

The Study of
**AFRICAN
POLITICS**

**A Critical Appreciation
of a Heritage**

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Heinrich Böll Foundation

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Dedication

To my mother Dorca Owino and
my father Canon Hezbon Shimei Nyong'o;
for your love and care all my life.

Contents

Dedication	3
Acknowledgements	7
Preface	9
Introduction	31
A journey into the past	39

Coming nearer to the present	51
The present as history: State, governance and democracy in Africa	78
The future as history in the making	97
Bibliography	103
Index	109

Acknowledgements

As the 21st Century approached, there were various multi-faceted efforts geared towards a critical review of development in Africa. The spirit of this reflection was on Africa learning from the past, and seizing the opportunity to formulate a vision for self-development and self-determination, in the new millennium. In this spirit of Africa taking ownership and responsibility for her development, there was ambition and optimism expressed in the common question “can Africa claim the 21st Century?” Some of the initiatives that addressed this question were the Millennium Renaissance Program, the Omega Plan and the emergence of the African Union. Africans took the onset of the new millennium seriously, and people from all walks of life including leaders, politicians and scholars reflected on the prospects for Africa in the 21st Century.

In line with this spirit, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Regional Office for the Horn of Africa, organized and supported a meeting in Addis Ababa in December 1999. The Foundation felt there was need to know what Africa was all about, how societies

had developed and what kinds of social forces and institutions could build the Africa of the future, liberated from poverty and underdevelopment.

The “African Social Scientists Reflections” meeting, consisting of social scientists and politicians in Africa met to critically examine whether the social science heritage is of any relevance to the Africa of the 21st Century. This reflective thinking is closely linked to the modelling of the Foundation based on Heinrich Boll’s (whom the Foundation is named after) call to citizens to meddle in politics. Further, the Foundation strives to stimulate socio-political reform by acting as a forum for debate, both on fundamental issues and those of current interest.

The Foundation was glad to host and be part of the process of reflection, and hopes that the publications will serve to stimulate and enhance discussions in Africa, particularly among those who wanted to participate and were unable to, for various reasons. Since all of the contributions were significant they are published in a series titled “Reflections”, as

- (1) Part I Anthropology in Post-Independence Africa: End of an Era and the Problem of Self-Redefinition, by Professor Archie Mafeje
- (2) Part II Law, The Social Sciences and the Crisis of Relevance: A Personal Account, by Professor Dani Wadada Nabudere.
- (3) Part III The Study of African Politics: A Critical Appreciation of a Heritage, by Professor Peter Anyang’ Nyong’o.

I would like to extend our deep appreciation to Prof. Archie Mafeje for the academic and copy editing of the papers submitted. The spirit of the participation is captured in the Preface by Prof. Mafeje, which synthesises the discussions at the meeting with some occasional comments and questions for future reflections.

Prof. Mafeje is a well-known African scholar who has taught in a number of African as well as European and American universities.

Many thanks to Prof. Dani Nabudere, the Executive Director of the Independent Afrika Study Centre in Mbale, Uganda. He is also attached to the Islamic University of Uganda as Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science.

Special thanks to Prof. Anyang’ Nyong’o, who originally conceived of the idea of having a meeting of senior African scholars to reflect on what they had done and what their disciplines had bequeathed to Africa in terms of knowledge and social practice. Prof. Nyong’o is a renowned African scholar who has taught in universities in Kenya, Ethiopia, Mexico and North America and is currently a Member of Parliament in the Kenya National Assembly and a Fellow of the African Academy of Sciences (AAS).

Aseghedech Ghirmazion
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Preface

The idea of organising a workshop for Intellectual Reflections by senior African scholars was first originated by Peter Anyang' Nyong'o in Nairobi in 1999 in consultation with Archie Mafeje. Anyang' Nyong'o believed that it would be a great loss if the senior generation of African scholars were to exit, without leaving behind a written testament about their intellectual legacy and what they individually consider to be their contribution in their respective disciplines.

The idea itself was an excellent one but the mechanics for its implementation were not that easy. First, the category of "senior African scholars" proved not to be self-evident as some scholars fell in-between generations. Second, who was to decide which ones deserved the honour. Professional jealousies and academic deference or elitism were bound to play a role in the selection process. Third, although in reality it was not too difficult to think of some distinguished African scholars, in practice if all were invited, they would probably be too many and spread across too many disciplines

to guarantee consistency in the deliberations.

Eventually, it became expedient to limit the envisaged workshop initially to the social sciences and to no more than twelve identified participants. This was done with the supposition that similar workshops would be organised for other groups, including those who have distinguished themselves in the humanities such as literature, history, and philosophy.

Finally, there was the perennial question of who would take enough interest in the supposed African gurus or icons to finance such workshops. It was a very pleasant surprise and a felicitous coincidence to discover that the Heinrich Böll Foundation Regional Office for the Horn of Africa would not be averse to financing such an endeavour. This certainly paved the way for future collaboration.

As a sequel to these developments the Heinrich Böll Foundation organised what came to be known as the African Social Scientists Reflections meeting at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in Addis Ababa on 15-18 December 1999. The attendance was less than the organisers had envisaged. It had been hoped that all the social sciences would be represented, including at least one recognised specialist on Feminist Studies. Six participants attended:

Professor Peter Anyang' Nyong'o (political scientist)
 Professor Andreas Eshete (philosopher)
 Professor Archie Mafeje (anthropologist/sociologist)
 Dr Thandika Mkandawire (economist)
 Professor Dani W. Nabudere (lawyer)
 Ms Zenebework Tadesse (observer by choice)

Those present were not discouraged by the low turn out and were determined to make full use of the opportunity as a starting point. The meeting held six full sessions over three days. The first session was devoted to working out a timetable. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o also took the opportunity to make some opening remarks. He reiterated the idea behind the meeting and emphasised that the main criterion for selection of participants was generation and contribution to the social sciences.

Such a contribution by individuals could be judged only by the extent to which they have been able to play a role in the indigenisation of the social sciences in Africa and in the deconstruction of Eurocentrism. He saw good prospects for interdisciplinarity in forging a new self-identity in Africa and in debunking imposed identities and forms of knowledge. Some points of clarification were raised and some elaborations made on Anyang's introductory remarks but no substantive disagreements emerged.

The rest of the session was reserved for reading the only three available papers

of which each had a discussant assigned. It is worth noting here that all three papers were not written specifically for the “Reflections”. Although written papers are better than no papers at all, they often divert the discussion away from the set topic of the workshop. Authors often find it difficult either because of lack of time or the force of their own mental-sets to come around to the specific requirements of the task in hand. It is no doubt a bad habit that organisers should guard against so as to avoid disappointment.

SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS

The second session started off with a presentation of a paper entitled “Africa in the New Millennium: Towards a Post-Traditional Renaissance” by Dani Nabudere. The author pointed out that the paper was written for a seminar on Development and Globalisation that was held in Scandinavia. In that context the paper covered a wide range of issues, starting from small village communities and women’s survival groups to “globalisation”. Appropriately enough, Nabudere’s proposed slogan was “Act locally, think globally.” Implicit in this epigram was the belief that it was local struggles in the villages that can guarantee African rebirth/resurgence/renaissance and ensure a rejection of neo-traditionalism that had been instituted by the colonial state. However, Nabudere warned that this should not be seen in isolation but in solidarity with other local groups elsewhere in the world. The argument here seemed to be that if the driving force towards globalisation is domination, then globalised resistance based on “global consciousness” is its antithesis. Then, it became a question how this view could be reconciled with Nabudere’s rejection of universalism in favour of “Africanity” or African self-identity.

In his advocacy of local groups as being the best hope for democracy and the future in Africa, Nabudere presented a very negative view of the African state and called for its “dismantlement”. He had no difficulty in pointing out that the post-colonial African has been a disaster politically, economically, and socially. In the circumstances neither development nor democracy has been achieved, he contended. In his view, this created the necessary grounds for a new “social contract” from below. Apart from the village communities and self-help groups, he did not specify what other forces the “below” includes or does not include e.g. traditional monarchs and chiefs who might be part of the “neo-traditionalism” to which he is strongly opposed. It seemed that in his modality “village community”/“global solidarity” Nabudere had omitted the national level and thus failed to address properly the national question.

In debunking “nation-building” and the concept of the “nation-state” Nabudere was inclined to treat the state as necessarily antithetical to “democracy”. Whether this was inspired by theories of the “withering away “ of the state, the current political

trends in Europe, or the failure of the African state, it proved to be a very contentious supposition or proposition. Parallel to this, Nabudere excluded the national bourgeoisie or what he dismissively referred to as the “territorial bourgeoisie” from the “social contract” that was supposed to usher genuine democracy in Africa. In real terms, without the state and the national bourgeoisie or local capitalists, it seemed that in his paradigm Nabudere was headed towards an unconscious creation of a palpable socio-political void in African societies. He referred to the case of the Somali Republic that has survived precisely because it relied on the traditional gerontocracy and local communities and to the revival of the kingdom of Buganda in Uganda and its self-globalisation to bolster his argument and to demonstrate the feasibility of what he calls “post-traditional” democracies. These though might yet prove to be transient political episodes in time of a crisis and not the inauguration of a democratic developmental state in Africa.

Diffuse local structures are no substitute for over-arching governmental structures in the process of development. Perhaps, inadvertently, he acknowledged this point when he showed how the Ogoni, Ijo, and other groups in the Niger delta obliged the Nigerian government to do what they could not by themselves, namely, more equitable distribution of national oil revenues. But then he vitiated this insight by concluding that: “They show that a small ethnic group of half a million people can have more impact on global capital than states.” This is a non-sequitor and is contrary to actual reality. The fact that African states are keen to make concessions to global capital than to protect their national interests does not mean that states in general lack the potential capacity to do so. It simply depends on the type of state one is talking about, as is implicit in some of Nabudere’s critical comments on the African state.

Commenting directly on the heritage of the social sciences in Africa, Nabudere referred to two diametrically opposed orientations. He characterised one of these as Eurocentric and subservient to European social science and the other as Afrocentric in that it is steeped in African roots and is committed to emancipating social science knowledge from the past. This came over as part of his intellectual trajectory for the 21st century in Africa.

In this connection he made some scathing remarks about what Achille Mbembe tried to do during his tenure as Executive Secretary of CODESSRIA. He saw Mbembe’s intellectual agenda as a return not so much to Eurocentricity but as a return to “Western-centricity” in which Europe is combined with North America and which is aimed at making social science epiphenomenal or metaphysical under the aegis of postmodernism. To this, Nabudere objected most strenuously and urged African intellectuals to start where they are, namely, in the African villages.

This tallies with Nabudere’s earlier view that the African renaissance will

begin in the African villages. It also denotes his notion of “liberating research.” He complained that social sciences in Africa had not played their role in helping people liberate themselves. This was a surprising volte-face because in his initial discussion of the social sciences in Africa he had claimed that there was a tendency that was an antithesis of Eurocentric social science and had “Pan-Africanist roots” and that its role was to emancipate social science knowledge from the past and to deal with the objective conditions in Africa. What could have been more serviceable? In addition, he talked proudly of their debates at Dar es Salaam University. Were they irrelevant and a waste of time? Apparently not, as will be seen in Nabudere’s subsequent contribution to the “Reflections” entitled “Law, the Social Sciences, and the Crisis of Relevance”.

There were many other points which Nabudere raised, among them the role of the World Bank in Africa, the implications and the future of the “Washington Consensus”, the global economy and prospects for the 21st millennium in Africa. But what proved most controversial are his views on (i) the significance of African village communities and self-help groups in the global context; (ii) the dismissal of the African state in favour of local communities in the period of reconstruction in Africa; (iii) failure to reconcile the need for a democratic developmental state in Africa with the emergence of the so-called “post-traditional” reconstructions in the villages; and (iv) the question of whether or not African social science has made any contribution in the development of the continent.

On the first issue Nabudere was accused of romanticising the village communities and of over-estimating their capacity to bring about radical national transformation. Instead of limiting himself to dismantling the African state and the celebration of local democracy, he was challenged to say precisely what it would take to create a “democratic developmental state” in Africa that would accept responsibility for all and ward off the deleterious effects of globalisation. In other words, what was his conception of the National Question in Africa in the present historical juncture? It was felt that this question was pertinent because the community groups from the developed countries e.g. the Scandinavian countries he saw as allies were protected and at times funded by their own governments. This is not true of African community groups. Instead, unlike the former, they are faced with the simple question of survival. Under the circumstances the moral and political injunction was that we should not celebrate life-long struggles for survival and exonerate African states from their social responsibilities.

The second issue argued that under the present conditions in the world there is no way we could dissociate social democracy from a democratic state that accepts responsibility for social development. It was maintained that the latter task was too huge to be expected of under-capitalised and socially deprived village communities

and groups. The obvious implication is that in our circumstances development “from below” can only mean democratic participation in national or sub-regional development and reconstruction. At the moment there is lack of a clear theoretical perspective on how this could be brought about or how a democratic developmental state could be realised. One thing certain is that the progressive petit-bourgeoisie and patriotic bourgeoisie will inevitably play a critical role in its construction. This is a hypothesis, which engaged social science researchers might have to revisit afresh, instead of being guided by presuppositions.

On the third issue even though there was a revulsion against any form of social and political romanticism, conceptually it is possible to reconcile development “from below” with a permeable “democratic developmental state”. These are two sides of the same coin and can only realise themselves through instituted forms of exchange. As the World Bank has come to realise, anti-state development perspectives are of no avail. It can easily be argued that the weaker the civil society, the greater the need for state inputs and solicitude. The logic of all this is well known to Dani Nabudere, as a committed socialist. Or is this no longer applicable?

The fourth issue dwelt on whether or not African social sciences have made any contribution to the liberation of the continent. This is one of the questions, which the “Reflections” were meant to answer. But *prima facie* it can be said that the contesters such as were found in organisations such as CODESRIA, SAPEM, AAPS, IDEP and some university campuses in the first ten years or more after independence made a historically important intellectual contribution. Furthermore, it can also be said that, although this might not have led to the liberation of the African people, these representations put on the nationalist agenda some important questions. Out of necessity, the outside world had to come to terms with some of these, albeit grudgingly. This intellectual trend seems to be continuing against all odds. After reading Nabudere’s representations, nobody can be in doubt about the veracity of this assertion.

However, there are signs that the trend itself is ripe for auto-critique. Dani Nabudere’s paper provoked a great deal of discussion which, while not on the topic of the seminar, showed that critical African intellectuals are at the crossroads and have to rethink the political suppositions of the nationalist movement. Even those who think that it failed still have to contend with the problem of what constitutes authentic representations. This has nationalistic connotations that force those concerned to assert what they think are desirable new identities in the wake of the failure of the nationalist movement against globalisation and Northern universalistic claims. On the other hand, there are those who think that, seen in a historical perspective, the nationalist movement did not fail but got confronted at some stage with problems

that it either did not foresee or have the intellectual and political tools to deal with. This being the case, those who so think believe that there is no going back and that the only way forward is to identify these shortcomings and see how they could be rectified. This might be the beginning of a broader meta-nationalism that has a better appreciation of internal negative forces as well as the threat of globalisation than the nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s. African dictatorships might not be an aberration but a result of a combination of internal and external factors that go beyond individual petty dictators.

