



ISSN: 0975-833X

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE INTRIGUES OF STATE AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 6th July, 2011
Received in revised form
9th August, 2011
Accepted 19th September, 2011
Published online 30th October, 2011

Key words:

The State, Government,
Liberalist Theory,
Marxism,
State and Government,
African States,
Democracy,
Developing Countries.

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ABSTRACT

The state is the epicentre of politics. It is the stage upon which the “game” of politics is played. The state shapes and controls and where it does not shape or control, it regulates, supervises, authorizes or proscribes political action and behaviour. Thus, politics is understood as the study of the state. The concept of state has been variously defined and from the various definitions, particular traits are evident: the state has several distinct features that distinguish it from all other institutions in society; the state is sovereign; the state has a significant feature of legitimacy; and the state is territorially-defined. Similarly, numerous theories have been propounded in an attempt to understand the origin, nature, power, organization, development and impact of the state. In a nutshell, these theories underline the role of state in four major ways: the state exists to regulate the various conflicting groups that exist in society, in pursuit of supremacy and leverage over others: the state exists to serve the economic interests of the dominant class in society; the state has the role of perpetuating the common good within the society; and lastly the state, through its many institutions, regulates relations between itself; its citizens and other internal as well as external actors, for its own self-preservation. This paper therefore critically examines the theories of the state, forms of state and government, the state in Africa, the state and civil society, and examines the various challenges facing the state in the developing world. The authors argue that the nature of the African state is underpinned by its colonial roots and that corruption, ethnicity and a bloated, ineffective bureaucracy are some of the outstanding characteristics of the African

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INTRODUCTION

The state has been used to refer to bewildering range of things; a collection of institutions, a territorial unit a philosophical idea and an instrument of coercion. The state shapes and controls and where it does not shape or control, it regulates, supervises, authorizes or proscribes political action and behaviour. Thus, politics is understood as the study of the state. It is therefore arguable that to fully comprehend the state, one must carefully study and understand the political forces that shape behaviour and action within it. This is because, as Heywood (2002: 101) has noted, the state ultimately has authority over otherwise personal and private aspects of life such as marriage, divorce, abortion, religious worship, etc. The capability or power of the state differs from one state to another and the nature of state power is thus central to political analysis. In political analysis, the understanding of different forms of states and their competing characteristics is important because it helps us to unravel and compare a wide range of issues and contexts. This paper undertakes a critical examination of the state in the developing world, drawing heavily from examples in Africa.

Conceptualization of the State

The concept of state has been variously defined. Four different definitions or conceptualizations stand out. The first one is the

legal definition of the state which holds that “the state is a territorially bound sovereign entity” (Danzinger, 2005: 110). According to this view, the state is a legal entity that has the following characteristics: a defined territory, a population, a recognized government, sovereignty, and the monopoly over the use of force. This definition of the state gives it a legal character within the international community of states in such a way that the state has rights and obligations under international law. The state is thus a legal person. Under international law, the principle of state sovereignty holds that each state has complete authority and is the ultimate source of law within its own boundaries. The doctrine of territorial integrity is premised on the idea that a state has the right to resist and reject any aggression, invasion or intervention within its territorial boundaries (Danzinger, 2005: 111). To be legally recognized among the international community of states, a state must have a recognized government. In other words, a particular state’s government must be recognized by other governments. Recognition is a political act, because a state may choose to or not to recognize another state purely based on political reasons. A state must also have a definite population; a group of people who identify themselves as citizens of a particular territory, either by birth or naturalization. Finally, under this legal definition, the state is the only entity that has the legitimacy to use force. In other

words, the state can lawfully wage war. From this definition, a state can therefore be understood to mean the set of organizational units and people that performs the political functions for a national territorial entity.

The state is also defined through the idealist perspective. This definition of the state is traced to Friedrich Hegel. Hegel identified three levels of social existence: the family, civil society and the state. Within the family, people set aside their interests for the good of the family (he calls this "particular altruism"). Within the civil society, people place their interests above those of the rest of the society. To Hegel, the state is an ethical community underpinned by mutual sympathy (which he calls "universal altruism"). In other words, the state is an institution that exists to perpetuate the common good of all its subjects (Hegel, Quoted in Heywood, 2002: 86). The functionalist definition of the state focuses on the role of the state and its purpose in society. It sees the state as that set of institutions that uphold order and deliver social responsibility within a society. The state has also been defined through the organizational approach. This approach sees the state as comprising those institutions that are recognizably "public" in that they are responsible for the collective organization of social existence and are funded at the public's expense. It further holds that the state comprises the various institutions of government, that is the bureaucracy or civil service, the military, police, courts, social security system, and all the other institutions and organizations that are public and are charged with performing public functions. The organizational perspective of the state thus places a premium on the organizational aspects of the state as opposed to the functional aspects. This definition presupposes that it is possible to expand or contract the responsibilities of the state and to enlarge or diminish its institutional machinery.

