

Chapter

7

The State in Contemporary Africa

A Critical Assessment of Theory and Practice

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In the past decade political scientists have rediscovered the concept of the state as a key to understanding the dynamics of politics. Like so many conceptual schemes in an academic discipline, it has seen its "star" rise and fall as the discipline moved through periods in which one paradigm or another assumed temporary predominance.¹ Today studies of the state are back in style and are the subject of lively debates among scholars of various intellectual and methodological persuasions.² The most critical points of debate center on the nature of the state, its actual or potential autonomy, and its capacity and performance in policy making. Nowhere is the debate over the state and state-centered research more vigorous than among Africanists.³

The current concern of Africanists with the role of the state in contemporary politics is largely a by-product of the emergence of political economy as the dominant paradigm in the study of development. Marxists, neo-Marxists, and pluralists alike have begun to focus on the state as a central actor in the processes of political and economic change.⁴ Whereas the state had previously been considered nothing more than an epiphenomenon, an arena of political competition and conflict, it is now being widely viewed as managed by a self-interested class that acts not only on behalf of the common good, but also for self-preservation, self-aggrandizement, and hegemonic power.

Africanists are now asking questions such as: Do states exist in Africa? If they do, how did they emerge? What do they look like? What

are their respective goals? How are they organized? How do they perform and with what effect? Are they autonomous or dependent? How do they relate to their domestic and external environments? Are the personal predilections of African leaders or their ideological preferences important determinants of their political behavior?

Some scholars caution against too heavy an emphasis on the state and state-centered research. Robert Fatton argues that the focus on the African state as a catalyst for change is misplaced and that at this time class analysis is more relevant.⁵ Rothchild and Chazan call for a more balanced perspective centered not solely on the state but on the state's relations with society.⁶ Jackson and Rosberg doubt whether African states can meet the empirical definition of the state based on its ability to exercise control over the citizenry under its jurisdiction. For them, African states exist more as juridically defined entities than anything else.⁷ Ayoade argues that some African states have so little vitality that they can best be described as "bedridden," "comatose," or "expired."⁸ While not denying the importance of the state in political and economic analysis, Claude Ake questions whether we can properly speak of the state in postcolonial Africa, since it possesses only limited autonomy or hegemony. What we have in Africa today, he suggests, are "states in formation."⁹

This chapter attempts to evaluate and to place in some perspective the current Africanist focus on the state. We need to cut through the confusion and take stock of what we know and don't know about how African states are organized and how they function. Although there is now a wealth of literature claiming to help us understand the African state and its role, there is no clear-cut model or theory of the African state. We are still at the pre-theory stage of development in our thinking. Critical analyses and case studies of the literature may yield some broad generalizations that could form the basis for some middle-range theories.

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first identifies and assesses the most common themes deriving from the literature on political economy that relate to the concept of the state in modern Africa, its origins, its organization, and its performance. The second outlines a descriptive model of the African state of the future. The discussion concludes with suggestions for further research.

THE MODERN AFRICAN STATE

In the lexicon of political science there is no consensus on a definition of the "state." In fact, over a hundred different meanings have been suggested.¹⁰ However, with the resurgence of state-centered research, scholars of various ideological and epistemological persuasions have

attempted to come up with refined conceptualizations of the state. Steven Krasner identifies four main elements in a concept of the state: government, administrative apparatus and institutionalized legal order, ruling class, and normative order.¹¹ Otwin Marenin identifies four different themes: manager, provider of fundamental societal needs, unitary actor, and part of society.¹² Rothchild and Olorunsola reduce the African state to two primary functional elements: manager and controller.¹³ The list goes on. For instance, Howard Lentner has countered Krasner's scheme with his own ten-element scheme.¹⁴ Rather than clarifying matters, the proliferation of efforts to streamline the conceptualization of the state in general and the African state in particular could result in even further confusion.

However, despite occasional confusion, there appears now to be widespread agreement among scholars that the state is more than just "government" and that it exists at two fundamental levels: the concrete and the abstract.¹⁵ At the concrete level it is represented in a juridically defined, sovereign territory, in governmental institutions, and in the political organizations used by those who govern to achieve the goals of the regime. At the abstract level the state is represented in its ideology. That ideology is articulated in a regime's political rhetoric, in the language of the rules governing relations between state and society, and among citizens.

In the 1950s and 1960s, when the structural-functionalist and systems theory paradigms were in their heyday among comparativists, the state was seen as nothing more than a mechanism for processing societal demands by turning them into policies and as a mechanism for managing, regulating, and adjudicating the behavior of the citizenry.¹⁶ This approach has been described by Lemarchand as "antistatist."¹⁷ It assumed that variants of Western democratic and capitalist organization could be effectively grafted onto African and other developing societies and that the legacy of colonialism would be of no enduring consequence.¹⁸ These scholars recognized the fragility of the new African states and their new political and economic institutions, but they assumed that Africa could follow the West and build strong, new nations from artificially created colonial states. The role of government or the state, then, was merely to pursue policies intended to result in the political, social, and economic integration of disparate, constituent groups.¹⁹ Despite the neatness of the structural-functional paradigm as a conceptual scheme, scholars quickly realized that it was seriously flawed, being static and ethnocentric. The model was of little help in understanding the dynamics of change in the Third World.