The intensity with which these issues were debated at the workshop by a small group of African intellectuals shows that the Africans might be down but not defeated. When it came to their continent and its reconstitution for the future, the participants simply could not stop talking, which is an indication that they do not have enough opportunities to exchange views and reach some consensus or get to know the complexities of their common desire. Till this is achieved, they will not be able to acquire the necessary cohesiveness to act as effective advocates of social and political transformation.

The second day saw the presentation of Thandika Mkandawire's paper entitled "African Intellectuals and Nationalists" that was written for a conference in Australia. The presentation was very concise and to the point. In summary it could be said that the paper was written in defence of the nationalist movement in Africa and the role of African intellectuals in its evolution. Mkandawire argued that there has been an undue concentration on the failures of the nationalist movement and less on its achievements. In his view this is equally true of the African leaders. He believes that immediately after independence African leaders made significant progress in development by investing in education for all, by improving healthcare facilities and infrastructure, and by making a serious drive towards import-substitution. Given this kind of endeavor, he believes that they cannot be accused of having sought high office only for personal gain.

This is all true but what became an issue is subsequent failures. It is possible that because of their belief in themselves and in their cause the first generation of African leaders found it difficult to surrender power. Their ensuing desire to stay in power obliged them to find illegitimate ways of clinging to it. This included abuse of power that detracted from their original nationalist goals. This was a destructive and perverse response for which they must be held accountable, despite Mkandawire's justified demand for mitigation. Irrespective of their initial achievements, African leaders and their governments are indictable for having created a negative model for political self-reproduction. Those who came after them, including the military, found a ready-made model for self-aggrandizement that did not need any pretence about

development. The African citizens are now enduring the effects of this legacy.

Arguing a case in mitigation, Mkandawire contended that African intellectuals thought the same about development as their political leaders and that they endorsed the national project that comprised nation-building, economic and social development, democratization, and regional cooperation. While this is true, it can be pointed out that it did not commit African intellectuals to the same power mongering as their “presidents for life”. Instead, they got disaffected and started to express views that were critical of the behavior of their governments. Hence, African governments in general became anti-intellectual. It was not out of any cynicism or belief that they could do without intellectuals, as Mkandawire is inclined to think. It was a straightforward political reaction to a potential social threat. In so far as this is true, Mkandawire might have gained by not identifying the nationalist movement as a dynamic social phenomenon with its particular leaders who are by definition more finite. It has to be acknowledged that leaders at a given historical moment are an important index of their movements but at the same time they are not their embodiment. The nationalist movement in Africa has not failed. It continues to usher different historical phases which bring about the atrophy of its erstwhile leaders. Critical African intellectuals, unlike their atrophied political persecutors, are an organic part of the dynamic nationalist movement on the continent. To be so, they do not have to be beholden to existing authoritarian African regimes nor do they have to be seen pottering in the mud. Their job is to create through the critical intellect socially and politically relevant ideas.

Even though he castigated African intellectuals for not being organic enough, he seemed to hold a strong brief for them, especially against their foreign detractors. He argued that African intellectuals do not only exist but are also a force to reckon with. He protested that the fact that there is no written sociology of them does not mean that they do not exist. He referred in particular to the work of CODESRIA and the phases through which it went during his stewardship. The record was so positive that he takes pride in it. But he seems to suggest that even so they did not become part of the nationalist movement.

The veracity of Mkandawire’s claim is seriously in doubt. In fact, it is arguable that it is the nationalist fervor that kept the African intellectuals in organizations such as CODESRIA, SAPEM, and AAPS buoyant. It is the same that has exposed them to accusations of being subjective or ideological, as if there are anywhere in the world intellectual representations that have no underlying value-premise. Organic African intellectuals have been in the forefront of the struggle for “democratization” in Africa since its inception in the late 1980s, which is a struggle for a “second independence” or a new Pan-Africanism. The fact that these struggles have not yet come to fruition does not invalidate the observable fact. The struggle is relatively young and, contrary

to Mkandawire's suggestion in his presentation; it was never part of the nationalist agenda at independence because it was assumed then that the overthrow of colonial imposition would automatically bring "uhuru".

In addition to its prescriptions, the nationalist agenda also had prohibitions. Mkandawire referred to these as taboo topics. Among these was any acknowledgement of tribal and ethnic claims. These were believed to be incompatible with national unity and hence the adoption of a one-party system on pragmatic grounds. Mkandawire wondered how the so-called national unity could be achieved in the face of cultural and linguistic diversity. He found it ironical that, if achieved, the same unity could militate against regional cooperation or Pan-Africanism. This harked back to Nabudere's pre-occupation with local identities and organizational structures. It seemed as if we had moved from the earlier nationalist obsession with the state to a new one with ethnicity as the essence of democratic pluralism. As will be seen, regarding the latter, Mkandawire objected most strongly to the treatment of the "state" and "ethnicity" as dialectical opposites. This approach was viewed with skepticism by several members of the group. Mkandawire himself was not convinced that ethnic identities were necessarily the building blocks of a democratic developmental state in Africa. This issue was debated further after Mkandawire's presentation that dealt largely with African intellectuals rather than African social scientists.

During the discussion, Mkandawire's view about African intellectuals were strongly challenged. In particular members of the group found his contention that African intellectuals were alienated from the nationalists unwarranted. Numerous cases were cited to show that African intellectuals had always been inspired by nationalist struggles and that these gave justification for their claim to an independent identity. Mkandawire did no more than quibble about minor details. In fact, his was a hard line to hit because he was talking not to Australians but to the very subjects of the process whose personal histories are known to him. There was even a suggestion that the nationalist representations of African intellectuals were so persistent that they have had an impact on research and development programmes abroad. Reference was made to the book that Mkandawire himself helped to edit, *Our Continent, Our Future* (1999) which had a devastating effect on the so-called Washington Consensus.

It would have been very unnatural for Mkandawire not to acknowledge such a great feat by militant African scholars. However, even such a concession did not stop the participants from piling it on Mkandawire by asking, for instance, how he would characterize the intellectual representations of African scholars who worked under the auspices of CODESRIA, AAPS, SAPEM, and OSSREA. The point was made and Mkandawire could not respond in kind. Nonetheless, there was a plea that Afrocentrism or the deconstruction of Eurocentrism should not be construed as an absolute rejection of the influence of European thinking on African scholars but rather

as a rejection of assumed European intellectual hegemony. Nabudere in particular insisted that this was an intrinsic part of the process of globalisation. None of the participants was willing to accept globalisation as a felicitous happening. This might also be a nationalistic reaction against the threat of globalisation, which is not a matter of ignoring it but rather of resisting it instead in order to guarantee self-autonomy or a multi-polar global system.

After the lively and sustained exchange on African intellectuals, the debate reverted to the question of “development” and “democracy”. At stake was the perennial issue of whether development was a necessary condition for democracy or the other way round. After moving back and forth for about one-third of the whole session, the participants gradually came to the conclusion that the two were not mutually exclusive, as is implied by the idea of a “democratic developmental state”. In turn, the latter concept provoked a return to the earlier debate about the necessity or the dispensability of the state. The majority view was that under the present circumstances in Africa, and globally, the state was a necessary major player. Mkandawire was most insistent on this point, despite the fact that in his presentation he blamed African intellectuals for concentrating too much on the state. The ultimate question put to those who shared this position was “who would go to bring about the institutionalisation of the desired form of state in Africa?” No ready-made answers could be given to this question and consequently the participants retreated into anecdotes and personal dialogues or bantering among themselves as if to release tension. It is apparent that African scholars are not sure of the agency of their proclaimed African renaissance or democratic developmental state. They have the conviction but not the requisite sociological knowledge or wisdom. The burden for research in this area might yet fall on the African social scientists themselves. After all, the guiding principle is that men and women can only raise such questions as can be answered.

Finally, a special appeal was made to Mkandawire that he should continue from where they left off in “Our continent, Our Future”. It was felt that it is not enough for African economists to deconstruct the World Bank paradigm without offering an alternative for future development in Africa or an African economic perspective for the 21st century. Indeed, Mkandawire told a number of stories which showed that neo-classical theory was at sixes and sevens, if not totally bankrupt, and that the new generation of economists were able to show this, without meaning to and to the embarrassment of the World Bank gurus. This is just what the participants wanted to hear from a seasoned African economist and, accordingly, demanded a written record of this legacy by someone who has been through it all. Whether this is a burden or an honour, it was left to Mkandawire to decide. In the meantime, we are all waiting with

anticipation.

The next submission was by Peter Anyang' Nyong'o in a paper entitled "The Study of African Politics". According to the author, the paper had gone through various stages. Originally, it was intended to be part of an introductory text on African politics way back in 1978 but events overtook him and his collaborator, Michael Chege. This partly explains the fact that the paper was very much dated. This notwithstanding, Anyang' assured the participants that, while he did not intend to produce a new text, he had every intention of developing the paper further. To this end, he proposed to divide the paper into four parts. Part I reviews the contributions of other social scientists to the study of politics, particularly anthropology, sociology, and "American sources". Part II is concerned with "recent theories" on politics, especially "dependency" theory and political economy. Part III, "The Present as History", concentrated on the state of the arts. "What is it that we are now doing in studying politics?" This involved a discussion of governance, democracy, and the state. Part IV, which had not been written yet but designated as "The Future as History in the Making", was meant to answer the question: "What is African politics likely to be like in the next millennium?"

Against this background, Anyang' started off by discussing the influence of anthropology on the study of African politics. In his view what was most striking and enduring was the classification of African societies into those that had a state (centralized) and those that were stateless ("acephalous").

This dichotomy was supposed to have certain implications for the study of politics and for the future political development in Africa. Whereas Anyang' inferred that one of the implications for the former was that "acephalous" societies were not amenable to the study of politics, he did not consider the implications for the latter. For instance, did centralized traditional states in Africa predispose the post-colonial states towards authoritarianism? Or vice versa - can the "acephalous" be used as a model for egalitarianism at the local level in a way that is reminiscent of Nabudere's model? Among other things, this would mean that if there was "tribal equilibrium" as anthropologists were inclined to believe, it did not connote the same thing. In passing, Anyang' had observed that the anthropologists were not interested in analysing internal or external contradictions. A more dynamic approach to African politics would have to investigate these in a historical perspective so as to illuminate the present, instead of limiting itself to "tribalism" or "ethnicity".

The next topic Anyang' introduced was "American sources". This referred specifically to American "behaviouralism" which is supposed to have overthrown both British political philosophy and structural-functionalism as espoused by Talcott Parsons and Max Weber (Max Weber might have influenced Parsons but he was no structural-functionalist, as is shown by his ideal-type constructs such as "charismatic

leader”, “traditional leader”, and “modern bureaucracy”). The latter aside, Anyang’s main target was Systems Analysis as advocated by David Easton (1965). Easton’s behaviouralism became very influential, especially in East Africa, as is shown by the earlier work of such writers as Goran Hyden, Martin Doornbos, and others. Nevertheless, it is debatable whether it overthrew structural-functionalism or even British speculative or interpretative political philosophy that was stoutly maintained by Ali Mazrui throughout, despite its gross under-representation in Africa. In the mid-1960s when James Coleman was in East Africa, he managed to establish some form of neo-structural-functionalism, which was in effect a return to the anthropological tradition of looking at politics from the point of view of existing institutions and structures and not from the point of view of competitive incumbency. This is where tradition is supposed to shape the emerging new structures. This is best exemplified by the volume entitled *Government and Rural Development in East Africa: Essays on political penetration*, edited by L. Cliffe, J. S. Coleman, and Martin Doornbos (1966). In addition, behaviouralism was in competition with modernisation theories in Africa (David Apter had joined the club as far back as 1961; see his *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*) that made individual behaviour contingent on value-orientation. It transpires, therefore, that Anyang’s suppositions or assertions about the influence of the various sources he alludes to on the growth of political science in Africa need further investigation.

Anyang’ makes an interesting supposition that behaviouralism in the social sciences in general was instigated by the American desire to provide a bank of knowledge on the “new nations” that was serviceable to American imperialism. This claim, plausible as it is, would be very difficult to verify. But to validate his case, Anyang’ referred the participants to the programmes of the Committee on the Comparative Study of New Nations that was officially sponsored in America. Interestingly enough, to back up his hypothesis, he refers to the Latin Americans who, unlike the Africans, were “not impressed with behaviouralism” but instead detected its imperialist underpinnings. In his view, this claim finds confirmation in Raul Prebisch’s work that inaugurated the “dependency” theory in Latin America, which found its highest edification in the writings of Gunder Frank. Here, it is obvious that Anyang’ is laying the ground for the theoretical negations of behaviouralism *a la Americana*. Indeed, in the early 1970s the *dependencia* theory took the centre stage in development theory in Africa. Although it was not limited to political science, it had a great impact on political scientists with leftist leanings. Among these may be mentioned Colin Leys who worked on Kenya, Bonnie Campbell who worked on Cote d’Ivoire, and Claude Ake who worked within a general Pan-Africanist framework. However, as Anyang’ pointed out, it was Walter Rodney, the historian from the University of Dar es Salaam

who popularized the dependencia theory in Africa in his best seller, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1971). What does this tell us about the bulk of African political scientists? Anyang' was disturbingly silent on the latter.

Nonetheless, he saw political economy as another important source in the development of political science in Africa. While approving of political economy as a useful general framework within which to work, he accused it of being reductionist in that in its concern about the economic base and the political superstructure it forgot about the "actors". He commended the so-called Dar School for having made a detailed study of the "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" in the East African countries. But even in this case, he contended, the emphasis was on the "dominant" classes and not so much on the "dominated" classes. As a corrective to this, he referred to the Kenyan Debate towards the end of the 1970s (see *Review of African Political Economy*, 20, 1981) in which they sought to find out what the various categories of actors were actually doing. According to him, this helped them to comprehend class-formation not in terms of only two major classes (the classical dual model). For all he could see, Anyang' believes that during the period in hand African politics became a study of authoritarianism. Unhappily, this assertion does not tally with Anyang's other claim that from "1968 to the 1980s very little was written on African politics". If so, how did "authoritarianism" become a major pre-occupation?