The functional definition of the state focuses on the role of the state in society, that is to say, the purpose for which the state exists. It stresses that the state exists to maintain social order. It defines the state as a set of institutions that uphold order and deliver stability to society. It is that set of institutions within a defined territorial space that are charged with the function of ensuring stability and the welfare of citizens. According to Neo-Marxist theorists, the state is seen as a mechanism through which class conflict is ameliorated to ensure the long term survival of the capitalist system. Thus, to the Marxists, the capitalist state exists to serve the narrow economic interests of the minority ruling class. Each of these definitions has drawn criticism from scholars. For instance, the legal definition of the state has been faulted for being tailored along international law, which in itself has been criticized on a number of grounds. For instance, international law is hardly enforceable in the same way as municipal law. Secondly, not all states can be equal from a practical perspective. The fact that the legal definition equates a state, say Benin, with another state, say France, is impractical in the sense that even if both are sovereign in law, they are both worlds apart in economic, military, social and other respects. The idealist definition of the state has been criticized for being utopian. This is because the idealist perspective of the state as an ethical community presupposes that the state should be revered. It is not practical to achieve universal altruism that this definition of the state underpins. Secondly, the definition fails to distinguish between institutions that are part of the

state and those that are non-state, such as the civil society. On its part, the functionalist approach is criticized because it tends to associate any institution that maintains order, such as the family, trade unions, the church, the privately-owned mass media, and private institutions with the state itself. Functionalists are also faulted for overemphasizing the functional roles of the state and ignoring its other important aspects such as organizational and legal aspects. Those who criticize the organizational perspective of the state point out that it does not clearly differentiate the concept state from the concept government. This is because the focus on the organizational dynamics of the state inevitably blurs the line between the state and how it is organized, and the structure and roles of governmental institutions within the state. From the above definitions, it is arguable that the state is a political association that establishes sovereign jurisdiction within defined territorial borders and exercises authority through a set of permanent institutions that are public, i.e. responsible for the collective organization of communal life and are funded at the public's expense. Weber (1948) defined the state by its monopoly of the means of legitimate violence, while Thomas Hobbes defined the state as a Leviathan, or a gigantic monster that totally controls all affairs of society (Hobbes, 1996). The ideas of Weber and Hobbes will be discussed in detail in the section on theories of the state. We can also deduce that the state has several distinct features that distinguish it from all other institutions in society. These are, first and foremost, the state and its institutions are public, meaning that they exist and work for the collective good as opposed to private institutions whose purpose and existence is to serve private interests. Another important feature of the state is that it is sovereign. In law, it exercises absolute and unrestricted power. For this reason, the state stands above all other groups and associations in society. The state also has the significant feature of legitimacy. State decisions are binding because it is claimed they are made in the public interest. However, the extent to which this characteristic is true depends on the type of the state one is referring to. According to Weber (ibid.), the state has a monopoly over the use of legitimate violence. This is to say that the state is the only institution in society that can legally wage war, or use force legitimately within or beyond its borders. Lastly, the state is territorially-defined. Each state has a defined territory, and exercises jurisdiction to all those who live within its borders. It has been argued that the modern state (as defined above) emerged in 15th and 16th century Europe when systems of centralized rule succeeded in subordinating all other institutions and groups, spiritual and temporal (Heywood, 2002: 87).

Contesting theories of the State

From a theoretical perspective, the state is a contested concept. Scholars have presented a variety of theories which seek to understand the origin and nature of the state, its power, organization, development and impact on society. To understand the state, one must examine the various theories that have been advanced to explain, describe and predict about it. Thus, we here-under examine a number of the leading contending theories of the state.

Liberal Theories

The Pluralist or Liberalist Theory is associated with Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean Rousseau, Robert Dahl, Charles

Lindblom and J. K. Galbraith. Classical Liberalism is identified with social contract theorists notably Hobbes and Rousseau, while Modern Liberalism (Pluralism) is associated with Dahl, Lindblom and Galbraith. Classical liberalists are also referred to as social contract theorists. Classical Liberalism is identified as the forerunner of Pluralist Theory. Social contract theorists hold that the state is a product of a voluntary agreement or social contract made by individuals who recognized that only the establishment of a sovereign power could safeguard them from the insecurity, disorder and brutality of the state of nature, described by Hobbes as a society devoid of political authority and of formal checks on the individual. In such a state of nature, life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Social contract theorists further hold that without a state, individuals abuse, exploit and enslave one another, while with a state, order and civilized existence are guaranteed and liberty is protected.

The basic tenet of Liberal Theory is that there are various groups and individuals competing for dominance in society. The state is a neutral arbiter amongst them. To the liberalists, the state plays the role of an umpire or referee who is capable of protecting each individual from encroachment by other individuals. In general, liberal theorists see the state as an impartial arbiter among other institutions in society - both state and non-state. Liberal pluralist theories of the state generally treat the state as a neutral entity or arbiter of change in the political economy of society. In its role as umpire, the state thus impartially presides over disputes amongst societal groups or institutional bodies within society. The *raison d'être* of the state's actions in this regard have one and only one, primary purpose - promoting the common good of society at large. One example often used by pluralists to bolster the argument of the state as a fair-minded arbiter of change interested in the well being of society at large relates to actions designed to deal with what the state perceives as 'market failures.' State intervention in the 'free market' is often premised on the belief that markets by their very nature, have a limited capacity to perform certain functions or resolve certain problems thereby necessitating state intervention. Some of the problems often listed in this regard relate to public goods and free riders, individual incompetence, externalities and spill over (Lindblom, 1977).