By the early 1970s, the structural-functional and systems theory perspectives were being vigorously challenged, mostly by the intellectual left. Some of the challengers questioned the ahistorical, ethnocen-

tric orientation of these approaches and their failure to recognize the profound effect of the "weight of history" and the impact of colonial domination in the contemporary Third World. The initial assault was led by neo-Marxist adherents of the *dependencia*, underdevelopment theory and world systems schools of thought.²⁰ Despite their frequent dogmatism and bias toward economic determinism, these approaches highlighted the importance of history in determining the character of the political economy of underdeveloped societies, thus avoiding a serious pitfall of the structural-functional and systems theory approaches. Colonialism was found to have laid the foundation not only for the character of the relations of new states with the world community, but also for the broad outlines of their domestic political economies.

Africanists borrowed the conceptual framework of dependency theory from radical structuralist students of Latin America.²¹ They portrayed the neocolonial state in Africa as devoid of an indigenous ruling class and controlled and manipulated by the metropolitan bourgeoisie. A local dominant class facilitated the continued exploitation of the domestic economy by the neocolonial, peripheral state apparatus.²² These states were extremely vulnerable and dependent upon the persistence of close relationships with external interests. The primary weakness of many studies that use the dependency theory approach is their lack of empirical grounding. They tend to assert, rather than prove, the points that they make and therefore are limited in their utility as analytic tools.²³

Although dependency theory must be given credit for recognizing the importance of history in structuring contemporary political economy, it was generally weak on historical analysis. This weakness is somewhat circumvented in the world systems approach, but the limitation of the latter perspective for the student of African politics is that it focuses mostly on the dynamics of the *international* political economy. Underdevelopment theory persuasively established "how Europe underdeveloped Africa" and how the structure of the neocolonial African state was created.²⁴ Students of neo-Marxian class analysts, such as Markovitz and Ake,²⁵ and developmental policy analysis, such as Rothchild and Curry and Bates,²⁶ however, have done the most to broaden and refine our understanding of the modern African state and how it relates to its domestic environment and the international environment.

Borrowing from Hamza Alavi's theory on the emergence of the postcolonial state in Pakistan and Bangladesh,²⁷ John Saul suggests three defining characteristics of the contemporary African state. First, the postcolonial African state was created by the metropolitan bourgeoisie because that class needed an administrative apparatus it could control while the local administrative state in turn controlled the indigenous population. Second, the postcolonial state has a special role in promot-

ing and manipulating the indigenous economy. Third, in post-colonial societies capitalist hegemony must be maintained by the African state once it assumes political power.²⁸ Claude Ake furthers this argument, claiming that the modern African state is a creature of the capitalist mode of production and as such is a specific modality of class domination.²⁹ Acceptance into the dominant political class is conceived as a reward to those who hold power because of the role they play in commodity exchange.

Saul, Ake, and other neo-Marxist Africanists conceive of the state as being controlled and manipulated by a dominant (if not ruling) class. The notion of a self-interested "state class" that staffs the central bureaucratic and political apparatus and autonomously pursues various goals and objectives has sparked lively scholarly debate. Such an idea stands in sharp contrast to the views of functionalist scholars who see the state as nothing more than an arena of political competition and conflict or "government," an action agency whose only mission is pursuit of the common good.³⁰ Radical structuralists have made us sensitive to the fact that the state is more than just government. This is particularly evident when we consider the context in which modern African states emerged and continue to function.

Modern African states are syncretic phenomena at both the concrete and abstract levels. They inherited many of their organizational structures and institutions from their former colonizers, and their ideological foundations are blends of traditional, foreign, and recently derived indigenous value systems.³¹ Several recent case studies employing what may be termed a historical sociology or political economy approach have greatly enhanced our understanding of how the historical experience and contemporary context bear upon the states' character and behavior.³²

At a fundamental level the modern African state appears to be a top-heavy administrative state.³³ It has been variously described as "overdeveloped,"³⁴ "swollen,"³⁵ "superimposed,"³⁶ and "absolutist."³⁷ However, it is now clear that throughout Africa, the heavy-handed, authoritative image projected by the state is more evidence of weakness than of power. Crawford Young notes that "there is a prime contradiction of the contemporary state, it is at once hard and distant, soft and permeable. In its habits and operating modes, the state reflects the inertial perpetuation of the colonial past; in its command style, the domination that gave it birth still persists."³⁸

Rather than being born with power, authority, and legitimacy, the contemporary African state, with few exceptions (Swaziland, Botswana, Mauritius) has been consumed with attempting to establish its hegemony and right to rule. The administrative norms that guided the colonial state quickly proved insufficient to enhance the effectiveness of

rulership in the new states. In its quest for hegemony and "hardness," the tendency has been for the state to suppress or ignore Weberian bureaucratic norms.³⁹