It is quite conceivable that Anyang's estimation is uninformed and, therefore, unjustified. The period between 1968 and 1975 was dominated largely by the dependencia theory, which did not have politics as its field of reference. It could be said that the period between 1975 and 1985 was dominated by political economy, which did not make any distinction among the disciplines. However, from 1986 onwards democracy became the major pre-occupation among African social scientists. Although the debate was open to all, the political scientists predominated by far. Reference could be made to well-known African political scientists such as Claude Ake, Mamndani, Ibbo Mandaza, Nzongola, Tandon, Molutsi, Sithole, Nnoli, Jinadu, Jibrin Ibrahim, Founou, and Peter Anyang' himself. This could have been a prelude to the democratization movement that reached its climax in 1990. If these representations are considered "very little", then what about the period thereafter in which the debate on ethnicity became almost an obsession among political scientists of all generations. Virtually, all the political scientists enumerated above engaged vigorously in that debate throughout the 1990s.

But, in addition, there was a whole crew of younger African political scientists, most of whom participated in the multi-national project on Ethnicity in Africa sponsored by CODESRIA and coordinated by Nnoli. Their exact composition, numbers, and their individual contributions are readily available in CODESRIA, which is now headed by one of their leading lights, Adebayo Olukoshi. There is, therefore,

absolutely no justification for Anyang' to have ignored all this wealth and to limit his references on African political scientists to only four members of the old guard. It is also worth noting that Anyang's systematic review of the growth of African political science stopped where dependencia and political economy ended i.e. the mid-1970s. Thereafter, he broke out into an unsystematic discussion of a variety of interesting topics about African politics. For somebody who is actively involved in politics, this is perfectly understandable. But it might not be what was expected, as the discussion that followed his presentation will show.

The first question that was raised after Anyang' had rested his case was on the anthropological connection in the development of political science. Was the anthropological heritage facilitative or detrimental? Immediately, Anyang' could not say "yes" or "no" because he had not considered in any depth the negative impact its designating categories might have had on the conceptualisation of the questions that political science sought to answer. He was clear on the question of invention of "tribalism" and graciously deferred to the "Dean of tribalism", namely, Archie Mafeje whose seminal paper on the subject that was published in 1971 led to a turn-about in the thinking of African social scientists about the bogey of tribalism. The same was not true of the question of "ethnicity" that has been with us for the last twenty years. Democratic "pluralism" presages that "ethnic" identities be recognised. But the fissiparous tendencies to which this leads have proved bothersome. "Ethnicity" is definitely not a colonial invention but that of the African nationalists in retreat. Although not referring to this specific point, in the course of the discussion Anyang' made a very pertinent observation, namely, that the post-colonial state was not solely a colonial invention but that of the African nationalists as well. It is conceivable that "ethnicity" is indeed a creation of beleaguered African leaders or presidents for life. But then this thesis is contrary to the presuppositions of those who consider recognition of such local identities as a necessary condition for democratic pluralism. Any political scientist, let alone a practicing politician, would be hard put to deny this moral claim. This granted, what would be the social and philosophical limits to such claims? Could some of these claims be spurious or simply anti-revolutionary?

This question could have provided grounds for a hot debate between Anyang' and Nabudere who was the designated discussant but during the discussion they were interested in complementing each other than on crossing swords. Thus, everybody kept skirting around the issue of ethnicity in Africa. Was it a matter of interpretation or a substantive issue? Was it a question of expediency or a matter of principle? The issue became so intractable that the philosopher participant from, significantly enough, Ethiopia suggested that the issue should be dealt with "from case to case". Philosophically understood, this meant that the issue could not be theoretically

clarified and could only be dealt with substantively. Interestingly enough, the same speaker at another critical moment surmised that the phenomenon might be transient, given the fact that in another few decades the majority of the African population will live in the urban areas where local identities will matter less. As would be expected of any philosopher, this was a perfectly logical inference but does not exhaust the field of discourse. Ethnicity is not a rural phenomenon. It is only invoked in the rural constituencies by national leaders who are usually based in the urban areas. As a matter of fact, it manifests itself most strongly in African central bureaucracies where contestation for power is most concentrated.

Although Anyang' in his presentation gave the impression that anthropologists were concerned only with tribes and their equilibrium, this is not entirely true because they had carried their mischief to the urban areas. They found "tribal associations" in virtually every African city. This is so much so that one of them, Max Gluckman, objected to their tribal fixation and declared that "when an African comes to town, he is urbanized" and that "an African miner is a miner like any other miner in the world". These were very brave pronouncements but they did not change the anthropological paradigm. Nevertheless, even within that paradigm there were some very beautiful urban studies that became classics in their own right. Among these may be mentioned E. P. Epstein's *Politics in an Urban African Community* (1958) and Mitchell's famous *Kalela Dance* (1956). These were intellectually inspired and intellectually inspiring studies by the avant-garde British anthropologists but they could not comprehend the behavior of Africans, except in the tribal metaphor, irrespective of the context. Thus, their texts were mistaken in conception but not in ethnography detail.

In other words, there is every possibility of deconstructing them, without denying their ethnographic relevance in a social historical perspective. This is thoroughly consistent because at some point in the discussions there was a complaint that while African political scientists insisted on Afrocentrism, they seemed to be ethnographically innocent, unlike the anthropologists. Accordingly, the participants emphasized the necessity of an ethnographic grasp in the study of African politics. The question is no longer who are these people you are talking about but rather what are they about. In other words, the Kalela dance by the Kalenjin-speakers is not just a dance but a statement that could be understood otherwise i.e. decoded. Such great attention to ethnographic detail could explain the apparent incoherence of African social formations and the authorship of current authoritarianism in Africa, without assuming an original sin.

From the point of view of political science, this takes us further away from political economy and drives us towards some form of particularism. Indeed, some participants complained not so much about the universalist pretensions of political

economy but more about its levelling effect where distinctions among various forms of existence and being are reduced to a “common denominator”. Interestingly enough, from an academic point of view, some felt that not only does this lead to superficiality but also to the disappearance of disciplinary boundaries. This was an interesting volte-face on the part of those who so spoke because in another context they are known advocates of interdisciplinarity and in the discussions in the workshop they were dabbling in all sorts of subjects. This points to the need to outline the legacy of the various social science disciplines so as to be able to see more clearly their weaknesses and strengths and their undeniable lines of convergence. Although this seemed to be a contradiction in terms, after some exchange of views the participants agreed that the fault lied not in political economy but in the indolence of those who used this approach. It was argued that, as the work of classical economists such as Ricardo demonstrates, political economy is not incompatible with detailed and painstaking studies. This was an interesting resolution of the problem. But it did not solve the problem of the disciplines in that ideography is what is supposed to distinguish the social sciences from the humanities.

In the meantime, there is evidence of growing convergence between the humanities and the social sciences e.g. anthropology and social history, cultural anthropology and literary criticism, and possibly economics and social philosophy, as will be seen in the next section. Finally, it was pointed out that political economy was not necessarily radical. Nonetheless, those who claimed so did not carry this point to its logical conclusion by declaring that political economy is positivist, as Marx did in his *Critique of the Political Economy*. The relevance of this would be that those African social scientists who chose to use this approach combined it with neo-Marxism which, ostensibly, would be anti-empiricist and openly normative, for example, against exploitation or poverty. It is apparent that African social scientists have a number of theoretical and methodological issues to clarify for themselves. Perhaps, this is why the organizers decided to invite at least one philosopher.

Appropriately enough, the following day started off with a presentation by Andreas Eshete. His was an oral presentation in the absence of a written text. Nevertheless, he honored his brief, as is shown by his opening remarks: “In general I will speak on how philosophy, in particular social and political philosophy, influenced the social sciences. The idea being that this might be useful to the exercise that we are undertaking here”. In a very systematic and consistent manner, as it behooves a philosopher, he sought to show first of all how there was a shift in philosophy from an obsession with the “epistemic” which gives priority to conceptual issues to a concern with substantive issues. He attributes this gestalt shift to the impact of social movements such as the anti-Vietnam war movement and the civil rights movement in

the United States, and to factors that were internal to philosophy itself. According to him, this shift in perspective was inaugurated by John Rawles' seminal work, *Theory of Justice* (1951). He credits Rawles for having tackled headlong substantive issues in philosophy for the first time. Be this as it may, there is some doubt about the critical effect of the social movements cited because he anticipated them by a good ten years. Irrespective of the possible disjuncture in chronology, what emerges is that Rawles reinstated "contractarianism" as against the utilitarianism of the 19th century. This idea was certainly going to have a great appeal to Nabudere, who in his presentation advocated a "new social contract" in Africa. This would be compatible for, according to Eshete; Rawles was not very Catholic with respect to methodology and thus borrowed freely from other disciplines such as the social sciences, choice theory, and history.

In both theory and methodology Eshete found a definite affinity between Rawles and Sen. To justify his case, he referred the participants to Sen's *Developmental Freedom*, which was based appropriately enough on his address to the World Bank. Like Rawles, Sen is credited for having evolved a concept of justice that should inform social development or existence. In Eshete's view this echoes back to the classical economists who were concerned not only with economics but also with social issues. He warned his listeners that they would be surprised to learn that Adam Smith believed that economic development depended on historical and cultural contingencies. While he upheld the principle of sensitivity to difference, Eshete resisted the idea of dividing the world into "localism" versus "cosmopolitanism" and described the belief that "there are only local stories to tell" as "anti-theoretical". While he would not commit himself to universalism, he maintained that all societies have the same problems and that the only difference is that the developed countries do not recognise this. They are, therefore, impervious to the fact that by helping underdeveloped countries to solve their problems, they are by the same token solving their own problems. This is what the theory of justice would predicate. But this would be at variance with actually existing imperialism.

The theory of justice might be able to re-define the terms of reference but it cannot guarantee their translation into practice. This is not a philosophical question but a political one. In practice how does one get the developed and underdeveloped countries to identify with one another? For the time being, it must be acknowledged that, if universalism exists, it exists in contradiction. This poses a very serious dilemma for intellectuals in the Third World. "International justice" is a perfectly logical construct but one that is very difficult to realize in practice. As Eshete hypothetically asked, if national resources are constitutionally recognized as common property, why can the same not apply to world resources? We all live on the same globe and suffer equally the consequences of development in any part of the world. In Eshete's view, this renders

any rules of exclusion illogical and irrational. He believes that it is important to make this apparent to the developed countries. But, from all appearances, it seems that enlightened self-interest is harder to administer than the quest for relative advantage. Eshete asked rhetorically: “What exactly are the obligations of the well-advantaged to the rest”. He wanted to know whether this should be seen as a matter of charity, as an obligation to humanity, or a matter of justice. To those who are on the receiving-end, the answer is self-evident.

Interestingly enough, when it came to the discussion, the questions raised were mainly technical and not social philosophical. For instance, quite a number of participants sought an evaluation of the representations of known black pretenders such as Mudimbe, Apiah, Cornell West, and Sergut Berhan. First, Eshete noted that he tried to talk not so much about the influence of philosophy on the social sciences but rather about the impact and relevance of the new social and political philosophy. Having said so, he pointed out that this tends “to exclude a great many African and African-American philosophers”. He cautioned that this does not mean that they do not address public issues but that they do so “sometimes naively, sometimes not so naively, but as activists”. To illustrate his point, he used Edward Said (perhaps, unjustifiably since he is not a philosopher) as an example. He observed that Edward Said draws a lot from philosophy in his work “but where philosophy has a bearing on his work, it is on his work on culture – not on the Palestinian issue. On the Palestinian issue he speaks much the same way that Chomsky would be talking about journalists – he speaks as a public intellectual not as an academic”, he elaborated. Edward Said’s representations notwithstanding, in the course of the discussion it transpired that Africans and African-Americans who have philosophical pretensions have a better market value as public intellectuals rather than as academics. It seemed that this was one explanation why they did not feature in the new social/political philosophy and did not engage in the debate on the theory of justice.

The next point of interest was the post-modernists, be it in an ambivalent way or outright skepticism. If there were still any lingering doubts about the post-modernist philosophers Eshete was more than willing to disillusion those concerned. Contrasting them with the philosophers of justice such as Rawles and Sen, he stated quite unequivocally: “Post-modernists are people who are skeptics about the very project of justifying anything. They are confident that any project of justification can be shown to rest ultimately on considerations of interest, on contingent things. Ethical justifications, rational justifications, or writing, conversation on anything like that they think are epiphenomenal. “So most of the stories they tell are negative stories about how everything can be unmasked. Of course, one can see for instance why it is that people from the Third World would be drawn to that unmasking because there is a great deal to be unmasked”, he concludes.

It appears, therefore, that the project of the post-modernists is deconstruction, without reconstruction. As of now, Eshete informed the participants, post-modernism has been naturalized by Americans and is of no consequence in its native France. However, this did not exhaust the discussion on post-modernism for, as Eshete himself acknowledges, the most interesting and striking work inspired by post-modernists is in anthropology. As is known, writers such as Rorty, Fabian, and Escobar contributed greatly to what came to be known as “critical anthropology” or “reflexive anthropology”. Although championed by Northerners, this had a bearing on anthropology in Africa where anthropology loomed large among the social sciences and where there was the greatest pressure to “decolonize” anthropology. This means that for those who propose to use anthropological antecedents, there is a compelling need to rethink their theoretical connotations. This also applies with equal force to those who see local communities and “traditional” institutions and forms of social organization as the probable source of social democracy in Africa. As had been pointed out “cultural diversity” is not without problems and so is the so-called “dialogue between cultures” at the global level. It would appear, therefore, that even in the case of post-modernists a point has been reached where critique of critique has to be seriously contemplated. Eshete pointedly accused the post-modernists of partiality, if not nihilism. Nobody seemed to disagree.

Archie Mafeje gave the last presentation. It was a straightforward account of how anthropology developed as a discipline, its impact on Africa, and of how Africans reacted. In accordance with the terms of reference of the workshop, Mafeje also gave an account of the role he played as an African anthropologist. His main thesis was that anthropology is a child of imperialism. Not only did it play a critical role in the subjugation of Third World peoples but also was premised on alterity i.e. it was based on the epistemology of subjects and objects. This being the case, anthropology was bound to be plunged into a deep crisis by contemporary struggles against colonialism. It had to adjust or die a natural death. In the meantime, the few practising African anthropologists were called upon to lead the way in the deconstruction of colonial anthropology. With a few exceptions, they were not able or willing to do this as a matter of course. Instead, it was some rebellious groups in the North who took the initiative. This did not suffice because they themselves could not dispense with the problem of alterity. Eventually, they gave up the ghost and retreated to where they hailed from or into exoteric subjects, interdisciplinarity, and African studies. This seems to have dissipated colonial anthropology altogether.