The argument relating to public goods and free riders essentially claims that certain goods, once provided, invariably benefit all members of society. Under conditions of this genre, individuals are to act as free riders - in other words, derive benefits from services or goods for which they have not paid. In this case, the state deems it necessary to intervene through the imposition of taxes in order to pay for such goods. Goods and/or services that fall under this category include, but are not limited to education, police protection, and national defence. The theory also contends that state actions seek, in some instances, to satisfy the desires or wishes of the members of society or the citizenry. In fact, according to the citizen-responsive model of the state, actions on the part of the state are primarily designed to respond to the articulated demands of the citizenry comprised of various groups. This is particularly so in liberal democratic societies, although even in quasi democratic states, like many in the developing countries, the state does engage in actions that aim to satisfy categories of its population; for instance installing street lighting within a

poor residential area, upgrading a slum, or introducing highway police patrols to contain increased highway robberies. These examples can be witnessed in Guatemala, Uganda, Benin, among other developing states. Pluralist theories of the state are often constructed around assumptions such as the presence of an educated, informed and politically active citizenry, freedom of speech and expression, interest groups, and a transparent public policy making process, amongst others that constitute the defining characteristics of advanced democracies. Under the assumed conditions, pluralists contend that individuals either through the groups in which they hold membership or on their own can, and actually do, influence the policy-making process. In other words, the citizenry is capable of altering the behaviour of public officials and ultimately public policy outcomes. Public policies cannot therefore be said to reflect the preference of policy makers or public officials alone. Rather, such policy, according to pluralists, tends to mirror the wishes and predilections of all members of society or the citizenry at large. This is true of most western democratic states including The United States, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, among others. The main criticism of liberal pluralist theories of the state is that they are not universal. In other words, they cannot fully be applied in an explanation of majority of developing countries, or in an effort to understand totalitarian regimes. Secondly, the assumption by such liberal theorists like Hobbes of a strong state as a manifestation of the common good of all its citizenry is somewhat utopian. Additionally, transparency within the ranks of government is not always present, and many policy formulation and implementation processes are executed without due consultation of the majority of the people for whom they are supposed to benefit. This is not only a phenomenon limited to developing states.

Marxist View of the State

Marxist theorists led by Karl Marx hold that all history is a struggle between two dominant classes in society: Those who own the means of production, and those whose relationship to the means of production is through the labour which they provide cheaply or for no pay at all, to those who own the means of production. According to Karl Marx, when humanity was capable of producing surplus, private property developed, society became unequal, resulting in classical society, and then feudalism, to its current state of capitalism (Lyons and Berlet, 1996). The state is a reflection of the struggle between the dominant minority class, and the exploited majority class. Marx argues that to understand the state, one must view it purely through economic terms. Marxists contend that the state is simply an expression of irreconcilable societal conflicts, whose roots are traceable to the egoism of civil society. Marxists fiercely oppose capitalism arguing that the latter provides an avenue for blatant exploitation of the weak members of society by the economically strong. As a frontal assault on pluralist theories of the state, the view postulates that the state and/or officials acting in its behalf do not represent the interest of the society at large. Rather, through capitalism, the state and all its instrumentalities are designed to exploit and oppress the larger society on behalf of preferred groups. Hence, the state is, for all practical purposes, the private property of the elite in their struggle for self-aggrandizement or advancement. Therefore, it is safe to argue that the state constitutes a necessary component in the system

of class domination. Marxists argue that the most desirable way to deal with pervasive alienation which characterizes the state is through communism because it entails the full realization of human freedom. Marx, like Hegel before him, conceived freedom not merely as an absence of constraints but as action having moral content. They believed that Communism allowed people to do what they want but also put humans in such conditions and such relations with one another that they would not wish to have need for exploitation. Whereas for Hegel, the unfolding of this ethical life in history is mainly driven by the realm of ideas, for Marx, communism emerged from material, especially the development of the means of production. Neo-Marxists like Gramsci, Miliband and Poulantzas stress on the ideological, instrumentalist and structuralist perceptions of the state. (Gramsci, 1971) argues that the domination of the ruling class in society is not so much a function of coercion, but of ideological manipulation. Miliband portrayed the state as an agent or instrument of the ruling class and emphasized the extent to which the state elite is drawn from the ranks of the privileged and propertied (Miliband, 1969). According to adherents of this strand of the theory, society's economically dominant class and other privileged groups are involved in a special relationship with the state. In characterizing this relationship, Miliband (1969: 54) contends that it (the relationship) may indeed be very close, 'and that the holders of state power are, for many different reasons, the agents of private economic power.' Miliband goes on to argue thus: 'those who wield that power are also, therefore, and without unduly stretching the meaning of words, an authentic ruling class' (p. 55). The relationship between the state and economic elites has grown even stronger in recent times as a function of growing interest in economic life in particular and economic development in general. Thus, when and wherever the state "intervenes", economic and entrepreneurial elites almost always assume an exceptionally strong position compared with other societal groups. On his par, Poulantzas (1968) emphasized the degree to which the structure of economic and social power exerts a constraint upon state autonomy. According to this view, the state cannot but act to perpetuate the social system in which it operates. In the case of the capitalist state, its role is to serve the long-term interests of capitalism, even though these actions may be resisted by sections of the capitalist class itself. The main critique to Marxist theory is that it is almost impossible to create a classless society where everyone is equal in relation to the means of production. In countries where Marxist teachings were put in practice, evidence showed that classes still existed, and exploitation thrived. Secondly, Marx is criticized for his emphasis on the economic determinants of statehood while overlooking social dynamics. It has been argued that Marxist views of the state are largely utopian. However, those who support Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories contend these theories offer a true reflection in the understanding of the capitalist state, and an alternative communist state in which citizens are free, enterprising and prosperous, under the watch of a government run by triumphant proletariats.