In a context where it has few political and economic resources that could allow it to purchase legitimacy, the tendency has been for the African state—no matter what its ideology—to be preoccupied with trying to establish its security, control, and autonomy. Consequently, the personalization of rulership has become the rule.⁴⁰ Thomas Callaghy terms this the emergence of the "patrimonial administrative state."⁴¹ African leaders have patrimonialized the states bequeathed to them by their colonial predecessors, and corruption has become a defining feature of contemporary politics. Politics has become more like business. Political power is the vehicle to economic power, and political resources tend to be reduced to economic ones. Under such circumstances political power is not sought for its own sake but for the material advantage it promises.⁴² Although Zaire is often characterized as the quintessential "cleptocracy,"⁴³ patrimonialism and corruption are used as political resources throughout Africa. Richard Joseph, in his important book on democracy in Nigeria, identifies what he terms "prebendalism" at the center of that country's politics.⁴⁴ In general usage, the term "prebend" refers to offices of feudal states that could be obtained in recognition of services rendered to a noble person, or through outright purchase, and then utilized to generate income for the holders of such offices. As used by Joseph, the term refers to patterns of political behavior based upon the assumption that the offices of the existing state may be competed for and then used for the personal benefit of the officeholders and their supporters. This condition is characterized by the intense struggle among various segments of society to control and exploit offices of the state. Graft and corruption are part and parcel of everyday political life at all levels.

Such patterns reveal the vulnerability and weakness of the state in most of Africa. In terms of its monopoly over the means of coercion, the African state tends to be strong relative to other segments of society, but in terms of its ability to ensure voluntary and regular compliance to rules and policies, it tends to be "soft."

Borrowing from Gunnar Myrdal, Goren Hyden has suggested three main features of the "soft state": "the circumvention of laws and regulations by officials and the inconsistent application of policies and laws; secret collusion between civil servants and politicians whose task it is to supervise the implementation of policies; use of corruption to secure objectives other than those officially stated."⁴⁵ The soft state operates in the context of resource scarcity, with persistent claims emanating from ethnically based and other corporate groups in the domestic environment. It tends to lack the reservoir of resources that are essential to

enable it to respond effectively to uncertainties during the processes of change and modernization.

Naomi Calden and Aaron Wildavsky have noted that what distinguishes poor countries from rich ones is the former's lack of "resource redundancy."⁴⁶ Poor countries like the ones we find in Africa generally lack reserves of the types of resources needed to guard against uncertainty in policymaking such as hard currency, skilled work force, and appropriate technology. The policies these soft states pursue are usually sufficient only to ensure the survival of the regime. Even when the state is able to engage in rational planning, it often cannot ensure citizen compliance. Under such conditions it is common for significant segments of the populace, particularly in areas outside the capital city, to exercise their "exit option" and to become disengaged from the state.⁴⁷ They ignore the regime's policy directives, rules, and regulations and turn inward, preferring to deal with the state through political patrons, if at all.

Another common occurrence is for large segments of the general population to engage in parallel or informal economies based upon smuggling, unregulated manufacturing enterprises, and forms of corruption.⁴⁸ Perhaps more importantly, it is common for public servants, from the lowest to the highest echelons, to be engaged in such practices as petty entrepreneurs. Chazan holds that,

The initial capital for these activities is frequently provided by monies siphoned off from the formal economy. Corruption, bribery and embezzlement are essential features of the parallel market. However, as informal structures are solidified and reproduced, capital is also being accumulated and reinvested in this sector independently. . . . The informal economy is a complex response to either opportunities presented by state engagement in the market or the inadequacies and frailties of state economic structures.⁴⁹

The limited resource capacity of most African states moves them toward varying degrees of authoritarian control. In some instances, such as in Ethiopia, regimes attempt to legitimate their authoritarian rule by introducing new ideological forms that emphasize national and class unity. In others, such as Amin's Uganda or Bokassa's Central African Empire, control is valued above all else.⁵⁰

The efforts of regimes aimed at state consolidation, national political integration, and social and economic development all are designed to reinforce state authority. A facade of democracy is in some cases maintained through one-party systems, but there are few instances of unfettered democratic interparty or intraparty competition. The party is used merely as an instrument for state control and for the reward of political patrons.⁵¹ In other instances military dictatorships obtain, and they rule with a combination of raw force and patrimonialism. In 1990

at least twenty-seven of Africa's fifty-five states were governed by regimes which had their origins in a military coup.

Potential opponents of the state are often coopted into what might be called the "state class" and allowed to enrich themselves through public office. In other words, public office is seen as a quasi-legitimate vehicle to personal economic benefits. This tendency is reflected in the dramatic growth in African public bureaucracies. Young notes that by 1982 the average fraction of the gross domestic product commanded by the public sector in many African countries was more than 30 percent, and in places like Zaire it was as much as 59 percent.⁵² African regimes are prone to overstaffing their central bureaucracies in hopes of enhancing both their administrative efficiency and statist control over society. The employees of those bureaucracies tend to be better paid than most other members of society and are accorded the best housing, medical care, and other social amenities to be offered.⁵³

African societies are generally characterized by weak, monoculture economies based upon commodity production for export. The industrial manufacturing sector is poorly developed because of its historic emphasis on import substitution and represents a huge drain on scarce foreign exchange because of current attempts to diversify and modernize it. Moreover, the tax bases of African states are extremely limited, and tax collection inefficient. Consequently they rely inordinately on foreign assistance, commodity trade, and international borrowing to supply the necessary capital to satisfy the appetite of members of the state class for the trappings of modern privilege and power, to finance the activities of the public bureaucracy and the military, and to pursue developmental objectives. Indebted industrialization, neglect of agricultural development, failure to diversify the economy, expensive social reforms, kleptocracy, developmental "gigantomania," and indebted militarization all add up to economic crisis.⁵⁴ Most African states are mired in debt, and this compounds the soft state syndrome.