For the African anthropologists, Mafeje reported, the decision had already been made for them by their governments after independence. The nationalist governments that were committed to “nation-building” simply banned anthropologists as peddlers

of “tribalism”. Consequently, most African anthropologists went underground for a long thirty years. When they emerged in 1991 at a special seminar in Dakar, they seemed totally lost and disoriented. According to Mafeje, who is one the African anthropologists who did not go underground; this confirmed what he had suspected. He was, therefore, interested in pushing the African anthropologists to justify themselves. To a very large extent, this was all in vain. In the meantime, he continued with his own deconstruction of anthropology that started in 1971 when he published his article, “The Ideology of Tribalism”. This was followed by other works, including *The Theory and Ethnography of the Interlacustrine Social Formations* (“interlacustrine” was the original term used by anthropologists for the Great Lakes region) and *Anthropology and Independent Africans: Suicide or End of an Era*. The upshot of all this was the assimilation of anthropology into social history while emphasising the importance of the study of ethnography in all the social sciences in Africa.

A few questions were put to Mafeje. One of them was whether he found any value in Vansina’s work in relation to his. He answered in the affirmative and argued that a dynamic study of ethnography serves social historical reconstruction. This would manifest itself as a combination of oral or ethnographic texts and “oral tradition” in Vansina’s sense. One of the implications of this is that writing of history is not the monopoly of professional historians. People also write their own history that becomes a justification for contemporary social claims. This is where social history meets ethnography, he concluded. This explanation served as a response to another question as to how one would reconstruct traditional anthropology, if indeed it has atrophied as a discipline. Anthropology becomes social history, without abandoning its methods and techniques for studying ethnography. Yet, another question was raised in relation to Chiek Anta Diop’s work. The reply was that what Mafeje was proposing is in principle the same, except for designation of units of analysis. He believes that Diop’s unit of analysis was too wide to be conceptually encapsulating and verifiable. As was pointed out by one, the delineation of units of social analysis cannot help being somewhat arbitrary.

But the interesting thing is that once established, such conceptual units create new identities that are capable of perpetuating themselves. This is what the invention of “tribes” in Africa is all about. Whether we like it or not, colonial governments and colonial anthropologists created new identities in Africa that are now part of contemporary social reality. This would suggest that there is a constant interaction between chroniclers and their subjects, irrespective of the truth or falsehood of what is being told. The growth of “nationalities” and now “ethnic federalism” in Ethiopia was cited as a supreme example of this. In passing it was noted that indeed African governments are also playing an active role in shaping the development of social

sciences, as is demonstrated not only by the banning of anthropology but also by the banning of sociology in both Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal and of political science in Malawi – all for political reasons. This brought to a close the discussion on Mafeje's presentation as well as of all the substantive discussions in the workshop.

CLOSING REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

It was left to Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, the originator of the project, to make the closing remarks. He reported that a few proposals had been made. One was to give the participants up to March 2000 to produce their final drafts. Second, it had been suggested that a website be developed so as to facilitate the posting and exchange of the texts not only among those present but also with those who had been invited but could not attend. In addition, he nursed the idea that those who had not been invited might be able to contribute to the discourse on their own accord. In his view, this meant that, apart from the posting of the papers, the participants would have to have a good write-up that would take off from the one or two pages that went out earlier as a concept paper. He felt that there was a need to rework the latter so that those in attendance knew exactly what the project was all about. He surmised that this would help those who visit the website to understand that the papers presented at the Reflections workshop were “not just collected from all over the place but were produced as a result of a particular concern”. With due respect, the idea of a special website was rejected as too expensive and unnecessary. The participants were convinced that alternative means could be found with the assistance of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

As far as the final product was concerned, he saw two possibilities. One was to suppose that each of the participants would write a paper of about fifty pages and that these would be put together in a book form. The other possibility was to let the participants “feel free to write their contributions as they felt, as the spirit moved them”. In this case their contributions could be as long or as short as possible, but in all instances as solid as possible. In his view, the second option would mean the contributions would be produced as individual monographs – some small and some big – but all self-contained.

In response to Anyang's suggestion, divergent views emerged. There were those who cherished the idea of writing just as they pleased and those who felt that by so doing their colleagues would open the door to cuckooland. They argued that, as a matter of principle and discipline, the contributors should adhere to the original idea of a sustained review of the growth of individual social science disciplines in Africa accompanied by an auto-critique since any intellectual heritage has its own virtues and lapses. Auto-critique was considered essential so as to guard against any form of

intellectual narcissism. Pursuant to this line of reasoning, it was suggested that the review of the growth of the disciplines should not be seen simply as a narrative but also as an exercise in provocation i.e. it should have a cutting edge. Some felt that there was a moral imperative that those who initiated the Reflections project should have the necessary confidence to expose themselves to criticism by others, which is the surest way of provoking a debate. Great pressure was exerted on the economist to write an account of the development of economics in Africa that went beyond the “Washington consensus” and which indicated the prospects for the 21st century.

Likewise, the philosopher was invited to write a piece on the contribution of African philosophers to the development of social sciences in Africa. He declined, surprisingly, on the grounds that he was not very familiar with the work of African philosophers. However, he was willing to write a contribution on the impact of philosophy (meaning social and political philosophy) in general on the social sciences. It had been hoped that Zenebework Tadesse would write a piece on the development of feminist studies in Africa and her contribution. But this remained unconfirmed.

After much digression and reminiscing it was more or less agreed that the original idea would be the guiding principle for writing or rewriting the papers. Some felt that the deadline was perhaps too close and unrealistic. But the Heinrich Böll Foundation representative found the proposed deadline convenient for her purposes. As a compromise, it was suggested that, instead of thinking of a compiled volume, the papers could be published as a series according to their availability. Although this suggestion was not strongly contested, there was a feeling that a “unified voice” would have had the right impact. It was also regretted that some disciplines such as history were not represented.

Regarding procedure, it was agreed that: (i) all substantive papers would be commissioned and drafts would be circulated to all participants for comments; (ii) Archie Mafeje would act as academic editor for all the papers, taking into account the comments by individual participants; and (iii) once published, the papers would serve as a basis for a more inclusive workshop, as was originally envisaged.

Finally, it was understood that the “Reflections” project would last for two years. But the participants could not agree how often they would meet per year. This was partly because they could not vouch for their own adherence to the proposed deadline and projected date of publication of the initial batch of papers. Above all, they did not have a working budget since this could not be guaranteed in advance.

The workshop was considered a great success, in spite of the low attendance. The organizers were satisfied that where things did not work out the way they wanted it was not because of lack of effort. The determination to canvass more support for the project remained, despite the practical difficulties and sensibilities mentioned at the

Introduction

The original idea that Michael Chege and I had while teaching at the University of Nairobi in the late seventies was to write a textbook on African politics. We also had a provisional title for it, “An Introduction to African Politics.” We actually drew up the outline, shared out the chapters and started the work. A draft was completed which we set out to revise in 1980. That is when all hell broke loose at the university. There were clashes between the state and the university centered on the registration of the university staff union. This story is worth telling, if only in brief.

Ever since the university was founded - no doubt a creature of independence - the staff at the university had been represented in all university governing organs by a staff association. This association excluded from among its ranks anybody who did not teach or do research. In other words, it was purely for the academic staff at the university. The senior staff members, readers and professors who were usually concerned more with ceremonies and status than anything else, had always dominated the leadership

of the association. In the last half of the seventies some of us felt that there were too many wrong things going on at the university, which adversely affected the interests of the university community in general. Attempts to get them discussed seriously within the framework of the association failed. The older university dons regarded us as hotheads who were out to make mischief. We were thoroughly discouraged.

While this was going on, the university workers had organized themselves into a credit and savings cooperative called CHUNA. They welcomed as members anybody who had a regular job and was on the university's payroll, starting from the Vice-Chancellor to the ordinary messenger. We began to wonder, therefore, why there could not be a union that was more representative of the work force at the university and which defended the rights of its members as employees of the university in the same way that CHUNA promoted the economic interests of the same as wage-earners within the institution. Willy Mutunga, who later became our Secretary-General, started to work on the legal aspects of forming an all university staff union. The Union was formed and was registered by the state. However, the employer – the university – refused to recognize it.

The university authorities argued that only an academic staff association could represent the academic staff in the governing organs of the university. The rest of the university employees were members of the Domestic and Hotel Workers Union, which was the only other union the university dealt with in labour or employee/employer relations, and which the academic staff were free to join if they thought that unionism would make a difference to their bargaining power at the university.

These cynical arguments notwithstanding, we went ahead with recruiting and registering members for our union. The non-academic staff joined in their hundreds. Very soon they commanded an overwhelming majority in spite of the fact that all the elected officials of the union were from the academic staff. Our first task as a union was to address ourselves to the burning issues at the university: problems of housing, health, terms of service and representation. Four commissions were established to do thorough research into these matters and to present the findings to the Vice-Chancellor, whether or not he recognized our union. The commissions did a fantastic job.

In housing, for example, we found cases where “landlords” were renting out “air” to the university. In other words, through arrangements between would-be landlords and the university housing unit, records would be entered that a particular house, which did not exist, was rented out to the university. Rents were therefore paid by the university whereas no services were rendered. There were also cases where houses in a bad state of disrepair were rented to the university but not occupied by any member of staff. The university thereby lost millions of shillings every year through such corrupt practices. We proposed that the university close these loopholes and find some extra revenue to support a more expanded owner-occupier housing scheme for university

employees. CHUNA, too, had been working hard towards this end. Hence, the workers supported the union's stand very strongly.

In the area of health, we discovered a scheme through which the university lost equally large sums of money. The university had a list of doctors whom members of staff could visit on an outpatient basis. The doctors could then bill the university for such visits. The university also had a designated pharmacy in town where staff could present prescriptions, pay for the medicine and then seek reimbursement. We found out that many doctors billed the university for fictitious treatment of members of staff. There were cases where three to four doctors could bill the university at the same time, and for the same consultation, and be paid. The commission looking into this affair estimated that the university had in one term lost close to a million shillings through such corrupt practices.

To put an end to this, we proposed that the university start a university health clinic for outpatient treatment. The teaching staff in the medical school could work here on a part-time basis, and even junior doctors could get part of their training in the clinic. The idea proved very popular with the staff who always lost valuable time waiting for treatment at downtown private clinics. The implementation of the scheme did not go down well with the ring of corrupt doctors who were beneficiaries in the old system. Nor were their accomplices within the university administration pleased.

Our next concern was to deal with the problem of representation in the university governing organs. Since the union could not be officially represented in the Senate and the University Council because the authorities refused to recognize it, we decided to campaign and elect candidates to various positions within the university system. Some of these positions meant automatic membership of either the Senate or Council or both. For example, when the deanship of the Faculty of Arts became vacant, we launched a strong campaign for the appointment of a union sympathizer and succeeded against major odds. Our support came mainly from young and junior members of faculty who felt alienated from the old guard. The old guard tried very hard to divide us on ethnic lines. But the union's record as a fighter for staff interests transcended tribal ideologies. The tribal card was a non-starter in that particular election. Later however, after the staff union had been banned, most of its leaders detained and some sent packing from the university after harassment and outright dismissal, ethnic-based politics became the order of the day at the University of Nairobi.

Two incidents preceded the banning of the university staff union. One was a demonstration organized by the union against the assassination of Walter Rodney, the Guyanese radical historian and political economist, and in support of international solidarity against imperialism and its apartheid manifestation in Southern Africa. At first, the state refused to give us a license to demonstrate. Then suddenly, on a Thursday, a letter came from the Provincial Commissioner in charge of Nairobi that we

could go ahead with the demonstration. In fact, the PC declared that he would himself be there to carry a banner against apartheid. This was quite out of character and the whole executive committee of the union was shocked. We were at a loss on what to do. Could this be a trap? If we refused to demonstrate then the state would argue that we were up to something else. Why apply for a license when the very act of giving it renders us inoperative? If we went ahead and fell into their trap, then we would no doubt face reprisals from the state. We decided to go ahead, but with precautionary measures in place to guard against any trap that could be laid for us.

The main fear was that the demonstration might be sabotaged from within. This could come in two forms: some agents' provocateurs writing placards which might be unnecessarily offensive to the state; others shouting offensive slogans or engaging in hooliganism. We took precautionary steps to guard against such scenarios. One, having all our placards officially stamped using the union's stamp the night before the demonstration and checking each one of them when the students and staff gathered at the Great Court on the morning of the demonstration. Two, we briefed the vigilantes on what to do and how to flash out saboteurs. Three, we agreed on a particular route to follow through town during the demonstration: only four people who were going to be at the head of the demonstration knew this route.

As it turned out, we identified saboteurs right from the beginning. They even attempted to lead the demonstration into a route that had not been agreed upon. The leaders soon pointed them out to the vigilantes and they were flashed out. Next was an attempt by the same saboteurs to engage in hooliganism. We circumvented this by quickly changing the route, leading the students into a major avenue and calling on everybody to sit down to listen to a short speech before we proceeded. Nobody could dare throw a stone when all were seated. Another attempt of sabotage by some of the marchers who began to harass motorists forced us to change the route into an open field in front of parliament buildings where we decided to hold a rally. The saboteurs gave up.

Two days later, the Daily Nation ran an editorial that praised the staff union for having organized a responsible demonstration in the city, the likes of which had not been seen for a long time. The editorial went further to extol the good leadership that the academic staff was giving to the students as well as all university employees. It took issue with apartheid and its international supporters and abhorred the assassination of Walter Rodney.

A week later, the Weekly Review published its own version of the story. It warned against a small group of Marxists who were bent on radicalizing the university and using it as a hot-bed of revolutionary politics. It denounced the anti-imperialist slogans carried by the students and called upon the government to ban the union.

That same week that the Weekly Review editorial appeared, the President made a

public statement to the effect that there were some people at the University of Nairobi who were plotting to overthrow the government. On a Saturday morning, that same week, I was working in my office when I received a telephone call. It was Peter Karithi, a journalist with the Nairobi Times, a newspaper owned by the Weekly Review group, and then edited by the same man, Hilary Ng'weno. Karithi asked whether, as a member of the Executive Committee of the university staff union, I knew anything about the plot the President had talked about. I said, in reply, that we of the staff union were not aware of any such a plot. The Nairobi Times headline that Sunday was "LECTURER DEFENDS UNIVERSITY AGAINST PLOT CHARGE." My response was taken to be an open contradiction of the President's statement, which it was not. I had merely stated a matter of fact that if such a plot existed, we in the staff union were not aware of it: and this was factually correct.

It is interesting that Stalin had sent his own generals to the gallows during the Second World War when they contradicted his own versions of how the War was being conducted and how it could be won. When he did this, people around him cheered him as the generalissimo who was never wrong; he was obviously wrong, both in his interpretation of the War and his sending the generals to undeserved death. In the same manner, the system and the press in Kenya decided then to castigate me and the staff union, and to demonstrate to the state that drastic actions needed to be taken to "bring all this unfortunate drama to an end", as one state jester put it.

I was woken up early one morning and taken into police custody for questioning. Students went on strike demanding my release. The university was paralyzed. The state was taken unawares. I wrote my statement, Karithi wrote his, Ng'weno was apparently also questioned, and I was released and given an assurance that no harassment would follow provided I proceeded with my work peacefully. But, in the middle of all this, my younger brother disappeared in Mombasa mysteriously and we never recovered his body to this very day. Soon after that, the President also banned the staff union while he was attending a wedding in Machakos. Most of us left the university within two years of that event. The rest is now history.