Weberian and New Right Theories

A distinguishing mark of Weberian and Neo-Weberian theories of the state is the emphasis they place on the nature, structure and behaviour of the bureaucratic machinery (Weber, 1948). In so doing, theories in this category accord very little

importance to the ability of the capital accumulation process, economic and social forces to explain state actions, activities and their outcomes. Rather, the theories assume that a better understanding of state behaviour can be gained by examining the bureaucracy as well as other mechanisms, instruments and structures employed by the state. Given this latter attribute, Weberian and Neo-Weberian theoretical constructs of the state bear a striking resemblance to what some have characterized as 'the state-centred or state-centric model' of the state. Essentially, the state-centric model, which embodies a burgeoning literature seeking to 'bring the state back in' to discussions of the political economy of society, rejects both citizen-preference and capitalist-driven models of the state because of the excessive degree of emphasis such models place on societal forces or factors outside the state itself, in attempts to explain the nature and activities of the state. State-centric models of the state hold that rather than simply a reflection of social forces (such as voters, organized societal groups and classes), the state constitutes an autonomous entity in its own right, possessing interests and goals as well as the means for achieving them. Thus, in some cases, the state may, and actually does, formulate and pursue its own goals rather than goals that simply mirror the demands and interests of societal groups or forces. In other cases, the state may, and actually does, indulge in activities designed to totally recast the fundamental economic, political and social structures of society. In this view, the state 'is not a whim of society or economy but an independent and powerful entity capable not only of holding off powerful social forces, but of imposing its own vision and goals on them'. Within the framework of theories in this category, the state is operationalized in terms of state institutions, principal actors acting on the states behalf, as well as state actions, which often take the form of the policies conceived, formulated and implemented by the state or state actors. Weberian theories are faulted for the inertia present in many state institutions. In the developing world for instance, state bureaucracy has been found to hamper the effective operations of state machinery, particularly because of lack of capacity, corruption, or simply apathy by state officials in carrying out their responsibilities. Equally, Weberian views of the state are challenged for their assumption of an existence of state institutional machinery that is strong and well developed to carry out state functions. This is not always the case.

New Right theories see the state as a Leviathan, borrowing heavily from Hobbes's theoretical writings in which he argues for a strong state capable of subjugating all other groups and institutions in society (Hobbes, 1996). They argue that the state is a self-serving monster intent on expansion and self aggrandizement. The state is seen as a parasitic growth that threatens both individual liberty and economic security. It meddles in every sphere of human existence. The theory further holds that the state pursues its own interests separate from the interests of the society. Senior members in state bureaucracies do not necessarily act for what is good for the society, but instead they act for self-preservation. Government agencies thus advance their own interests. Bureaucratic self-interest supports a large government apparatus and state intervention. A large government translates to job security, improved pay and a higher status for government officials. As Heywood (2002) has argued, the image of self seeking bureaucrats is plainly at odds with the pluralist notion of a

state machine imbued with an ethic of public service and firmly subject to political interests. Critics of New Right theorists point out that the theory is overly western in its postulates. It hardly makes itself applicable to developing world situations. Secondly, even as it serves its interests, the state does concern itself with the welfare of the larger society to a certain degree because the state does not exist in a vacuum. Surely, state agencies and bureaucracies do appreciate the fact there will be an election which could sweep them out of office unless they addressed certain demands from the electorate while in office. The problem is that the manner in which they address such demands is seen as being self-serving. For this reason, New Right Theory is criticized for being too state-centric and anti-people.

Feminist Theories of the State

It must be pointed out that there is no systematic feminist theory of the state. Feminists do not regard the nature of state power as a central political issue. Instead, they prefer to focus on the deeper structure of male power centred upon institutions of the state, the family, and the economic system. Liberal feminists posit that if women are denied equal legal and political equality, especially the right to vote, the state is biased in favour of men. The main tenet of Liberal Feminism is that all groups in society have potentially equal access to state power and that this can be used impartially to promote justice and the common good of society. The state is capable of intervening, through reform, to correct biases that may exist against women. Thus like pluralists, liberal feminists have faith in the state's neutrality and its capacity and willingness to put in place legal mechanisms to entrench female rights. Liberal feminists therefore support campaigns to equal pay legislation, the legalization of abortion, the provision of child-care facilities, the extension of welfare benefits for women, and equal opportunities for promotion at work among others. Thus, liberal feminists have an essentially positive view of the state.