No matter what their political or economic ideological orientation, African states are generally more involved in their economies than is common in Western societies. They have been variously described as "neomercantilist"⁵⁵ or "mercantilist states in the making."⁵⁶ Callaghy cogently notes that "In the basic mercantilist equation of African state formation, the key element in the search for sovereignty and unification is power, the basis of power is wealth, and the foundations of wealth are foreign exchange and economic development. The crucial link between foreign exchange and economic development is external trade."⁵⁷

The extensive involvement of African governments in the economy through parastatal bodies also contributes to the bloating of the budget and size of the public sector. After independence, it was common for

leaders of African states, no matter what their ideological persuasion, to choose to involve the state in promoting, manipulating, and leading development. The vehicles for achieving this end were public enterprises. Larry Diamond, for example, notes that "Zambia had 134 parastatal bodies in 1970, Nigeria 250 by 1973, Tanzania about 400 by 1981."⁵⁸ It is estimated that between 1970 and 1980 at least twenty sub-Saharan African countries had an average of 100 parastatal bodies each.

In the African political arena the most significant class is the state class. The state class is composed of the reigning political authorities, the central bureaucracy and its regional functionaries, the top echelons of the military, and members of, where it exists, the dominant political party. For the most part African class systems are only in the process of formation. Kinship and ethnic affinities continue to be extremely significant in determining political dynamics. Yet ethnicity and "tribalism" are not what Western scholars once thought them to be.

Three decades ago many people assumed that "tribalism" could explain the political motivations and behavior of Africans. Initially scholars, such as Clifford Geertz, Leo Kuper, and M. G. Smith, argued that ethnic affinities were primordially based and that ethnic groups tended to be locked in hard and fast categories based on factors such as language, religion, race and/or assumed blood ties.⁵⁹ It was thought that constituent ethnic groups were made to cohere by the coercive authority of the colonial state. Intergroup conflicts, when they occurred, were conveniently labeled "tribal conflicts," without much attention being given to understanding the fundamental origins of the conflicts. There is no doubt that the political attitudes and behavior of some ethnic struggles we find in Africa today are primordially based, but such instances are rare.

A revisionist school of thought on the political saliency of the ethnic factor in Africa, while acknowledging the significance of ethnicity, suggests new interpretations of the fundamental forces underpinning contemporary incidents of ethnic conflict.⁶⁰ The argument made is that instead of being based on primordial sentiments, the politicizing of ethnicity is often based on the competition among various groups over the scarce resources of the modernizing sectors. I refer to this phenomenon as the "new ethnicity."⁶¹ Although kith and kin in rural areas continue to be important reference groups for urban-based relatives, ethnic competition occurs most frequently in the cities and towns and involves friction over economic resources, such as jobs, patronage, education, and so forth. Furthermore, revisionists argue that ethnicity, when found to be a factor affecting individual and group political behavior, is fluid, intermittent, and experiential.⁶²

Traditionally, in most parts of Africa people organized themselves along clan and not tribal lines. The clan was considered the terminal community. But with the advent of colonialism, it became common for groups to be identified (and eventually for them to identify themselves) in terms of an expanded ethnic community that came to be known as the tribe.⁶³ First the colonial state and then the independent state in Africa contributed greatly to the emergence of a modern, expanded conception of ethnic identity. However, revisionists appreciate the fact that the new ethnicity is not always the primary determinant of political action. Often, competition is based on clan identities and results in intraethnic rather than interethnic or tribal conflict. What seems to determine the scope of the individual's ethnic reference group at a given time are the nature of the stakes involved and the nature of the existing political climate. For example, the various clans of the Kikuyu in Kenya regularly compete through political patrons and communally based organizations over the delivery of social services from the central government. But when, for one reason or another, the political climate begins to emit cues that force individuals from various clans of a larger ethnolinguistic group to identify more closely with one another, the change in fundamental allegiance has been dramatic. For instance, in 1968 when Tom Mboya, a prominent Luo politician was killed by a Kikuyu, the Kikuyu clans, as a group, felt threatened and began to organize for possible collective action as an expanded ethnic community.⁶⁴

Ethnically based political action today is clearly intermittent. Individuals and groups may act on the basis of individual preferences at one time, make choices based on clan considerations at another, and even decide to base behavior on class considerations at still another time. The scope and intensity of political competition based on ethnic identification is most often determined by how ethnic patrons active in the modern political arena define political situations with national implications. It is important to note, however, that the new ethnicity is not always politically relevant.