So why have I told this story? One, because it explains why Michael Chege and I never finished writing the textbook we set out to write. Two, because it explains why some of the material gathered for that textbook have now been used for writing this reflexive review. Three, and more importantly, this is my own conception of African politics and what I have continued to feel needs urgent attention in African political discourse since my experience at the University of Nairobi. I became acutely concerned about the struggle for democracy in Africa, the context in which politics takes place in Africa and how, in concrete circumstances, democratic forces can forge alliances and build coalitions.

The staff union experience was not only useful in getting to know how political

alliances are forged; it also demonstrated to us, in a condensed fashion, what politics in Africa is all about. The challenge we posed to those who exploited their bureaucratic positions for personal gain in alliance with doctors and landlords outside the university spilled over into university and state politics, and the staff union was the final casualty. After that experience it became easier for me to conceptualize African politics, and to deal with issues of ethnicity, class, region and religion as they manifest themselves in political struggles. Yet it would not have been right to generalize that easily from a single but intense experience. I therefore decided to go back into history and find out how African politics had been studied in the past. Who were the political actors? How were they conceptualized? To what extent do past categories of analysis help in our analyses and understanding of contemporary African politics?

Quite often, when one is involved in writing a piece of work or doing some research, one is always asked to “review the literature” first. This exercise of reviewing the literature can be very uninspiring, if carried out in a mere ritualistic manner, which is quite often the case in lots of dissertations that I have had the displeasure of reading. I think the whole idea of reviewing literature is to go through some body of knowledge that already exists in a particular area of inquiry in which one is involved. And even then, not all the literature contributes to delving into the major questions one is asking. I have therefore made “this journey into the past” and looked at “more recent debates” on African politics in general so as to see how politics itself has been conceptualized, as well as see changes in the character of African politics, the nature of political power, the relationship between the state and social classes - or state and other social strata - and therefore how to understand democratic claims and demands in the political processes. It is within this dynamic historical context that a discourse on politics and democracy in Africa can make sense. Let me elaborate on this point further, again by way of example.

When I started teaching at the University of Nairobi, I was given a course on Basic Concepts of Political Science to teach. The course outline that I inherited from my predecessor envisaged picking out certain key concepts in political science, such as bureaucracy, government, state, legitimacy, authority, etc, and explaining what they meant to students. I decided I was not a dictionary and that I would do nothing of the sort. Moreover, concepts are not just words; they are the building blocks with which knowledge is constructed. They only make sense within a certain theoretical discourse and philosophical context. Outside this, concepts cannot be discussed on their own but only with reference to analyses of concrete objects of thought or practice.

I, therefore, decided to teach the course by going through political discourse and philosophy from ancient Greece to modern times. I wanted to see how Plato discussed the idea of society and polity in his writings, and what controversies this caused during his time. I wanted to find out the social basis of contract theories, and the significance

of the idea of a “state of nature” in conceptualizing legitimacy and authority in the writings of Locke, Rousseau and John Stuart Mill at that time and today. This style of teaching was rewarding; and students graduated knowing more about political science and politics than had happened before, judging from their improved performance in other courses in political science and public administration subsequently.

The reader will, therefore, understand the importance of this particular essay as a forerunner to the text that I plan to write on state, democracy and politics in Africa.

A great deal that has been written in the past serves as a store of the history of African politics as well as interpretations of that history. It is a history of people, organized in various ways, including tribe, a concept that, as we will presently see, is also historically bound.

Tribe, of course, matters in African politics. But it is not just the “tribe” that is crafted and manipulated ideologically, but also the tribe that is the real relationship among people as they interact and make daily choices. Such choices are shaped both by ideology as well as concrete historical experience. In this regard, the ideology of tribalism has been important in African politics in so far as it has shaped political experiences. A military coup undertaken in the name and interest of a tribe makes such a tribe very vulnerable to reprisals when the coup leaders fail in their enterprise. One cannot therefore belittle tribalism in political struggles and their outcome.

A political party formed in defense of ethnic claims, or in response to inter-ethnic threats, will probably consolidate ethnic support in an electoral contest at very little cost in political mobilization. The ideology of ethnic solidarity will do it all. Professor John Joseph Okumu, in his two studies of “The Little General Elections in Kenya” in 1966, as well as “The Gem By-Election in 1969,” both published in the *East African Journal*, demonstrated how this works in dynamic politics. The images invoked, the epithets manipulated and the ancestral spirits summoned to the contemporary stage of modern politics show how ethnicity is not just a manipulative concept but also a living form of political identity and struggle.

But as we saw in the case of the University of Nairobi politics, we raised issues that concerned members of the university community in general, and presented them before the university authorities as the demands of the union and not of any tribe. There were, of course, members of different tribes in the university, but for us the tribe was not the essential category in the power politics of the university when it came to pursuing our interests. Soon we could easily have allied with other unions outside the university to make demands on the state on behalf of workers. Thus the way politics is organized can reduce the profile and prominence of tribe in any political setting. That does not mean, however, that tribe may not feature when issues and problems are articulated in its name.

The onus is on us, therefore, to investigate and understand the context in which

politics takes place before we make sweeping statements about African politics. Otherwise, as Chairman Mao once said: “no investigation, no right to speak.”

1

A journey into the past

Before coming to the paradigms themselves, one must first say that there seem to be two major stimuli to the changes of paradigms we have employed over the past fifty years or so to analyze African polities and politics, whether pre-colonial kingdoms, colonies, or contemporary states. Africa itself has changed, apparently not for the better. Our conceptualization of power has become more complex. Inter-disciplinary connections are being made in its analysis, so that social studies are beginning again to be as historically aware, and historiography as socially alert, as they were in the eighteenth century when both fields subsumed under political economy. Political economy stressed purposeful action by goal-seeking individuals. Upon that conceptual foundation could be erected a substantial field of investigation and policy analysis, from Adam Smith to David Ricardo.

I. BRITISH SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND AFRICAN POLITICS

Many intellectual and methodological schools of thought have influenced the study of African politics in the past. For many years, the study of pre-colonial African politics was the exclusive province of British anthropology, particularly as this was expressed through the intellectual paradigms established largely by Radcliffe-Brown. However, Meyer Fortes, E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Max Gluckman became the greatest exponents of African political institutions within the British school of structural anthropology, with scholars such as Lucy Mair, Audrey Richards, and Lloyd Fallers taking a more functionalist interest in the same.¹

The theoretical tendencies of B. Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard sought to approach societies as collectivities of institutions, possessing defined functional relationships. Its underlying quest was to delineate the basis on which societies reproduced themselves on a stable basis for prolonged periods, a concern that was to dominate “systems analysis” of political life in the hands of David Easton decades later. But more to the point, as Jean Copans has remarked, “the need to find political continuity in African society in order to ensure a beginning of indirect rule was the basis of political anthropology.”² “Find the chief”, Malinowski is reputed to have exhorted field-bound social anthropology initiates.

Against this background, pre-colonial African societies came to be categorized as either “state” or “stateless”, depending primarily on the criteria adopted by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940), namely, the function of organized force in the reproduction of society. In state societies, politics was clearly demarcated; there were the rulers and the ruled and political functions were clearly delineated from other functions. In stateless societies, there was no clear demarcation between the political and the customary. If to politics belonged that sphere of individual conduct related to his being subject to a

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1. Meyer Fortes, E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Max Gluckman are perhaps the earliest known members of the London School of African Anthropologists, but their theoretical orientations are rooted in the social anthropology of Radcliffe-Brown. See, for example, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses* (London: Cohen and West, 1961); “Preface” in M. Fortes and E. Evans Pritchard (eds.) *African Political Systems* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940); “Introduction” in Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde (eds.), *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 1-85; M.N. Strinivas, (eds.), *Method on Social Anthropology: Selected Essays*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Social Anthropology* (London: Cohen and West, 1951); Max Gluckman, *Custom and conflict in Africa* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956); Lloyd Fallers, (ed.), *The King’s Men: Leadership and Status in Buganda on the Eve of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); *Law Without Precedent: Customary Law in the Colonial Courts of Busoga* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967) Meyer Fortes, (ed.), *Social Structure: Studies Presented to A.R. Radcliffe-Brown* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949)
 2. Jean Copans, “Africans Studies A Periodization,” in Peter Gutkind and P. Waterman (eds.), *African Social Studies: A Radical Reader*. (London: Heinemann, 1977), p.22.

public order in which laws of conduct are set by an authority to which he is obligated, then in stateless societies, custom rather than politics or law, played this role. Thus, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard divided these two types of society into Group A (those with states) and Group B (those without states). Among Group A societies, the ultimate sanction and source of authority a ruler has over his subordinates is the command of organized force. In other words, where a state has come into being, the incumbent cannot exercise his authority effectively, without the monopoly of public force. In this regard, these anthropologists shared the same view about the state as Marx, Engels and Max Weber. In societies of Group B there is no association, class or segment that has a dominant place in the political structure by virtue of greater organized force than is at the disposal of its congeners. If force is resorted to in a dispute between segments, it will be met with equal force.³ Hence, in stateless societies, there is also an element of “classlessness”, of low social stratification, of a social division of labor based on natural ties and blood relationships rather than on economic ties and social relations of production.

Just as the construct of ‘state’ societies became the basis of the political anthropology of such people as the Baganda, Ankole and the Lozi, the model suggested by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard’s “Group B” became the basis for analyzing what Middleton and Tait called “tribes without rulers.”⁴ For years this dichotomy held sway even after the so-called “behavioral revolution” in American political science had invaded Africa.⁵

Although social anthropologists dichotomized African political systems as such, they never satisfactorily explained how this dichotomy had evolved. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard examined kinship, population sizes, cultural heterogeneity, territorial expansion and economic activities but failed to come out decisively in favor of one or the other as the primary cause of the differences. It did not appear to them that “state societies” tended to be bigger, more culturally heterogeneous and more socially stratified than “classless societies.”⁶ With regard to “mode of livelihood”, they were merely concerned with techniques of production - shifting cultivation, mixed husbandry and agriculture, etc. - rather than modes of production which would have included the question of which class produced what for whom and with what political consequences. Hardly surprising, therefore, they came to the conclusion that

3. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, *African Political Systems*, p. 14

4. John Middleton and David Tait (eds.) *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958). Here an attempt is made to understand further the similarities and differences of the uncentralized political structures as defined by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard.

5. See, for example, Leslie Rubin and Brian Weinstein, *Introduction to African Politics: A Continental Approach*. (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 11-22.

6. See their *Introduction to African Political Systems*.

different “modes of livelihood” made no difference in politics and state organization; an assumption we shall demonstrate to have been patently incorrect if one examines the totality of production.

What is more, in their quest to study “total working systems”, both Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown had concentrated on isolated island societies. In Africa this translated into concentrating on small-scale rural communities. The unfolding classes and class struggles in the cities, mines and agricultural plantations did not receive as much attention save for Clyde Mitchell’s and A.L. Epstein’s study of the Copper-belt in Zambia.⁷ George Balandier’s work which sought to explain “the colonial situation” and its impact on peasant and urban African societies particularly in the then French Equatorial Africa⁸ was also significant in this regard. A.L. Epstein, as Mafeje (1971) has pointed out,⁹ was one of the few anthropologists of his time to suggest that Africans in the urban areas could actually reject “tribalism” as being irrelevant to their problems. Epstein demonstrated the existence of a working class consciousness among copper miners in Kuanshya.¹⁰

Having made that observation, Mafeje points out, Epstein had a much more correct analysis of the social dynamics of colonial Africa than the other “tribal-minded” anthropologists. The social category “tribe” could not be used to analyze African social formations forever. A relatively undifferentiated society, practicing a primitive subsistence economy and enjoying local autonomy, can legitimately be designated as a tribe. When such a society strives to maintain its basic structure, and local autonomy, even under changed economic and political conditions, perhaps it can be said to exhibit “tribalism”. But to impose the same concept on societies that have been effectively penetrated by European colonialism, that have been successfully drawn into a capitalist money economy and world market, is a serious transgression, adds Mafeje. The new division of labor, the new modes of production, and the system of distribution of material goods and political power give modern African societies a fundamental difference between purely traditional societies and societies which have elements of modernity at various levels. The man who strives to maintain the traditional integrity and autonomy of his nationality on cultural and linguistic issues, and the man who invokes tribal ideology in order to maintain a position of power of in

7. See, for example, Clyde Mitchell, *The Kalela Dance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958); A.L. Epstein, *Politics in An Urban African Community* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958) - although concerned mainly with the whole political environment of Africans on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, Epstein attributed a vital role in this environment to Trade Unionism, hence to the growing consciousness of workers as a class in their struggles against capital and “community dynamics”.

8. Georges Balandier, *The Sociology of Black Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1970).

9. See, for example, Archie Mafeje, “The Ideology of Tribalism in Africa”, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, IX, 2(1971): 253-61.

10. Epstein, *op cit*.

the modern capital city, are two very different creatures. The fact that tribalism “works” in political mobilization and in legitimizing political exclusion is no proof that “tribe” or “tribalism” both exist in any objective sense, concludes Mafeje.