Radical feminists, on the other hand, offer a more critical, negative conceptualization of the state. They argue that state power reflects a deeper structure of oppression for women in the form of patriarchy. Radical Feminist Theory sees the state as a deep rooted power machinery that is heavily tilted in favour of men. They see the state in a gender inequality context and insist that it is essentially an institution of male power. The state is used by men as a tool to defend their own interests and uphold the structures of patriarchy. Women are subordinated through confinement to family and domestic responsibilities, turning them into housewives and mothers. They are systematically excluded from public life responsibilities such as politics and the economy. Thus the theory holds that the state is run by men and for men. Women are totally excluded from decision-making. Within the state, most of the key positions are held by men, and a welfare system only helps to transform domestic dependence on men by women to a new kind of dependence where women depend on institutions of the extended state. According to this theory, therefore, the role of the state is to champion male interests while ignoring the welfare of women. Though credited for targeting the spotlight on a feminist understanding of the state and its operations, feminists are faulted for not explaining the reasons why women are subordinated by men. Secondly, the

theory fails to appreciate that not all men in society control state power and that a big number of men are just as subjugated by the state as women are. In summary, therefore, these theories underline the role of state in four major ways. Firstly, the state exists to regulate the various conflicting groups that exist in society, in pursuit of supremacy and leverage over others. Secondly, the state exists to serve the economic interests of the dominant class in society. Thirdly, the state has the role of perpetuating the common good within the society. According to this pluralist view of the state, the state provides security, maintains order, facilitates the economic and social wellbeing of its citizens and generally oversees the progressive development of society. Finally, the state, through its many institutions, regulates relations between itself; its citizens and other internal as well as well as external actors, for its own self-preservation. This view sees the state as playing the role of master, overriding all other groups in society, and lording over them. No single theory discussed above has the ability to give existence of state and government a reason but a combination of at least some or all of them. What is outstanding from these theories is that they either view the state as an evil or as a blessing; evil in the sense that it serves the interests of certain people and not all, and a blessing that it is viewed by others as wrought with collective benefits to its members.

Systems of Governance

The state has, ever since its inception, become increasingly dominant in organization of political power in society with a spill-over effect in its social, economic and even technological aspects. This dominance can be argued to be arising from the state's authority, legitimacy and sovereignty. Through authority, the government is able to compel obedience and even extract loyalty from its citizenry. This can be achieved by the government through force, terror or from social contract between the governed and the governor. Through legitimacy, the government is able to prompt the governed to acquiesce willingly to the governments' authority and state apparatus. Lastly, sovereignty makes the government to have ultimate say over its own affairs independent of external influence from other states and equally makes the state to relate with other states and international actors (Grovoqui, 1996). To dominate the organization of society's political power, different types of governance have been realized in both traditional and modern society. These have been based on two main aspects: who gets to rule; and concentration of power. In either case, the government remains to perform three functions: making laws (legislating function); executive function (enforce the laws); and judicial function (interpretation of laws). These functions can be distributed (democracy) or fused and become vested in one individual who hence becomes very powerful (autocracy). In a parliamentary system, both the executive and legislative functions are combined in one branch and judicial functions in another. On the basis of who gets to rule, there has existed a monarchy, oligarchy, anarchy and even democracy as a system of governance. In a monarchy, there is a royal and an imperial set-up. Rulers ascend to power through ascribed qualification, that is to say, through heredity. Rulers are not elected but chosen on very non-meritocratic grounds. One could be a leader because his father who was a leader died. In a monarchy, all power is vested in the hands of an all powerful monarch - king or queen. In Africa, the best example can be

found in Swaziland. In an oligarchy, a few wealthy people govern. The best of oligarchy is aristocracy which expounds on the need of a few learned and propertied people to rule. In an anarchy system, governance is regulated by no one and there exists anarchy, that is to say no one occupies the apex of power. This is a very dangerous situation characterized by a power void since no one has the specific responsibility to make, enforce and interpret laws. A Democratic system of governance has the power devolved and it can be said that many people and in fact a majority rules as purported by the democracy theorists. Democratic governments nurture participatory rule, a wide variety of freedoms and uphold a liberal economic environment in which individual ownership of property is strongly emphasized. In terms of concentration of power, in monarchies power is vested in one absolute individual. In aristocracy, power is vested in the hands of a few while democracies have power concentrated in the majority hence power is decentralized. Equally in autocracies or authoritarian regimes power is concentrated in single individuals but not in absolute terms as in monarchy. Historically, these forms of government have at times departed from the scene or evolved into other new forms.

By the beginning of the 20th century, especially the early 1920s, three main forms of the state had emerged within the international system namely, the fascist state, the communist state and the liberal democratic state. The fascist state, which thrived in some parts of Europe especially in Germany and Italy between 1920s and the end of the Second World War, was founded on a form of extreme right wing ideology that celebrates the nation or the race as an organic community transcending all other loyalties. Fascism was forged in the crucible of post World War I nationalism in Europe. The national aspirations of many European peoples - nations without states, peoples arbitrarily assigned to political entities with little regard for custom or culture - had been crushed after World War I. The humiliation imposed by the victors in that war, coupled with the hardship of economic depression, created bitterness and anger. That anger frequently found its outlet in an ideology that asserted not just the importance of the nation, but its unquestionable primacy and central predestined role in history.