Revisionists acknowledge that social class as well as ethnicity could form the basis for political action in modern Africa; but it is neo-Marxist students of class analysis who have done most to try to factor social class into the context of political relations.⁶⁵ Some scholars, such as Archie Mafeje, see ethnic affinities as nothing more than "false consciousness" and a hindrance to class formation.⁶⁶ It is clear that throughout Africa class consciousness is not widespread. At the same time, there is no doubt that classes are being formed. To the extent that politically relevant class consciousness exists, it is found mainly among members of the state class and, to a limited degree, among members of the incipient

African working class. The latter is generally suppressed by the state, but in places like South Africa its potential political power is clearly evident because of its size and critical role in the most industrialized economy on the continent. The important point to note here is that the political significance of social class, like ethnicity, is intermittent and experiential. A great deal depends upon the idiosyncratic features of given societies, the political stakes involved, and the character and intensity of political tensions. Together, however, ethnicity and class are at the base of much of African politics today.

The holders of state power constitute a governing class and may often, but not always, be correctly referred to as the "ruling class." Some dependency theorists, such as André Gunder Frank and John Saul, assumed that the ruling class resided in the metropole, but it is now generally agreed that they overstated their case, as there is evidence of at least occasional autonomy on the part of peripheral states in their dealings with external patrons.⁶⁷ In fact, rather than being puppets of external or domestic class interests, the rulers of African states have proved themselves adept at manipulating various interests in order to assert and further their autonomy.⁶⁸ Ethiopia, for example, despite being heavily dependent upon the Soviet Union for military assistance, resisted pressure from its superpower patron to form a civilian vanguard party for almost a decade. When the party was formed, it was largely the design of the indigenous state class rather than of Soviet ideologues.⁶⁹

The two primary goals of African states are survival and socio-economic development. One objective cannot be guaranteed without the other. Embedded in the concept of state survival are the maintenance of the juridically defined state and the governmental apparatus of the regime and the consolidation of the hegemony of the state class. In its quest for survival, the state class must constantly attend to the tasks of ensuring domestic order and competing with other states for power, prestige, and respect. Rather than always being compelled to serve the common good or to adhere to the dictates of external or domestic class interests, the state class often acts in a self-interested manner and comes into conflict with nonstate interests.

The state class employs public policies as instruments for achieving a wide range of purposes. Without the capability to use public resources to mobilize or control the general population, the state class would not be able to act instrumentally on its own behalf or to achieve the political and developmental goals it pursues. Because they are resource-poor and soft, African states must usually rely upon external sources for needed inputs such as economic and military assistance and on coercion to establish a semblance of hegemony. Richard Higgott has correctly noted that "there is a clear link between dependence and the authori-

tarian nature of most African regimes. . . . The desire of the ruling elites to achieve stability, more often than not perceived simply as the absence of open conflict, will see African leaders continue to rely on the former colonial power, or the broader international system, for economic and military support."⁷⁰

The autonomy of African states is not universal and absolute. In fact, what exists is a state in relative autonomy that varies from society to society and from context to context.⁷¹ Leonard Binder contends that since 1952 the Egyptian rural middle class has had a profound influence on the state's ability to rule in an autonomous fashion. He argues that it is a class that does not rule, but the state cannot rule without its support.⁷² Focusing partly on the same period in Egypt's political history, Waterbury finds that the state possessed a good deal of autonomy from indigenous classes.⁷³ Springborg, on the other hand, focusing on Egyptian politician and wealthy landowner Sayed Marei and his extended family, demonstrates how traditional elites adapt their patron-client networks to exercise continuing leverage on the changing national political scene.⁷⁴ He suggests that in Egypt certain families are cohesive and adaptive enough to outlive almost any changes in the national political system. In other places such as Ethiopia, the state has at times been able to exercise considerable autonomy from both domestic and external interests in domestic policy matters, while being heavily dependent on external sources of economic and military aid. This has particularly been the case over the past decade or so since the USSR became Ethiopia's superpower patron.⁷⁵

In addition to utilizing public policies and coercion to establish their autonomy and hegemony, some African states have developed ideologies intended to enhance their control while laying the foundations for their legitimacy. Afro-Marxist states such as Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Angola, for example, for most of the 1980s tried to use varieties of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and modes of political organization to restructure their respective societies and to create a new socialist ethic.⁷⁶ They sought to neutralize the potentially divisive effects of ethnicity and other forms of cultural pluralism and to introduce a new, unifying, egalitarian value system. The same could be said of populist socialist regimes. History has shown, however, that ideology is not magic. It cannot absolutely compensate for state softness, vulnerability, and limited resource capacities, but it can tell us much about a regime's policy preferences.⁷⁷ Pragmatism more often than not determines the reality of a state's political economy. Of course, this might be different if the dependency and soft state syndromes did not prevail.

More African states (40 percent) claim to be socialist than actually are socialist or probably will ever be. Few claim to be explicitly capitalist, but most are characterized more by capitalist tendencies (free

market, private enterprise, private ownership of the means of production) than by state control over the means of production, distribution, and exchange or by central planning. Richard Sklar has noted that outside South Africa it is erroneous to speak of a competition between capitalism and socialism.⁷⁸ States that lean in the capitalist direction and publicly favor the free market appear as compelled to regulate their economies closely as are Afro-Marxist states. The form and extent of state involvement in the economy vary, but the results are generally the same. The legacy of colonialism, the international and domestic environments in which they operate, their generally low resource levels, and their limited legitimacy all combine to make most African states politically authoritarian and largely statist in their economic modes of operation.