A similar critique on the use of the concept ‘tribe’ to the study of African social formations during the colonial period was made by Ramkrishna Mukherjee in his book, *The Problem of Uganda: A study in Acculturation* (1956). Drawing heavily from the works of L.H Morgan and F. Engels, Mukherjee argued that the very existence of social classes in Uganda’s social formations - some of which were “feudal” (actually tributary) - clearly showed that they could not be properly referred to as “tribes.” For all this, it could safely be stated that up to 1950 one could not speak of literature in African politics outside the works provided by social anthropologists. African politics was non-existent outside the framework of “tribal” life, so insisted the colonial administrator. It did not exist in white settler plantations, urban industries or mines, so insisted the colonial capitalists, the owners of these means of production who wanted to keep colonial politics to themselves. And there were apparently no scholars to challenge these views. If anything, the majority simply fell into line. Even when a few anthropologists such as M. Wilson, R. Firth, R. Redfield and Audrey Richards began to talk about ‘social change’, they did not forsake what Max Gluckman in 1959 “tribalistic tradition”: tribe and the tribesmen was the starting point of their analysis.¹¹ But, as Mafeje has argued, Gluckman, the critic, himself never abandoned the tradition in his later works.¹²

Lord Hailey’s first edition of *An African Survey* (1938), produced as an aid to the British colonial Office on how to deal with colonial questions, read like a run-down of the problems a European administrator was likely to encounter. Such problems included indirect rule and the position of chiefs; not to mention urbanization and native associations in towns. Hailey goes further to enumerate such issues as native education and its likely effect on social stratification; simmering of nationalism as a result of native discontent; the need to improve social services so as to get able-bodied workers for the colonial economies, and so on.¹³

The veritable exception among these earlier works was Raymond Buell’s *Native Problem in Africa* first published in 1928, providing a wealth of material on African

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11. C.F.G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945); R. Firth, *Elements of Social Organization* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951); R. Redfield, *The Primitive World and its Transformation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953); A.I. Richards, *Economic Development and Tribal Change* (Cambridge University Press, 1954).
 12. Mafeje is here referring to Gluckman’s “Anthropological Problems Arising from the African Industrial Revolution,” in A.W Southall (ed.), *Social Change in Modern Africa* (London, 1961) and *Order and Rebellion on Tribal Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).
 13. Lord Hailey, *An African Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938). The 1954 Revised Edition did not much material on African nationalist politics, by then of course, these forces are too central to be ignored. 12/19/01

societies under colonialism, not excluding strikes, peasant resistance to expropriation of land, proto-nationalism and independent churches.¹⁴ Buell analyzed such political movements not from the point of view of warning the authorities about what to do but from a scholarly point of view, explaining and describing their social structures and dynamics. This can be contrasted with Orde Browne's *African Laborer* (1938), that investigated the problems attached to the development of wage labor. As Lord Lugard summed it up in his introduction to the book, was essentially a warning to colonial authorities of the dangers that wage labor posed to the stability of colonial society. Browne's solution to this problem was to "retain the connection between the worker and the land", which would retard or delay class-formation and the consequent political dynamics. Retaining this connection would also mean that national communities would not emerge as quickly, and hence the material basis for democratic politics would for a long time be elusive.

By the thirties, the tendency towards class differentiation within the African peasantry, combined with the collapse of world prices of raw materials which ruined so many small commodity producers, had produced precisely the situation which colonial governors, and Orde Browne, had hoped to avoid: class-divided African societies. Africans who had little future except as wage labor, but who at the same time had no hope for wage employment because of the very nature of the colonial economies, would from now on be a political problem to be addressed. A new framework had to be found; a new partnership with the native had to be sought. It was Lord Hailey's mission to look into the future of colonial Africa in the wake of the crises of the thirties. Then came the Second World War that, as we shall subsequently see, changed the future of colonial Africa and the concern of scholars about Africa rather profoundly.

The rise of African nationalism after the Second World War stimulated a greater interest in African politics than ever before. Some authors such as Basil Davidson and Thomas Hodgkin wrote not only out of academic interest but also out of a genuine commitment to the ideals of African liberation and their works have been among some of the most enduring.¹⁵ Other scholars sought to analyze "political institutions" in the period of transition using the tradition of British political history and institutions analysis.¹⁶

14. Raymond L. Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1965). Buell was significantly an American writing before American capital had made serious inroads into Africa, and his work pre-saged what was to become, three decades later, American support for formal decolonization and neo-colonial solutions setting the stage for greater American capitalist penetration of Africa.

15. Hodgkin's revealing narrative of "where the Paths Began" appears in Christopher Fyfe (ed.) *African Studies Since 1945: A Tribute to Basil Davidson* (London: Longmans, 1976); Basil Davidson, *Black Mother: The Years of Trial* (London: Gollanz, 1961), *The African Past: Chronicles from Antiquity to Modern Times* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966); *The Africans: An Entry to Cultural History* (London: Longmans, 1968)

II BEHAVIORISM AND AFRICAN POLITICS

By and large, however, the literature on African politics during the nationalist period and in subsequent years was to be dominated by authors utilizing what came to be called “the behaviorist perspective” of political science. The fact that most writers using this perspective were either Americans interested in Third World countries in the wake of declining European hegemony in these areas in the post-war period, or professional academics seeking “areas of specialization” should not obscure the common intellectual thread that runs through all of them.

The Behaviorist approach to politics, as its very name suggests, eschewed perceiving political institutions as the basic units for research and sought to identify the behavior of individuals in political situations as the basic unit of analysis. Beyond that, it identified all social sciences as behavioral sciences and sought to study political science in the context of other social sciences. At another level, the behaviorist movement aimed at perfecting quantitative methods so as to develop a systematic empirical political theory. Heinz Euleu’s *The Behavioral Persuasion in Politics* (1963) still remains one of the best explications of behaviorism.

It is not particularly easy to delineate the sources from which behaviorism sprang. The desire to explicate clearer theories of political behavior for the ordering of empirical data no doubt mattered a great deal. Perhaps, in the end nothing counted more than the quest for non-radical anti-Marxist paradigms for understanding and explaining the complexity of political life in the Third World in a manner that held promise for the eventual triumph of capitalist development and some form of bourgeois democracy in the Third World. As Lonsdale has argued, in their bourgeois anxiety western scholars studying Africa seemed to have constituted themselves into a Committee of Concerned Scholars for a Free Africa.¹⁷ It must be recalled that these theories, claiming value neutrality, emerged against the backdrop of the Cold War. Popular forms of Marxism that predominated at the time were Stalinist and, as would be expected, these were anathema in American academia.

It is in this context that one must view the influence of Max Weber whose works became particularly widespread in America after the Second World War, owing to no small degree to the Weberian renderings of Talcott Parsons. Weber’s position is invariably seen as the most serious anti dote to Marxism or as a sharp qualification to the Marxist view of society. It could have hardly come to America at a more opportune

16. See, for example, Denis Austin, *Politics in Ghana* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); C.T. Leys and R.C Pratt (eds.), *A New Deal in Central Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1960); William J.M Mackenzie, *Five Elections in Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

17. Lonsdale, J., “State and Social Processes in Africa,” *Africa Review* (1980), p. 143. For Further discussion on

moment. Weber's ideal types and parsonian "pattern variables became essential tools in the intellectual tool-kit of any graduate student proceeding to study developing countries. Weber's authority types - traditional, charismatic and rational -legal - had a tremendous influence on American social scientists trying to make sense out of the new political regimes in Africa in the post-colonial era. Talcott Parsons' theories also included an initiation into "functionalism". This, as well as the conventional forms of structural-functionalism in social anthropology described above, provided one wing of the behaviorists with a vital theoretical point of departure. "Systems analysis" was one by-product. David Apter's early work on Ghana's nationalist politics, *The Gold Coast in Transition* (1955)¹⁸ was the first and among the best known products of behaviorism in Africa. Measured against what had gone before, the book was a landmark in the truest sense of the term. Subsequent flow of single-country studies appearing in the mid-fifties and after was equally remarkable.¹⁹ Colin Leys may have overstated the case in asserting that Apter's work had the same intellectually liberating effect as had that of Feuerbach's on Young Hegelians.²⁰ There is, however, no denying that behaviorism - with all its misperceived objectives and theoretical fallacies - had at least served to elevate the study of African politics into a more sophisticated and more illuminating level than had hitherto been the case. It brought out political data and phenomena that progressive thought could and has fruitfully built upon. At a much more general level, it is fair to say that behaviorism established the study of diverse political systems across cultures by the use of generally applicable concepts.

The major pitfall of behaviorism lay in its conceptualization of politics and the distribution of political power. We have already seen that Fortes and Evans-Pritchard limited politics to the centralization of coercive force in society. Politics, as Max Weber put it, meant a system of social interaction that involved the "use or threat of use of legitimate physical coercion"²¹ This became the point of departure of investigations into how political power is achieved; how "political culture" determines the regulation of power; the sustenance of political equilibrium under conditions of development

"American Political Science and African Political Realities", see also Michael F. Lofchie, "Political Theory and African Politics", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 8, 1 (1970): 1-13; William G. Fleming, "American Political Science and African Politics" *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 7,3 (1969): 495-510.

18. David Apter, *The Gold Coast in Transition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), later published as *Ghana in Transition* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1963).
19. To cite a few examples, see: Martin Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State: A Study of the Modernization Process in Sierra Leone* (Cambridge, Mass: Howard University Press, 1966); A.R. Zolberg, *One Party Government in the Ivory Coast* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964); James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958); Crawford Young, *Politics in the Congo: Decolonization and Independence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).
20. Colin Leys, "Introduction" in *Politics and Change in the Developing Countries* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p.9.

and so forth. The question of how politics in the first place came to be, why it became necessary for some groups in society to coerce - for surely, as Rousseau himself pointed out, use of force must presume existence of contradictory interests - were never broached. Politics was abstracted from struggles arising in social production whence it springs. Behaviourists assumed political roles were there in and of themselves, and there had to be incumbents playing these roles. How they played these roles and the outcomes of their actions - given certain goals that they and society might set - was a province for study in the social sciences that quite often went beyond the limits of behaviorism.

III. THE STATE AND MODERNIZATION

With political independence came the notion that the state, in the new nations of Africa, needed to perform certain roles if the expectations aroused among the people by political mobilization for independence were not to be frustrated and hence turned against the established order. During the first decade of independence, there was political as well as an academic consensus among western social scientists (and western-trained scholars) that the new nations of Africa needed modernizing states. The idea of modernization, by itself, was not new; but the idea that there should be modernizing states in Africa and the kinds of politics and policies that this implied, was definitely a product of both behaviorism and post-independence imperialism. States were seen to be beneficial, necessary for the collective good; they were not viewed essentially as institutions of political power that could be captured by certain social forces to pursue their own sectarian interests, as Marxist literature seems to suggest. This perception of the state in post-colonial Africa was to await Franz Fanon,²² underdevelopment theory and subsequent Marxist and neo-Marxist enjoiners of the sixties and seventies. "Nations", it was argued, certainly by contrast with colonies, "are the most efficient and effective way to mobilize human resources in a social unit large enough to permit the benefits deriving from an extensive division of labor combined with a universalistic achievement orientation".²³ Nation-building, therefore, became the watchword for both the politician and the scholar. The politician sought to practice it through policies and ideologies of 'national integration' while the scholar was engaged in generating models and structural/functional prerequisites

21. Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston: Little Brown, 1966), p.18.

22. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), originally published in 1961 as *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: Francois Maspero, 1961).

23. Lonsdale, *op cit*, p. 143.

for its achievement. Modernization, as a social process of change, encapsulated the parameters for model building by the social scientists and the goal achievements by the nationalists now holding state - power - at least within the realm of their aspirations and ideological justification for their power positions.

Modernization, David Landes has written, is the combination of changes - in the mode of production and government, in the social and institutional order, in the corpus of knowledge, and in attitudes and values - that make it possible for a society to hold its own in the twentieth century.²⁴ In other words, modernization makes it possible for a society to compete on even terms in the generation of material and cultural wealth, to sustain its independence, and to promote and accommodate further change. Modernization comprises such developments as urbanization - the concentration of population in cities that serve as nodes of industrial production, administration, and intellectual and artistic creativity. It also leads to a sharp reduction in both death rates and birth rates from traditional levels. Modernization, further, entails the establishment of an effective, fairly centralized bureaucratic government. It also leads to the creation of an educational system capable of training and socializing the younger generation to a level compatible with their capacities and best contemporary knowledge. Finally, modernization is, of course, indispensable to the acquisition of the ability and means to use an up-to-date technology and the industrialization that goes with it.

In Europe modernization was heralded by the Industrial Revolution that, in turn, came out of the changes that had slowly been taking place within feudal society since the 13th century. The concept and idea of modernization was therefore passed to Africa by those societies that had already achieved it, i.e. western European societies. In Africa, by the end of colonialism, no industrial revolution had taken place nor had one been initiated in earnest. If anything, colonial authorities feared the disruptive effects of modernization on traditional African societies. Such disruption made "governing" colonial societies problematic. If programs of modernization had to be initiated for understandable economic reasons, then caution regarding the way they were implemented was important. The colonial authorities defended African subsistence farmers and the peasantry not because they were concerned about the interests of these social classes but because they were against proletarianization, against the disturbing effects of "pure capitalist development". Yet, with the demonstration - effect of life in the West, and the extension of this life to the colonies by the colonial elite (native and foreign) political modernization as a gateway to economic modernization soon became the cry of the nascent African bourgeoisie. The political system had to give the lead and provide the context for this all round modernization process. In other words, while in Europe socio-economic changes had heralded the necessary political changes through a long historical period, in Africa the reverse would have to happen. The political system had to be modern so that certain social forces that stood to benefit

through this process could modernize society. The cart, as it were, had to be put before the horse.

When western social scientists talked of the modernizing state, they endeared themselves to the new African nationalists now in power. Since this “modernization theory” came from the USA - a world power which never had colonies in Africa - it was seen as suffering from no colonial hang-ups. Distinctions were therefore made between states that had capacities to undertake modernization tasks (for example those endowed with capital and modernizing elite) and states that lacked such capacities. Where such capacities were lacking, then appropriate programs were initiated to help create them. At the level of the state apparatuses, manpower training programs were recommended for administrators and a strong political order as the appropriate context in which administration would itself become effective in undertaking modernization tasks. A sub-discipline emerged in political science to study and propagate these ideas. This is what came to be known as ‘development’ or ‘public administration’. At the level of the economy, capital investments from abroad, loans and aid from bilateral and multilateral sources, were often not lacking (though not abundant) provided a free market environment was ensured by the political system. The interplay of these two was expected to lead eventually to modernization. After all, W.W. Rostow had argued that all societies follow a single path towards modernity: they begin from the ‘traditional’ threshold, they go through the ‘take-off’ stage and, provided they do the right things, they will definitely arrive at ‘where we all are in the west: the modern state’.²⁵ In Africa, investments did not come in plenty. It became difficult to modernize the while the base- the economy - largely pre-capitalist.

After independence in Africa, several things militated against this smooth journey towards modernity. First, we should take note that the journey is not necessarily smooth, and, secondly, because even if Africa were to modernize, independence alone was not a sufficient condition for the process to be effectively initiated. Not only was there the problem of capital which could only be partly remedied through foreign investment and some modicum of domestic savings, but there was also the problem of domestic social forces that could spearhead the modernization process. Supposedly, this could only be partly remedied by the social engineering that the state was expected to undertake by modernization theorists. The argument became circular.

A modern society, sociologists argued, was characterized by a “universalistic” culture where individuals were motivated in their actions by universal rather than particularistic impulses and “primordial ties” associated with traditional society. The trouble with Africa after independence was that individuals were themselves

24. David Landes, “The Unbound Prometheus”, p.6.

25. W.W Rostow, *Stages of Economic Growth* (London: 1966).

retarding modernization by being governed in their behavior by these traditional codes of behavior. If modernization was to take place, individuals had to change and have more modern attitudes. A modernizing state had to eradicate such “backward” cultural tendencies as a way of preparing society for modernization. People, for example, could not have a saving mentality if they still believed that, in their old age, their relatives would look after them. They could save, however, if they developed a culture of individualism and of postponing today’s pleasures for tomorrow’s comfort. Again, modernization theorists saw all these problems as solvable through proper social engineering, and this responsibility largely fell on the state. How could the state do this?