The fascist ideology, where it thrived in Europe, created a state with the following characteristics: nationalism and super-patriotism with a sense of historic mission; aggressive militarism even to the extent of glorifying war as good for the national individual spirit; use of violence or threats of violence to impose views on others; authoritarian reliance on a leader or elite not constitutionally responsible to an electorate; cult of personality around a charismatic leader; reaction against the values of modernity; exhortations for the homogenous masses of common folk to join voluntarily in a heroic mission; the self image of being a superior form of social organization beyond socialism, capitalism and democracy; elements of national socialist ideological roots, for example ostensible support for the industrial working class or farmers, but ultimately, the forging of an alliance with an elite sector of society. Fascism emphasizes a myth of national or racial rebirth after a period of decline or destruction. Fascism calls for "spiritual revolution" against signs of moral decay such as individualism and materialism, and seeks to purge "alien" forces and groups that threaten the organic community (Lyons, 1996). In Europe,

Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Nazi Germany remain the best examples of Fascism. Both were crushed during World War II through the active combination of efforts by the liberal democratic state in Western Europe and North America, and Communism. Soon after, stiff competition for dominance emerged between the liberal democratic state and the communist state, manifested by the cold war. A Communist State, otherwise referred to as Marxist-Leninist, is defined as a state ruled by a communist party. As defined by Karl Marx, communism envisages a classless and stateless utopian society where the resources and means of production are owned by communities rather than by individuals and where there is equal sharing of all freedoms, all work and all benefits. The intermediate stage of socialism is meant to create a 'new man' who voluntarily acts in the best interest of the community. In an ever stricter sense of communism, there is no ownership, not even by communities, and theoretically everyone works according to their ability and takes according to their needs of their own volition. Communist governments have typically arisen during times of general political instability. Most have come to power through revolutions (as advocated for by Marxist theories) led by communist parties. Highly organized communist parties based on Marxist-Leninist ideology were established in the 20th century, most notably in the former Soviet Union, following the 1917 October Revolution. Several other communist states were established in Hungary, China, Poland, and Romania among other countries. In 1959, Cuba became the first communist state in the Western Hemisphere. Cambodia, Vietnam, East Germany, North Korea are among other notable communist states.

Communist states have historically been characterized by state ownership of productive resources in a planned economy and sweeping campaigns of economic restructuring such as nationalization of industry and land reform (often focusing on collective farming or state farms). While they promote collective ownership of the means of production, communist governments have been characterized by a string state apparatus in which decisions are made by the ruling communist party (Marx, 1967). In a communist state, state and the party are effectively identical, and govern all aspects of the society. State structures are either totalitarian or authoritarian, with no room for alternative opinion. Corruption is rampant in communist states, and little respect is paid to accountability in the management of state resources. The stiff competition between the liberal democratic state and the communist state culminated in the demise of communism in most of Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s, coinciding with the end of the Cold War. Thus to date, only China, Cuba, Libya and North Korea are governed through the communist model. Communist states are criticized for their authoritarian nature. They are also criticized for maintaining a large secret police apparatus to closely monitor the population and silence those deemed enemies of the state. Arrest, torture and summary execution are methods used to silence critics within communist states. Those who advocate for the communist state argue that central economic planning has, in certain instances, produced dramatic advances, including rapid development of heavy industry during the 1930s, in the Soviet Union. The advocates also cite generous social and cultural programs, universal education programs and provision of universal health care. The Liberal Democratic State is the most dominant form of state in existence in the world today.

Liberal Democracy is a form of representative democracy where the ability of elected representatives to exercise decision making power is subject to the rule of law and moderated by a constitution which emphasizes the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals and minorities; and which places constraints on the extent to which the will of the majority can be exercised. Liberal democratic states are characterized by a constitution that limits the authority of the government, universal suffrage granting all adult citizens the right to vote regardless of race, gender or property ownership, free and fair elections, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of expression through the press and other alternative sources of information, freedom of association and assembly, equality before the law and due process under the rule of law, the right to private property, an independent judiciary, with opportunities for appeal, and a system of checks and balances between branches of government (Dahl, 1961).

Liberal democracies are also representative democracies. Some of them have additional systems of referenda to give the electorate a possibility to overrule decisions of the elected legislature or even to make decisions by plebiscite without giving the legislature a say in that decision. Switzerland is a good example of this kind of state. There has been a raging debate as to the extent to which developing states are democratic, especially in the post Cold War era. Critics of liberal democracy argue that since it does not always respect majority rule (except when citizens are asked to vote for their representatives), then it is not democratic at all. Liberal Democracy is criticized for being an integral part of the capitalist system and is class-based and not fully democratic or participatory. It is bourgeois democracy where only the most financially powerful people rule. It is important to note that both Communism and Liberal Democracy combined to defeat Fascism. It is equally vital to take cognizance of the fact that it is hard to draw a distinction between Fascism and Communism since both appeal to Marxist orientations that involve a single person mobilizing the masses. The only implicit distinction is that Fascism had an appeal to racist elements, while Communism involved mobilization of the masses through a political party for the common good. From the demise of Fascism, both Liberal Democracy and Communism competed as major ideologies on the basis of which states were to be formed. This competition heightened throughout the Cold War period and ended in 1990 when Communism collapsed and Liberalism emerged the victor. And since 1990s, it is the Liberal Democracy and its element of free market economy that has dominated the world. Communism is only present in Cuba, China and North Korea. The first two have, however, started to liberalize their economies, in the face of globalization which is spearheaded by the liberal democratic state.