THE AFRICAN STATE IN THE MAKING

What will the African state of the future look like? How will it function? Will we be more able to generalize about the African state twenty years from now than we could twenty years ago?

African states will continue to be heavily influenced by their colonial past in the foreseeable future. It was during the colonial era that the bases of economic and political dependence were laid and the foundations of the bureaucratic, autocratic welfare state were established. Democratic norms and institutions were quickly eroded or suppressed throughout Africa after independence, and there are no signs that this will change dramatically in the near future.

Martin Carnoy argues that the Third World state's failure to establish its legitimacy or hegemony can be traced to the fact that colonial capitalism inhibited the development of indigenous middle classes that might have had the capacity and legitimacy required to lead development.⁷⁹ This fact has contributed to the emergence of coercive, corporatist-authoritarian regimes in Africa and other parts of the Third World. The creation of the authoritarian regimes of the Third World, Carnoy warns, may foreshadow the institutionalization of militarism in the periphery.⁸⁰ Certainly, there is evidence that this is the direction in which many African states are headed. In few places is democratic or quasi-democratic presidential succession a norm. Rigged elections and military coups are more common. Lip service is paid to democratic and egalitarian principles by leaders throughout Africa, but in practice the tendency is toward centralized, authoritarian control. Centralized political control is likely to continue to be valued more than liberal democracy by African leaders, no matter what their ideological orientations, because of fragility of the state's position of authority. Many African

leaders appear to assume that over time improvements in the quality of life or the application of a correct ideology will allow even autocratic regimes to secure popular legitimacy. Indeed, as is proven by the case of the Soviet Union just after World War II, this is a possibility. However, such a scenario seems unlikely in the near future in most of Africa.

In some African states new rounds of constitutional development will be employed to encourage the citizenry to accept regimes' efforts to impose their own views of political, institutional, organizational, and social relations. In 1987, for example, Afro-Marxist Ethiopia introduced a constitution that spelled out the rights and obligations of the state and civil society in the language of scientific socialism.⁸¹ Since the inauguration of the constitution, the regime has been trying with difficulty to have the vision it represents accepted by the population.

Sklar suggests that, in spite of flaws and inherent contradictions, Nigeria's current phase of constitution building holds some promise of succeeding.⁸² His optimism is founded not on the projected democratic-socialist character of the new constitution, but on the fact that it promises to enshrine a constitutional form of government. This, according to Sklar, will "open the door to movements for democracy and social justice."⁸³ Yet, as Nigeria's history has shown, a constitutional form of government is no guarantee of a rapid movement toward democracy and social justice. In fact, I would argue that, as in the past, progress in this direction is likely to be fraught with false starts and setbacks of indeterminate magnitude and duration.

The leadership that guided African states to independence is gradually fading from the scene. Its legacy to the next generation of holders of state power is in most cases likely to be statist, authoritarian organization and modes of operation. This is as much true where there has been uninterrupted civilian rule as it is where military rule has predominated. It is also as true in places where the economic ideology is capitalist as it is where the hope is to build a socialist economy.

What seem to be emerging in Africa are the initial manifestations of the corporatist mode of political organization, or proto-corporatism. Corporatist ideology serves to justify authoritarian rule, and corporatist practices provide governing elites with mechanisms for controlling key socioeconomic sectors. Contemporary corporatist ideology derives from natural law doctrine and grounds its political prescriptions upon the organic view of the state. Early corporatist writers reasoned that if human beings are hierarchically ordered, specialized components of an organic whole that serve by performing specific functions, each component part of society should accept its place and serve the common good by performing the functions assigned to it.

This hierarchical vision of society easily serves to justify an authoritarian political order. Kenneth Erickson, discussing the organic view in

the Brazilian context, observed, "In organic-state thought, the ruler or rulers take the role of the brain and are supposed to see that the *general will* or national interest prevails over the specific interests of which society is composed. This view, then, holds that a discernible general will exists—greater than the sum of the desires and demands of the individuals who make up the society—and that a nation's rulers are capable of identifying it."⁸⁴ Benevolent rule by enlightened elites, therefore, is vastly superior to individualist liberal democracy, a system believed to allow rapacious special interests to pursue their own selfish ends at the expense of the common good.

Treating corporatism in practice, Philippe Schmitter said, "Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories of leaders and articulation of demands and supports."⁸⁵ The state thus controls the very existence of sectoral interest groups and sets the bounds of legitimate representation, so that rulers can pursue the common national interest, defined in today's Africa in terms of economic development.

Schmitter has identified two forms of corporatism: societal corporatism and state corporatism.⁸⁶ Societal corporatism is a pattern of institutional relationships in which the officially sanctioned sectoral interest organizations, while collaborating with each other and state policy-making elites in the pursuit of a commonly accepted national interest, speak quite autonomously for their socioeconomic sectors and actively engage the state in the defense of their constituents. In countries characterized by societal corporatism, such as the Scandinavian ones, and the Netherlands, state and peak-level interest groups therefore work in rather close interdependence.

State corporatism is an institutional arrangement in which the state seeks to co-opt or control major sectoral interest organizations, usually by establishing rules that govern their very creation as well as their behavior. Where practiced in Latin American countries such as Brazil and Mexico, state elites have sought to define the boundaries of legitimate politics and to use their control to structure and foster a process of economic development.