Behaviorism viewed the state in terms of an umpire regulating and processing competing interests in society. Such competing interests were analyzed as interest groups, pressure groups, political parties and so on, all part and parcel of the Eastonian environment (society) in which the political system (state) performed the function of interest articulation, recruitment and aggregation.²⁶ Where such groups did not exist, it was in the interest of the political system to nurture them, for on them depended both the modernization of society as well as the modernization of the political system itself. Politics, in general, was seen as the game of the elite. The elites organized such groups, spoke on their behalf and even ‘thought out’ their interests. According to Edward Shils, the African elites - no matter their differences - wanted the one and the same thing, namely, modernization.²⁷ Hence, development of a modern polity as well as economy was their common objective.

Behaviorism and modernization theories were therefore partners in western-based and western-inspired “development studies” of both the African polity and society soon after independence. They were both marketed by Gabriel Almond’s Committee on Comparative Politics of the Social Science Research Council in New York. While they both stimulated valuable research on the internal functioning of the state in post-colonial Africa and on certain social dynamics in African societies then, they both failed to direct attention to important differences in the context in which bureaucracies operated and social transformation was attempted. This had far-reaching implications for the theory of modernization and the “inevitable development path” it presupposed.

26. See, for example, Almond and Powell, *op cit.*

27. Edward Shils, *Political Development in the New States* (The Hague: Morton and Co., 1960)

2

Coming nearer to the present

I. DEPENDENCE AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT THEORY

As early as 1957, Paul Baran, in a critique of modernization theory, had put forth an explanation of capitalist underdevelopment in the Third World. The penetration of mercantile capital in the heyday of early imperialism, Baran argued, had led to the expropriation of indigenous means of production, repatriation of surplus to the metropolis and systematic avoidance of policies through which meaningful industrialization could be undertaken in these countries.²⁸ In the end the bourgeoisie which emerged in these countries was a mere auxiliary of international capital - a “comprador bourgeoisie” unable to carry out the historic mission of the bourgeoisie as was the case in the Industrial Revolution. Underdevelopment, a self-reproducing cycle of backwardness of capitalist development, was the result. The development that is entailed in the type of modernization that

28. Paul Alexander Baran, *Political Economy of Growth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957).

Landes describes involves altering the social system of domination as it changes the organization of production and consumption. With capitalist development, this entails a radical transformation of pre-capitalist societies into capitalist societies.²⁹ Underdevelopment, however, refers to a type of economic system with a predominant primary sector, a high concentration of income, little diversification in the production system, and above all, an external market far outweighing the internal one. It is the historical linkage of the colony with the metropolis through colonial capitalism that sets processes of underdevelopment in motion and, unless these linkages are radically altered after independence, underdevelopment inevitably becomes a permanent feature of Third World development.

Frantz Fanon argued as much.³⁰ For him, the responsibility for continued underdevelopment was to be put squarely on the nationalist middle class that, soon after assuming political power, grows senile as a national bourgeoisie even before it is born. This is a bourgeoisie which sells its national soul “to the metropolitan bourgeoisie and becomes “stupidly, contemptibly, cynically bourgeois”³¹ because it is not in its interest to do anything else national but to keep as the adopted children of the western bourgeoisie. “Seen through its eyes, its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the “transmission line” between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mosaic of neocolonialism. The national bourgeoisie will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoisie’s business agent, and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner. But this same lucrative role, this cheap-jack’s function, this meanness of outlook and this absence of all ambition symbolize the incapability of the national middle class to fulfil its historic role of bourgeoisie.³² That is, the role of spearheading capitalist industrialization based on the development of a viable home market, what was subsequently to be called “self-centered capitalist development”.³³

Walter Rodney’s popular book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*,³⁴ served

29. This is the “progressive role” that Marx and Engels assign to the Capitalist Mode of Production in the Manifesto. Indeed, one of the yardsticks used by neo-classical economics to measure capitalist development is the “contribution of the manufacturing sector to the GDP”. The higher the contribution the higher the level of capitalist development, which also means that peasant ‘agriculture becomes less significant in the economy.

30. Fanon, *op cit*.

31. *Ibid*, p. 121

32. *Ibid*, p. 122

33. The man who has most ably developed this idea of “self-centered capitalist development” for Africa is Samir Amin. See the following of his works: *Accumulation on World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); “Accumulation and Development: A Theoretical Model,” *Review of African Political Economy*, 18, (1974); “Development Autocentre, *Autonomie Collective et Order Economique International Nouveau*, “Africa Development, e, I (1978). See also Kweku G. Folson, “Samir Amin as a Neo-Marxist,” *Africa Development*, 10, 3 (1985): 112-136.

34. W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1972).

to cast the history of Africa in this framework. Rodney's was but another Fanonian attempt at rewriting Africa's history within the underdevelopment framework, and the book became an international hit among radicals of diverse intellectual persuasions. Most of all, it seemed to vindicate Fanon: it was senseless to talk about 'development' in Africa before the political question was settled in favor of the social forces (peasants, workers and the revolutionary intelligentsia) who had the national interest and the 'class willingness and capacity'. Prior to that, Basil Davidson, though not using a Marxist frame of analysis, had published a succession of works on colonial African societies.³⁵ Ivor Wilks, following the same tradition, brought into light numerous discoveries on the commercial, cultural, and scholarly connections linking Ashanti (in Ghana) and its northern neighbors with the western and central savanna. Wilks carefully studied the nature of commodity circulation between the extractive industries and the forest zone and the commercial centers of the upper Niger.³⁶ The gist of all these studies was to show two things: that Africa could relate to the outside world out of the context of imperialism without necessarily being underdeveloped; and secondly, that it was due to imperialist imposition that the process of underdevelopment was set in motion and structures of domination and exploitation established that were used even in the post-colonial times for the further underdevelopment of Africa.

The mistake is not only that of the rent-seekers within the African bureaucracies, but is also to be explained in terms of the structural relations within the international economy in which Africa has been embedded since colonial times. The World Trade Organization seeks to perpetuate this relationship, and not to change it.

The theoretical studies on dependence and under-development became even more predominant in African studies as the first 'development decade' came and went, without any visible sign of qualitative change in Africa's modernization process. At the economic level the indices were nothing but disappointing. Two of the most quantitative-oriented bourgeois economists, Irma Adelman and Cynthia T. Morris, examined World Bank statistics from 74 Third World countries (Africa included) for the 1957-68 period and arrived at what was to them a startling conclusion. This was that "hundreds of millions of desperately poor people throughout the world have been hurt rather than helped by economic development."³⁷ Robert McNamara, the President of the World Bank, claimed that 40% of the Third World's poor had become materially worse off by the end of the first development decade (i.e. 1960s), economic growth in

35. Davidson, *op cit.*

36. Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evaluation of political Order* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975)

37. Irma Adelman Cynthia T. Morris, *Economic Growth and Special Equity in Developing Countries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), p. 192.

these countries notwithstanding.³⁸ If impressive indicators on industrial production and a demographic transition had accompanied these indicators of poverty and low standards of living, one would argue that some capitalist restructuring of society was taking place; as it were, this was not the case. It is not therefore surprising that, as the 20th Century has come to a close, more than 50% of the population in Africa still lives below the poverty line.

Dudley Seers confirmed this lack of viable capitalist development in a powerful essay entitled "The Meaning of Development."³⁹ Apart from the fact that the word 'development' connotes some positive images (images of approval) in our minds, it also refers to certain key social issues in the modern world with regard to socio-economic change. These include reduction of poverty, increasing employment, more social equality and participatory (or democratic) forms of government. Using these as a yardstick, most African states had not lived up to being "modernizing polities" even by the end of the 1980s - three decades after independence. Matters have only slightly improved on the political front in a few places following the "democratic throw" of the 1990s.

Anne Phillips went much further than Dudley Seers.⁴⁰ She stated that there is really no satisfactory definition of "development" that does not imply "capitalism" even in the most technological definition. Whereas it may be true that imperialist penetration of Third World countries leads to the transfer of values from the periphery to the metropolis at a certain stage, this cannot be taken as the permanent feature of capitalist development in the Third World, notwithstanding the "comprador bourgeoisie". In his article on "Imperialism and Capitalist Industrialization,"⁴¹ Bill Warren launched an apparently head-on attack on the dominant thesis in underdevelopment theory. Warren objected to the notion that imperialism prevents the emergence of indigenous capitalist development in the Third World and tried to establish that underdeveloped countries were undergoing a rapid process of capitalist industrialization. Warren tried to show further that it is wrong to hold the view that political independence is irrelevant to the pursuit of development because it cannot in itself threaten the underlying relations of exploitation and domination. On the contrary, as Thandika Mkandawire was later to demonstrate with reference to Africa,⁴²

38. Robert S. McNamara, *One Hundred Countries, Two Billion People* (New York: Praeger, 1973).

39. Dudley Seers, "The Meaning of Development" on Dr. Lehmann (ed.) *Development Theory: Four Critical Case Studies* (London, Frank Case, 1979).

40. Anne Phillips, "The Concept of Development" *Review of African Political Economy* No. 8 (1977): 7-20. See also Faycal Yachir, *Ou en est la 'Theorie do Development'?* "Africa Development, 10,3 (1985): 5-27

41. Bill Warren, "Imperialism and Capitalist Industrialization," *New Left Review*, No. 81, 1973.

42. Thandika Mkandawire, "African State Responses to Economic Crises," *Eastern Africa Social Sciences Research Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1985).

political independence does offer options for the nationalists to pursue projects of capitalist industrialization although the external structural and conjunctural factors, imperialism being one of them, do indeed impose constraints. Further, argued Warren, it is not usually the case that the interests of imperialist countries are served by the maintenance of underdevelopment in the rest of the world. If anything, the debate on “articulation” that was raging at the time when Warren wrote his essay underlined the fact that as needs of imperialist accumulation changed, so would the manner in which the capitalist mode of production articulated with the pre-capitalist modes of production. Whereas during the colonial period imperialism did use its political power to hold back the process of transition to capitalist industrialization, in the post-war period imperialist countries have positively favored economic development if only in a “forward-looking strategy to contain revolution”.

Underdevelopment theory, observed Phillips, emerged as a critique of orthodox development theory. With its unquestioned identification of development with capitalist social relations, it denied any other type of development as possible in human history. With its confidence that “backwardness” was a product of isolation from the world economy and could be eliminated through greater integration, it was actually a forerunner justification for globalization and a rationale for establishing the current rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Its reluctance to consider the history of relationships between the “advanced and backward” countries as relevant to the explanation of underdevelopment - and as a response to the political problems posed by decolonization and nationalist development strategies, made it too much of a defensive theory for the status quo.

Even more reprehensible for a discipline claiming “value neutrality” was the clearly overt pro-capitalist, pro-west, pro-imperialist and pro-ruling elite bias particularly in the development and “modernization” variants of behaviorism. These took as the explicit goals of the whole society the policies of the ruling classes, the political leadership. They paid scant attention to the degree of repression - covert or overt - and exploitation inherent in the systems they wished to develop, and which was necessary in order for the political leadership to pontificate about what it claimed to be the national goals. Jose Ocampo and Dale Johnson criticized the concept of “political development” from this perspective⁴³ in their essay, “The Sociology of Development and the Development of Sociology.” Andre Gunder Frank, in the same volume, also exposed the ideological underpinnings of development theory then prevalent in bourgeois scholarship. Unfortunately, in spite of the fact that such development theory

43. Jose F. Ocampo and Dale L. Johnson, “The Concept of Political Development,” in James D. Cockroft, A.G. Frank and D.L. Johnson (eds.), *Dependence and Development* (New York: Doubleday, 1972).

was already falling out of step with reality and was definitely no longer at the forefront of intellectual inquiry in the west, they continued to dominate official thinking in Africa. And with their dominance, no doubt because such theories coincided with ruling - class interest, any alternative scenarios for development could come only from official circles. Within the world of scholarship, dependency and underdevelopment theory was gaining hegemony. The loss of interest in the study of political processes by themselves and a preference for what came to be known as “the political economy approach” greatly facilitated its ascendancy.

After the Second World War capitalism in the west seemed to have been coping with its own crises. With welfare programs and full employment policies, class struggles seemed to have taken the back seat. Samir Amin suggested that the western proletariat could hardly be expected to be internationalist in its outlook since it was a beneficiary to the exploitation of the direct producers in the periphery.⁴⁴ Baran and Sweezy, in their critique of postwar western capitalism, concentrated more on its wastefulness and alienation of both the exploitation and the exploited rather than on the fact of exploitation and the potential violence that was implicit in the manner in which it will come to an end when class contradictions mature.⁴⁵

All these currents influenced underdevelopment theory that, in being applied to Africa, saw capitalism as antithetical to any meaningful development, given the structural relationships that this mode of production had forged between the periphery and the center. This structural relationship entails the transfer of value from the periphery to the center as we have seen. But it can only do this, if it preserves pre-capitalist modes of production in the periphery. In this regard, underdevelopment theory could not be completely found wanting in its interpretation of what was going on in Africa with regard to the center/periphery politics. Even as the World Bank sought to protect farmers by making sure they got a fair share of their marketed produce, it sought simultaneously to preserve the middle peasantry in the countryside thereby inhibiting the transfer of values from agriculture to industry within the periphery.

If capitalist development was to occur in Africa, then development policies had to be pursued that would necessarily lead to the eventual eradication of peasant - based agriculture. This would further mean the predominance of industrial production in the national economy not so much as an impulse from an external market but as the outcome of the dynamics of the internal home market.

Even though figures could be produced showing growing industrialization in the Third World due mainly to the activities of foreign investors, such figures did not necessarily prove, as Warren intended to do, that there was capitalist industrialization

44. S.Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale*

45. P.Baran and P. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966).

in the Third World. As Anne Philips pointed out, such statistics represent a very weak argument against underdevelopment theory. To produce figures on industrialization and suggest that this implies “development”, to recognize, as Warren does, “the backwardness of their agriculture and its consequences; the unevenness and imbalance of their economies as the most immediate problems facing underdeveloped countries, and then set these problems aside, is hardly to establish a watertight case.” What is really happening in most of Africa today, with the many crises of social reproduction being talked about, is that capitalist development is being strangled by many factors such as the politics of the leading classes, the nature of the state, international linkages, and the half-baked proposals for the “way out”. Within the Marxist mode of analysis, these cannot, however, be presented haphazardly. There is a need for analyzing them within the context of contemporary African political economy.

If modernization theory had thus been taken to task by theories of dependency and underdevelopment, which were further advanced by Marxist and Neo-Marxist critiques, behaviorist analysis of African political processes and social dynamics also suffered the same fate. Concentration on “empirical” political research in the “new states” did not realize that political reality was changing and the units of analysis chosen to be researched into were fast becoming irrelevant to political processes in Africa from the mid - sixties onwards. What seemed to have been an anathema in the late fifties, like the coup d’etat in the Sudan or the Congo crisis that followed in its wake, were becoming the norm in the African scene. The future of the African states did not seem to point to progress towards democratic modernization that was implicit in behavioral scholarship. If anything, political events were taking trends that could be characterized more as political decay than political modernization. Development was not being realized; the state, as an agent for bringing it about, was perhaps partly to blame. But why was the state to be blamed?