Analytical Perspective of the African state

The State in African society can be examined from different, but overlapping, analytical perspectives namely organic, configurational and interactive (Chazan *et al.*, 1992). Seen from this perspective, the state in Africa is an actor in the public arena. In this capacity, it directly impacts upon social and economic processes as well as the results of these processes. Within the framework of this model, it is assumed that the state is at once, a structure of domination and a unitary actor quite apart from the society at large with certain

functions and obligations to fulfil. This view of the state is in line with the Marxian concept of the state discussed above. The state in Africa is perceived as a framework within which social groups form. This framework also recognizes the importance of political activity and other forms of social intercourse. In contrast to the view of the state as an organic entity discussed above, the configurational perspective does not perceive the state in Africa as the dominant actor in society. Rather, the state is perceived as simply one of many societal actors. The political economy of African countries is affected as much by the state as by the social forces with which it constantly interacts. Thus, no analysis of the political economy of African society can be deemed complete unless such an analysis has paid more than passing attention to the state and the social forces with which it interacts on a daily basis. The social forces in question include, but are not limited to: specific ethnic, social and religious organizations. To survive and advance their own ends, these groups customarily develop strategies that often compete and sometimes conflict with the goals and objectives of the state. Resolving the conflicts arising from this situation often entails negotiation, bargaining and compromises. Thus, to adequately understand the political economy of countries in the region, this analytical approach suggests that we pay a lot of attention to the interactional episodes that occur between the state and society in the course of resolving the conflicts that may arise when the state and societal groups concentrate on pursuing their respective objectives. From this vantage point, the state is anything but the central and dominant figure in the political economy. Almost all states in Africa trace their roots to colonialism. Thus, as Chazan, *et al.* (1992) contend, the origins of the African post-colonial state, is the colonial state. First, a very centralized machinery is responsible for managing their affairs. Second, power, political and administrative functions are concentrated in the hands of a few in the capital cities of these countries. This is a colonial legacy. Third, there is the tendency to emulate the developed nations, most of which are erstwhile colonial masters. The roots of this proclivity can be traced to the colonial era. The pride of first place in this regard goes to erstwhile French colonies. Economic, administrative and other policies in French colonies were distinct particularly because they originated in the metropole. By comparison, colonial authorities on the ground crafted similar policies in other colonies. In this latter case, colonial administrators were granted a great deal of power on the spot. This did not however diminish the influence of the colonial master nations. African states are also characterized by deep ethnic divisions. This characteristic has its roots in the artificial manner in which the colonial masters created the African state, without any due regard for the pre-existing nations. African states are notorious not only for interfering with market forces but also for the unequal patterns of resource distribution imbedded in their structures. This is evidenced by the concentration of wealth in the hands of a very tiny economic and political elite, while the majority of the population wallows in poverty. Finally, African states are characterized by massive poverty both in terms of Gross Domestic Product, Gross National Product and income per capita, relative to other developing and developed states. This is attributed to the dependency character of African economies and the 'conspiracy' of the international economic order in which poor countries are subordinated to the rich masters of the global economic order.

State Engagement with the Civil Society

State and society are, in fact, intertwined and marked by a relationship of either conflict or cooperation. This comes from the fact that the state always seeks to rule society and to dominate society as part of performing one of its core tasks - control of society. To achieve this objective, the state resorts to the use of force at times to ensure compliance and loyalty. Since the society members are also vigilant on the excess of the state, there is always a clash between the state and society. The state though, has remained dominant because of its possession of the instrument of legitimate coercion, legitimacy accorded to it by the people or its citizens. The society uses its civil organizations known as civil societies to further their interests including the interests of containing the state to their benefit or advantage. In Africa, these are exemplified by religious-based organizations, community-based organizations (CBOs), Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Trade Unions, Private organizations, among others.

The above argument is aptly captured by Bratton (1998), who observes that:

Alfred Stepan sees civil society as an arena where manifold social movements and civil organizations from all classes attempt to constitute themselves in an ensemble of arrangements so that they can express themselves and advance their interests.

The relationship between society and state is, in majority of occasions, conflictual for state endeavours almost always fail to meet the demands of the society as a whole. The state has always claimed to be responding first to interests which are most important and later taking care of the less critical ones. What is of importance to note is that the state through its institutions mainly the government, has been able to survive since its invention and remains the dominant political entity in society. It remains the major determinant of many other aspects of society; including culture. Through the government, the state is able to engage with the society through its agents and policies. State policies encompass issues such as health, education, social welfare, defence, development and administration, research and so on. The State also transfers resources from one place to another within its jurisdiction and regulates its population through its laws. It is through these policies, genuine or not, and government agents that the state gets an avenue to interact with the society. There exist features of what everyone expects to see in state policies. To Shively (2001: 118), the policies should be "fair", that is, people in the state should be treated in the way they deserve; and the policies should be "efficient", that is, producing the greatest good at the least cost. The two criteria are at times in conflict for what is fair is not necessarily efficient. It is therefore clear that the state interacts with society especially through the government, its agents and its policies. Equally, the state dominates this relationship due to legitimacy and authority accorded to it by the members of the society. Throughout history, this engagement has been shaped by the kind of political system embraced at a given time by a particular state. So far there has not been a uniformity in the political systems across the world and therefore equally no uniformity in patterns of state engagement with society. In trying to control

and rule the society, the state's endeavours have been greatly challenged from different corners. Some challenges to the state emanate from within and others from without. Let us now turn our attention to challenges facing the state authority.