Corporatist tendencies exist in Africa, and what is likely to result in the years to come is a peculiarly African variant of this organizational form.⁸⁷ It will most likely be closer to the state corporatism found in parts of Latin America than to the societal corporatism that predominates in Europe. Power will be centered on the state, which will pre-

side over and be involved in a mixed economy. The degree of capitalism and privatization and the degree of central economic planning will vary from country to country. Legitimate political participation is likely to be closely controlled. This trend is already evident in countries as diverse as Zaire, Ethiopia, and Kenya. In each of these cases, there is a strong tendency for the state to overcontrol politics and to be unable to exercise sufficient control over the economy. In Zaire Mobutu has created an organic statist regime with corporatist tendencies. It possesses what Callaghy has termed "the pseudo-modern ideological and structural forms of a single party," and the state is seen as essential in the systematic regulation of politics.⁸⁸ The state class maintains a tight grip over political expression and suppresses the emergence of independent political as well as economic interests. By the early 1990s, Mobutu claimed to be entertaining a multiparty system, but there was no evidence that such a system, if it were ever established, would be completely open. What is more, the state continued to be a kleptocracy mired in debt, with an economy dominated by an informal market, virtually immune from effective regulation.

The Afro-Marxist regime in Ethiopia by 1987 had constitutionally enshrined a Marxist-Leninist party designed to neutralize ethnic and class affinities, to legitimize its rule, and to force selected members of the populace to form corporate groups for the purpose of participating in a pseudo-democratic vanguard party and in regional and national assemblies. The party and mass organizations defined by the state class were the only vehicles through which legitimate political discourse could take place. Efforts to create a centrally planned economy stalled, and large numbers of rural producers disengaged from the state.⁸⁹

In Kenya, after the death of President Jomo Kenyatta in 1978, the regime of Daniel arap Moi systematically erected an increasingly authoritarian and less democratic regime. The secret ballot, parliamentary primary election was replaced by a requirement to "queue behind your candidate." The *de facto* one-party system became *de jure*. The constitution was amended to give the president greater control over the judiciary and to broaden police arrest powers. Corporate entities such as labor unions are allowed to exist, but they are highly regulated. Local business interests are known to favor a liberalization of government policies, but they have been unwilling to press vigorously for reform. After brief consideration in 1990 of creating a multiparty system, President Moi ordered that deliberations on the topic be ended at once. However, pressure from civil society forced the Kenya African National Union (KANU), the only legitimate political party, to hold hearings on ways the party might be made more accountable and democratic. It was clear that KANU and Moi preferred liberalization somewhat short of true

liberal democracy. The economy continues to be characterized by the coexistence of active formal and informal markets, despite the government's efforts to suppress the latter.

Throughout Africa the past two decades have witnessed an erosion of democratic tendencies rather than further democratization, but the erosion in many nations need not be permanent. Countries in other parts of the world, such as Brazil, have gone through several phases where limited popular democracy and authoritarian corporatism have alternated.⁹⁰

Even in African countries where liberalization may take place in the near future, it is likely that the reigning regimes will continue to adhere to some variant of authoritarian-corporatism. Beneath the facade of fewer political prisoners, a freer press, more religious tolerance, and a more open economy, the centralized control of African states seem likely to continue and indeed become stronger. Richard Higgott has noted that "Liberalization would not necessarily mean an end to the corporatist pattern of relationships between the state and a body of functional, non-competitive and officially sanctioned interest groups in a way in which redemocratization inevitably would."⁹¹

African corporatism will persist as long as African states are soft and economically dependent, and perhaps even beyond.⁹² These deficiencies force the state toward authoritarianism and militarization. States that possess the economic resources to meet the social demands of the populace and are governmentally strong and efficient enough to project an image of legitimacy and authority experience the most success in being able to build on that legitimacy and to tolerate free and open political expression. Only Botswana currently seems to meet these criteria. Sparsely populated and relatively homogeneous ethnically, Botswana has used assets acquired from the sale of its high-quality diamonds on the international market to improve the general quality of life. In the past decade the per capita income has gone from \$290 to \$1680 per year. Almost half of government expenditures are allocated for development. Despite a recent seven-year drought, the multiparty Botswana political system remains stable.

Current trends seem to suggest that the ideologies of African states will continue either to be latent or to reflect the political preferences of the state class rather than the state's actual economic policy. Most African leaders will continue to disdain or caution against the excesses of capitalism. However, some variant of capitalism will be unavoidable in all African states because of their vulnerable positions in the world economy and because of their poverty and underdevelopment.

Even if socialism takes hold in Africa, it will have to be preceded by capital accumulation.⁹³ Sklar argues, "Socialism needs capital and lacks a theory of incentive; capitalism needs the state and lacks a theory

of social responsibility."⁹⁴ He calls for a judicious mixture of capitalism and socialism in Africa and suggests that this is the only way that African societies will progress from their current state of decay.

