except when its lucrative economic infrastructure was in danger. The succeeding post-colonial state lacks a history and has no connection to the pre-colonial state, except some values dynamic enough to resist the years of colonial domination. The post-colonial state is therefore in flux, in a process of integrating a non-native value system and infrastructure, in an un-comprehensive domestic environment. Those institutions that have survived colonial domination exist in contradiction to newly adopted European values. The level of confusion is enormous and undermines the successful assertion of the state structure because of the lack of trust and the disconnection inherited from the colonial experience. For example, the extended family system remains a critical support for the individual within an African societal setting but in the context of modern Africa, it is inherently injurious to the survival of the individual, and the need to eliminate this support system creates problems in the attempt to build a vibrant and united community. Another example can be found in the redundant role of the traditional institutions and values in modern Africa. For hundreds of years, these institutions and values provided legitimacy for the state and the spiritual identity for the relation between the governed and the governor; but today, they may be irrelevant and in time of crisis are unable to sustain the people in their search for answers to the challenges of the modern state within which they exist.

Therefore, building democratic institutions helps to ensure that the priorities of diverse social groups and institutions are considered in the formulation of development strategies. Democratisation in this case also means building a democratic state, and doing so means institutional change (the form of the state), representative change (who has influence over policies and to whom is the state responsible) and functional transformation (what the state does or the range of state responsibilities) (Grugel 2002: 70). It is obvious that no state is fully demo-

cratic but the process of democratisation requires a transformation of the visible structures of the state, and this same process can be hindered by the difficulties of institutional reforms, the prevalence of non-democratic cultures, and elite opposition. The abuse of power by transition elites and corruption within the society can limit democratisation. Democratic deficits can also be caused by ethnic differences or nationality problems, diminished sovereignty, poor state capacity, and authoritarian legacies. Many African states which have also made the transition from military dictatorship to democracy suffer from the residues of the military culture in terms of policy initiatives, practices and decision making process (Ojo 1999). In Nigeria for example, not only has the military chaperoned the new democratic experiment but many of the military leaders also made the transition as the new democratic elite (Ojo 2001). As Grugel rightly put it, democratisation involves a transformation in the way the state takes and implement decisions but it is not a complete break with the past and the drive to reform the state is frequently blocked by interests embedded within it. And the way the state behaves after transition is dependent at least as much on the weight of the past as it is on the imperative for change (Grugel 2002: 85).

Furthermore, the regulatory capacity of a developmental state, including the capacity to discipline the market to the requirements of long-term development, will need to be sharpened. Of particular relevance here is the capacity not only to generate and manage growth but also to distribute its benefits in a manner that is consistent with the goals of nation-building, a stable foundation for continued accumulation and the aspirations of the populace for improved social livelihood standards. Such capacity will similarly need to be extended to the management of periods of economic crisis and decline. Attention will also need to be paid more closely to the revitalisation of education both at the primary and tertiary levels in order to raise the levels of literacy and renew the corps of technically competent personnel required for managing the state and the economy. Finally, a new dynamism will have to be infused into the interventions of the state in the economy, with officials taking more seriously the questions of if, when, where, how, for how long and at what level they should intervene in the markets and the reciprocal rules that should govern relations between government and business. This latter point is an extremely important one which is broadly relevant for all states but given the differences in the levels of development and needs of African countries, it would be foolhardy to

attempt to devise and impose a one-size-fits-all model of state intervention in the economy.

### Conclusion

In the light of the analysis in this paper, my argument is that much as globalisation may be inevitable, its consequences for the African states are devastating. It is therefore, my contention that there is the need for an appropriate response to emerge from Africa with a view to understanding the dynamics that will hopefully help to evolve measures that will reduce the devastating effects of globalisation.

One can assume that since the African state is in a process of finding a common denominator through which it can reinvent itself, it has in no way reached a catastrophic level of failure but rather is actively trying to contend with the changing socio-political and economic changes of the global system. Under this scenario, there is definitely hope for Africa. Thus, we pose the question: what is to be done? Do Africans require a response informed by their own historical development? My belief is that for Africa to get out of this entrapment, it needs to de-link its dependency on the western powers and its system of independent states needs to be reconstituted. Given the foregoing, what are the alternatives left for the states in Africa in view of the rampaging menace of globalisation and the seeming helplessness (due to debt burden) of the states and the citizenry? In other words, what are the ways out? Even though these questions on the surface may appear unanswerable, it is essential for Africa's very survival to be emancipated from the current state of helplessness. Clues have been given as to what Africa and her people must do to 'counter the centrifugal forces of globalisation' and emancipate themselves from its manacled claws.

One possible way out according to Tandon (1998) is the subordination of external relations to the logic of internal development. Through this, African revolutionary and activist classes (could be) actively engaged in building alternative (new) structures of power for organising production based on new values of humanity and care for the environment. According to this logic, 'developing countries should retain the idea of an activist state in reacting to the effects of globalization' (Ohiorhenuan 1998: 14). That is, African citizens must cease to be mere 'onlookers' – who, according to Frantz Fanon (1961), are either cowards or traitors – on issues affecting their economic, political and socio-cultural well-being. Instead, they must sever the apron-strings of

domination by the developed world by categorically and practically resisting the inequality inherent in a globalised world. Thus, according to Ake (1996: 122-123) 'the people of Africa will have to empower themselves to repossess their own development'. This, could, in addition to other mechanisms, be done by rebuilding their national images, by fighting corruption and, by insisting on their own cultural preferences, and the terms of membership in the global village. This will only be possible through a sincere, committed sociological, cultural, economic and political realignment that is truly African in nature, and intent.

Finally, the developmental state in Africa can strengthen the local community-based system of production and marketing. This will enable the state to control local resources away from the hands of globalising international corporations. Economic policy, with regard to distribution in particular, should not be dictated by economic globalisation but subject to political decisions at home. That is, the state should maintain its ability to protect national interests against further encroachments on its sovereignty implied in globalisation's aggression. Without these, it will be difficult, if not totally impossible, for Africa and Africans to talk about political and economic integration, improvement and, above all, emancipative development in the twenty-first century.

#### Notes

1. See Olayode, K. O., 2004, 'Civil Society and Democratisation in Africa: The Nigerian Experience', Unpublished Ph.D Thesis: University of Cambridge, United Kingdom); Agbaje, A., 1992, 'Adjustment, State and Market in Nigeria: The paradoxes of Orthodoxy', *African Specimen*, 27 (2).
5. Held, D. A., McGrew, D., Goldblatt and J. Perraton, 1999, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*.
2. For example, Sola Akinrinade, 'The Re-democratisation Process in Africa: plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose?', argued for the 'dismantling of the neo-colonial state'. See Akinrinade and Sesay (1998); also, Julius Ihonvbere, 'The Crisis of Democratisation in Sub-Saharan Africa', Public lecture delivered under the auspices of the Triangle Association of African Students, North Carolina, USA, 7 April, 1995, argued for the 'dissolution of the repressive state in Africa'.
3. For further exposition of this concept, see Mkandawire, T., 'Thinking about Developmental States in Africa', Paper presented to the United Nations University and African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) Conference on Institutions and Development in Africa, Tokyo, Japan, 1998.

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