Challenges to State Authority

The state has been internally challenged by the civil society that has always felt that the state is inadequate in providing its services to its citizens. The civil society is a great challenge to the state's authority as it is the organization and association formed by those who are disenfranchised or those who have no access to state machinery or who act jointly to exert more influence (Bayart, 1986). Civil society is either formal or informal. When formal, it is consummate, recognized, legal and visible as an institution. When informal, it is made up of less visible and less defined rules and alliances based on kinship, caste and even gender. Attempts by the civil society to overtake the state in certain cases result into immediate problem and erodes and corrodes the state authority. As such are viewed as direct challenges to the imperatives of statehood, territorial hegemony, security autonomy, legitimacy and revenue. The state's authority is equally challenged by globalization which seems to render borders of states porous. Globalization which has compressed a whole world into a "global village" by making access of information from other states however geographically far it is, through easy and efficient means, makes state authority to control entry into and out of its borders ineffective. Globalization is also seen in reducing state authority through the issue of "global citizenship" which comes as a result of transfer of cultures from one state to the other without the involvement of the state. Globalization, especially of the market type, has really reduced the effectiveness of the state authority as it equally calls for limited state interference on certain aspects of human life; for instance economic aspect (Nabudere, 2000). The embracing and application of international law to address certain issues of global concern that a purely individual state cannot address has equally gone deep in reducing state's authority. Global issues such as global warming, pollution of environment, terrorism among others cannot be addressed by individual states in isolation but by a combined endeavour between the developed and developing countries. Another challenge to state authority emanates from the current emergence of regional integration schemes in different parts of the world. Regionalism has been conventionally viewed as a boom to economic developments. Both developed and developing countries have formed super-national bodies or organizations whose spectrum is beyond those of the state. This has been seen in economic spheres. An instance is the formation of the European Union which has moved to a situation of having its own currency and moving forward to form a political entity. In such a situation, allegiance and loyalty of the citizens of the member states will be pledged to the super-national body and not to their specific individual states.

Many states have had their authorities threatened by ethnicity. In countries where there are several different ethnic groups as in Africa, these ethnic groups have totally failed to view themselves as being part of the wider state combining them. Members of different ethnic groups are more attached to their ethnic group tendencies than state ones. Ethnic groups

especially in Africa and with an exception of very few countries pose this challenge to their states. This leads to weak statehood for it seems the wider state is not recognized and hence is not legitimate. Once the state's legitimacy is questioned, its authority is too at peril and to take the situation back to normalcy may need some kind of coercion. Ethnic or clan rivalries have rocked a good number of African states. They have led to state collapse or near state collapse in Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Burundi, and Democratic Republic of Congo among others. Even in Kenya, which is viewed as a citadel of unity in the greater Eastern African region, ethnicity threatens to tear up the country. So unless ethnic problems are addressed, state authority will remain challenged. Developing countries are characterized by the presence of large business enterprises in the form of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) which operate in several host countries with their headquarters in their home countries. These businesses are very rich and very influential. They have influence in both home and host countries and at times even determine the shape of politics in both sides. In certain occasions, these businesses operate like states in their own right for even their financial worth is several times higher than the economies of some developing countries. They have several benefits inherent in them especially in terms of creation of employment and transfer of technology. Based on the benefits they have, citizens of different countries they operate in are at times loyal to them more than they are to their states. In this way, they pose a great challenge to the state. The state struggles to control them but at times they also control the state in certain aspects such as determining economic growth of these states, the kind of technologies transferred to them and so on. Multinational Corporations should not be underestimated when looking at sources of challenges to state authority in the developing world. Closely related to civil society, which is a big challenge to state authority, is the Non-Governmental Organizations present in most parts of the world. They are very critical to the state function as they seem to be more attractive to people than states based on the humanitarian feelings and moral obligations they purport to be driving their activities. Edward and Hulme (1992: 16) argue that "traditionally", most NGOs have been suspicious of governments, their relationships varying between benign neglect and outright hostility. In fact, it is even right to argue that NGOs are also constantly suspected by the state and the state is always out to control their operations or activities due to the threats they pose to the state authority. Many states in which NGOs operate have "tended to take the view that whatever assistance these organizations want to offer ought to be channelled through the relevant government ministries" (Oyugi, 2004: 40). And indeed the mode of operation of these NGOs in the field has been a bone of contention between them and host states due to the challenges they pose to the authority of the state.

Conclusion

The shadow of the state falls upon almost every human activity, systems of state and government, the state in Africa, the state and civil society, and examined the various challenges facing the state in the developing world. We have shown that the nature of the African state is underpinned by its colonial roots and that issue of governance relating to corruption, ethnicity and a bloated, ineffective bureaucracy are

some of the outstanding characteristics of the African state. The paper has also shown that state authority has been challenged by several factors - some internal and some external. There is very little to be done to help sustain the relevance of the state in the developing world apart from ensuring the state performs its function of guaranteeing the greatest happiness to the greatest number, and, possibly, the greatest happiness to all. If this remains illusionary, the state authority will remain challenged. Perhaps there is a point in the argument that the state in the developing world may soon be rendered irrelevant!

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