In the foreseeable future the state class will likely continue to be guided in most cases by patrimonial considerations rather than by economic or political rationality. It seems likely to continue to equate its hegemony more with power and control rather than with legitimacy. The best that can be hoped for is an abatement in the economic crisis which would allow the state to create incentives in the form of favorable market prices for both producers and consumers and social development policies sufficient to reengage significant numbers of the populace. This, however, is beyond the control of most African states.

DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This essay has attempted to take stock of what we know about the modern African state in theory and in practice and to speculate about its future. In the process numerous avenues for further research have surfaced.

First, there presently exists a cumulative body of knowledge about how individual African states were built and how they currently function. What we need now is more comparative studies of how African states formulate and execute domestic public policies. The studies should entail not simply an analysis of state bureaucratic agencies, but an examination of how the governing class mobilizes the state apparatus to achieve certain ends and the manner in which the central bureaucracy interacts with society at the level of implementation. There currently exists a wealth of country case studies on particular policy issues. However, there are far too few cross-sectoral and cross-national policy studies. Such studies would greatly improve our understanding of the policy-making process in Africa. Despite the difficulty of doing rigorous policy analysis in Africa because of the political sensitivity of that kind of research, initial efforts must be made.

Second, the domestic context in which African states must function is rapidly changing. Ethnicity, class, and patron-clientelism continue to be extremely significant determinants of individual and group political behavior. However, it seems reasonable to expect that as the habit of national citizenship becomes the norm; as the state penetrates to the far reaches of society, and as African economies become more diversified, ethnicity and clientelism will become generally less important than social class in explaining political behavior. This would be particularly likely if the state class continues to practice an exclusionary form of proto-corporatism, preferring to recognize and deal with some groups

and not others. Armed opposition movements throughout the continent (for example, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Africa) are inspired by the fact that large segments of these respective polities have been shut out of legitimate politics and are involved in what they perceive to be struggles for social justice if not revolution.

Third, we need a better understanding of the peculiar nature of the African state as a generic phenomenon. A form of authoritarianism (not of totalitarianism) exists to varying degrees throughout the continent. This phenomenon has corporatist traits, but there have been few case studies that have revealed the true essence of what I have called African proto-corporatism. The various forms of this phenomenon need to be identified and understood. The question remains: Will civil society in Africa accept as legitimate some form of authoritarian corporatism or will the coming decade see the emergence of movements pressing for democratization as has been recently witnessed in Algeria, Camaroon, Benin, and other parts of the non-Western world.

Fourth, the implications of state and societal decay in Africa have yet to be assessed systematically. Numerous studies have established the fact that large segments of the African populace have become disengaged from the state and spend more time trying to evade it than doing its bidding. Moreover, debt, economic stagnation, disease, lawlessness, environmental degradation, and natural calamity are common in many countries. This is not to say that most African states are on the verge of dismantlement, but only that in many places common citizens passively resist or ignore what are perceived to be the repressive and sometimes oppressive policies of the state. In other words, they "tune the state out" and focus on their most immediate needs. As pervasive as this tendency is, few studies have considered the permanency of this condition or the methods being employed by African states to reengage the populace.

Fifth, the prospects for revolution in Black Africa should not be minimized. As the rulers of certain states lose support among the nascent intellectual class because of repressive and nonprogressive policies, and as they continue to accumulate wealth and power in an excessive way, the foundations of revolutionary sentiment may be laid. This is particularly so with the growing availability of modern arms on the continent. The possibility of social revolution in contemporary Black Africa might also be fueled by the fact that throughout most of the continent domestic economies are increasingly unable to absorb the expanded pool of high school and university educated youth. These young people are increasingly cynical about the corruption and ineptness of their political leaders and are suggesting less repressive and more equitable alternatives in the application of social and economic policies. This is the kind of sentiment that led to the overthrow of Haile Salassie and is now inspiring clandestine groups that hope to challenge the

regime of Daniel arap Moi in Kenya. Military coups are almost certain to continue in Africa, but scholars should also consider the possibility of genuine social revolution. Critical assessments of revolutionary pressures in Africa are long overdue. We need to answer the questions: What are root causes of social revolution? To what extent (and where) are they to be found in Africa?

Lastly, African states tend to be heavily dependent upon external sources for critically needed economic inputs. Yet, there are times when African regimes exercise considerable autonomy from both domestic and international interests. As was demonstrated above, the state class sometimes acts in its own interest rather than being manipulated by other internal or external interests. The dependency syndrome needs to be examined so that we can better understand how the leaders of African states exercise leverage and autonomy in certain situations. Indeed, in some cases, interdependence would seem a more apt characterization of how some African states deal with their external patrons.

Despite growing scholarly efforts among Africanists to identify patterns of democratization on the continent and tendencies toward societal leverage against the state, the state is likely to remain at the center of African politics for the foreseeable future. The state's access to substantial amounts of scarce economic resources that can be used as patronage and its virtual monopoly over the means of coercion seem likely to dictate in the future the consolidation of varieties of state corporatism in Africa.

NOTES

Thanks are due to Ruth Iyob, my research assistant, for her work on this project, and to my colleagues, Ruth and David Collier, for their valuable comments and suggestions.

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 25. See Markovitz, *Power and Class in Africa*; Ake, *Political Economy of Africa*.
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89. See Keller, *Revolutionary Ethiopia*.
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