When political scientists were busy studying political parties and other “interest aggregators” in society and finding out how their activities would add up to political development, governments were already busy suppressing them, and the ruling classes were equally busy subordinating such parties to the state where they still existed. While political scientists were extolling the virtues of mass mobilization, the military was taking over in one country after another, calling the only shots of the day, and leaving political participation as a false remembrance of things past in the pages of such behaviorists as La Palambora and Myron Weiner.⁴⁶ Modernization theorists such as Morris Janowitz⁴⁷ would perhaps have argued that army rule was not only an inevitable outcome of modernization - as Samuel Huntington⁴⁸ would also concur -

46. Quoted from S. Mueller’s comments on another paper by the author. Reference here is to J. La Palambora and Myron Weiner, *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966)

47. Morris Janowitz, *The Military in the Politics of New Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964)

48. Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

but also a necessary political condition for further modernization in new nations such as those in Africa. Experience was, however, to prove such theories wrong. While the researchers on public administration were asking whether the new nations in Africa were swayed much more by primordial ties in making decisions than rationality, corruption was on the rise among the practitioners of public administration, and governmental bureaucracies began to fail in their public functions as uncle employed cousin on a post not budgeted for and the 'big man' diverted public funds to private use, without feeling the slightest compunction. Soon there followed bloody fights as to who was to occupy which bureau since they were mainly seen as avenues for accumulating personal wealth, power and influence in society. Quite often it was the colonel with some troops behind him who shot his way to state power and settled, for the moment at least, who was to be in charge of the settled and the contested bureaus. Even where bureaucrats were reasonably well-meaning, and corruption kept to a minimum, the state could not fulfil all the developmental functions expected of it. Smoulders of popular discontent started to show, leading to the need for more politics of control by those in power rather than politics of participation.

II. POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE CONTEXT OF POLITICS

In studying both the developmental processes in Africa as well as the political processes, something was lacking; an understanding of the environment or context of both development and politics. Politics is contextual, i.e. it takes place within a certain environment, it deals with relationships among social forces as they seek to transform their environment so as to satisfy their needs, wants, desires, aspirations, biases and ambitions. In politics, conflict is involved as a social phenomenon, and the conflicting social force struggle over the acquisition, use and distribution of contested resources, be they material or symbolic. The environment and the theatre of struggle - in its social, geographical and historical sense - are quite often not chosen or clearly understood by the conflicting parties. And yet it is this space that may, to quite a large extent, influence or determine the outcome of a particular political conflict or struggle. Such space, given by the structure of society, the natural environment, historical inheritance and the nature of transnational linkage (underdevelopment theory seems to emphasize such linkage) provide the context in which politics, as organized within modern nation-states in Africa, takes place. Yet, behaviorism paid scant attention to the issue of context, or if it did, it was only within its own narrow problematique. As the context changed in Africa, so did the nature of politics, and the need to analyze both by more relevant intellectual tools. When dependence and under-development theory paid attention to this context, it took the actors out of the stage and made the architects write the script, perform the play and receive the wrath of the audience as

having done a very bad job of it. In other words, there was a tendency by dependency and underdevelopment theory to reduce the African ruling classes to “yo-yo men”, the state to be servile to imperialism and the masses to be the unfortunate recipients of state action which did little, if anything, to improve their livelihood.

Marxism came into the study of African politics and developmental processes promising to provide much more useful paradigms. The focus in the study of politics was to be the state and social classes. We find, of course, that, well before the growing dominance of western social science in Africa, there was Marxist thinking and social analysis in the labor and political movements in Africa. Reference must here be made to militants in the African National Congress in South Africa who, though heavily influenced by the Soviet Union, did produce analyses of their situation from a class perspective. In Nigeria, as early as 1945, Chief Abafemi Awolowo, leader of the Action Group political party, viewed Nigerian society along class lines. Awolowo’s social classes might not have been discerned from a scientific analysis of the relations of production in Nigerian society; they were, nonetheless, the result of a clear recognition on Awolowo’s part that society was no longer just a “tribal” entity, and that there was a dimension to social conflict and the struggle for political power that could not be clearly understood without taking into account the existence of social classes. Much later, the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and the Action Group of the Western Region, two of Nigeria’s opposition parties in the immediate post-independence period, attributed Nigeria’s political, economic and social illnesses to the presence of contradictory class interests in society.⁴⁹ As Kenneth Grundy goes on to suggest, NEPU was a radical reaction to the inherent conservatism of the then ruling Nigerian People’s Congress (NPC). Its policies and ultimate objectives were firmly founded on a class analysis of politics. The post 1960 Action Group followed suit in its analysis of the social structure and class dynamics of Nigeria. It was therefore not surprising that Richard Sklar, an American political scientist who did his research on “Nigerian Political Parties” in the early sixties,⁵⁰ could not ignore the class dimensions of politics in Nigeria. In chapters eight and eleven of his book, Sklar discusses “the social basis of the party-power system” in Nigeria and suggests, among other things, that communal and association participation in politics should be clearly delineated in such analyses. Though communal factors did affect the nature of participation of the members and supporters of the various political parties studied, class affiliation was paramount.⁵¹

49. See, for example, Kenneth Grundy, “The ‘class Struggle’ in Africa: An Examination of Conflicting Theories,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2,3 (1964): 379-93.

50. See, for example, Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

51. To quote Sklar: “It is less frequently recognised that tribal movements may be created and instigated to action by new men of power in furtherance of their own special interests which are, time and again, the constitutive interests of emerging social classes. Tribalism then becomes a mask for class privilege.” *Ibid.*, p.6 Compare this to what Chief Abafemi Awolowo says in his autobiography: “What was heart-rending to many of us was the element

In a later article published in the *Journal of Modern African Studies*,⁵² Sklar once more called on American social scientists to pay attention to 'class action' in studying African politics.

In Eastern Africa, Mahmoud Mamdani cites a letter writer to one of the Ugandan dailies in the forties as pointing out the dangers of class formation in colonial Uganda.⁵³ The letter, according to Mamdani, was very clearly argued along Marxist lines whether or not the writer in question had been schooled in Marxism. At the same time, it has to be understood that this was the time when the labor movement in East Africa was under the influence of Marxist thinkers, notably the late Makhan Singh. It is not inconceivable that, in their journalistic writings, Singh and his compatriots had some appreciable effect on the worldviews of the literate workers.⁵⁴ The same argument can be extended to West Africa where, within the French colonies, especially Senegal and Mali, the embryonic working class and the intelligentsia had Marxist thinkers among them. If this were not so, men like Assane Seck⁵⁵, Modibo Keita,⁵⁶ Leopold Sedar Senghor⁵⁷ and even Sekou Toure⁵⁸ would not have found it necessary to denounce both the existence of social classes and class struggle in their countries (they even generalized demagogically for the whole of Africa) soon after independence.

of tribalism which was introduced into the campaign with a view of swaying the minds of the people in sympathy for Oba Akisanya and embittering them against the Movement. The candidature of Oba Samuel Akisanya had been rejected because he was an Ijebu, declared the Pilot. And the Ijebus naturally felt outraged, and went all out to fight in defense of the good name and prestige of their tribe. I knew it was true that Oba Samuel Akisanya had been rejected because he was Ijebu. Awo: *The Autobiography of Chief Abafemi Awolowo* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1960), p.150.

52. R. Sklar, "Political Science and National Integration: A Radical Approach," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 5,1 (1967): 1-11.
53. 1945, writes Mamdani, "an astute Muganda observer from Katwe, an African trading center on the periphery of Kampala, wrote the editor of the *Uganda Herald* about 'the problem of the new African middle class'. 'A new class is being born before our very eyes. Those of us who prefer the proverbially advantageous position of the onlooker are watching with an ever-increasing interest the growth of this class. This class is taking form and shape with a speed that is to some people terrifying. Certainly the war has helped to speed this growth. The class becomes increasingly self-conscious and excessively vocal every day; and all this to the end that it may acquire for itself a position (together with the attendant privileges) in the social and political life of the country. It is not for... anyone to ignore its existence. Certainly the first thing about any social phenomenon is to recognize it as a fact. Then we shall be in a position to understand its nature and its results. That knowledge will help us in the solution of our many post-war problems, be they medical or educational. The official will know what class of African he is dealing with; and the African will understand the limitations imposed on him by the size of the class he represents.'" *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976) p. 183.
54. See Makhan Singh, *History of Kenya's Trade Union Movement* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969).
55. Assane Seck is reported to have argued: "The class struggle shows itself, not in the relationships between the African middle class and the African mass, but in the relationships between the whole body of Africans and Europeans."
56. See Modibo Keita, "The Single Party in Africa," *Presence Africaine* 2, 30(1960), where he argues, in a somewhat confused manner, that "we obviously cannot assert that Negro African Society is a classless society..." but... "we do say that the differentiation of classes in Africa does not imply a diversification of interests." There is therefore no class struggle in African society, and by careful planning for development, the ruling class can usher society straight into a socialist world.

By asserting their own version of what they thought were the characteristics of social classes in Africa, they were attempting to take intellectual lead from the real Marxists whom they knew, or suspected, existed in their political parties, labor movements or society in general.

Marxist political thinking and social analysis was done a great deal of harm by the first generation of nationalists to seize political power in Africa. Leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sekou Toure of Guinea, Habib Bourghiba of Tunisia, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Mamadou Dia and Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, Tom Mboya of Kenya and Modipo Keita of Mali,⁵⁹ setting themselves up as the radical nationalists of Africa, denounced Marxism as irrelevant to Africa and professed to have versions of socialism that could be brought about without class struggle and the destruction of the bourgeois state. We shall go into the sociological details regarding why these African nationalists thought and acted thus in subsequent chapters. Suffice it to say here that they did a lot to divert attention away from independent states to issues of ideology concerned mainly with the substance of their philosophies and how original these were.⁶⁰

It was not until towards the end of the sixties, with Kwame Nkrumah himself having been overthrown, and a great deal of critical literature beginning to come out on the Ghanaian experiences⁶¹ that solid Marxist analysis of African political and development processes started to appear. Without attempting to exhaust the list, Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul, in two essays published in the late sixties,⁶² were

57. See, for example, Leopold Sedar Senghor, "The Senegalese Way to Socialism," *Review of International Affairs*, Belgrade, XII, 258 (January 1961), where he argues, among other things, that "in Senegal there are no classes in the real sense of the word; there are only social groupings."

58. For a discussion on Sekou Toure's denial class struggle in Guinea, see Kenneth Grundy, "The 'Class Struggle' in Africa: An Examination of Conflicting Theories," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2,3 (1964): 379-93.

59. Kwame Nkrumah, while in power, wrote *Consciencism*, denied the notion of class struggle as being relevant in analyzing social conflict in Africa. After he was overthrown from power by a military coup d'état in 1966, he wrote a book on *Class Struggles in Africa* in which he recognized the betrayal of the masses by the African "reactionary bourgeoisie" in alliance with imperialism. In Tunisia, "Destourian Socialism" of Bourghiba's Neo-Destour Party believed that the Tunisian elite had a "historic mission" to develop society, hence there was no room for class struggle (see, especially, Jean Duvignaud, "Classe et conscience de classe en Tunisie" *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* (Paris, 38, 1965). Julius Nyerere's two essays, "Democracy and Party System" and "Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism," published by Oxford University Press in 1967 in a collection of his speeches, *Freedom and Unity and Freedom and Socialism*, underscored the same Neo-Destourian point. The idea of class struggle, let alone the existence of social classes, was alien to Africa; the historical context which inspired Marx and Engels to write the *Manifesto of the Communist Party and Marx to write Capital* "have no counterparts in independent Africa"... so argued Tom Mboya in introducing "Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya," in 1965. Mamadou Dia, Senegal's first Prime Minister, was equally categorical: "Marxism-Leninism, like all other foreign ideologies must be renounced, the African must be free from them, so he argues in *The African Nations and World Solidarity* (New York: Praeger, 1961).

60. See, for example, "The Context of African Political Thought" *Journal of Modern African Studies* 8,1 (1970): 1-13, for a critique of some such studies.

61. See, for example, Roger Murray, "Second Thoughts on Ghana," *New Left Review*, 42, (1967): 25-39.

62. G. Arrighi and J. Saul, *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973).

the first to examine “African socialism” and “African nationalism” from a Marxist perspective and to call attention to the need to scrutinize more carefully the class basis of African politics. Two quotations will suffice to illustrate our point.

One:

“Just as the populist strand in African socialism obscures the realities of class formation, so is important, if somewhat paradoxical, to observe that much of the criticism of ‘neocolonialism’ in socialist Africa has served to obscure the realities of international capitalism’s involvement on the continent. Of necessity, therefore, the range of specific policy options is also artificially narrowed,”⁶³

Two:

“The social forces which might be expected to underpin any drive to reverse these trends (of the “Latin-Americanization of Africa”) are, generally speaking, either absent (as in the case of the proletariat proper) or ideologically and politically fragmented (viz., the peasantry). Moreover, given the present pattern of capital intensive development, the proletarianization of the peasantry will be too slow and long drawn out a process on which to base hopes of revolutionary change in most to the area. In time the fruits of bankrupt development - impressed upon lumped elements in the urban areas, sections of the peasantry and some members of the intelligentsia, for example - will come to define real contradictions, but in the short run, greater authoritarianism, occasionally complemented by mass incursions into politics whose regressive and parochial character reflects the fragmented and mediated consciousness which we have mentioned, is a more likely outgrowth of tension than any concerted revolutionary activity.”⁶⁴

It is perhaps necessary to delve more deeply into the implications of these hypotheses when looking into the formation of the modern nation-state in Africa and the ideologies of the nationalist regimes.

It did not take long before several radical intellectuals across Africa started to pursue this critical perspective in the analysis of political processes in individual African countries. The University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania took the lead. Issa Shivji’s essay, “Tanzania: The Silent Class Struggle,” (later extended into book form and published in 1973),⁶⁵ showed how the Tanzanian ruling class, in spite of its professed ideology of “serving the masses through socialist development”, was much more concerned with entrenching itself in positions of state power so as to use such positions for purposes

63. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-7.

65. See, Issa G. Shivji, *Class Struggles in Tanzania* (London: Heinemann, 1976)

of accumulation of private capital and more political power. This “bureaucratic bourgeoisie”, Shivji noted, was not simply a phenomenon peculiar to Tanzania. It was only more pronounced in Tanzania because before independence the African middle class had virtually no ownership or control of the major means of production. These were in the hands of an immigrant bourgeoisie (Asian) and the bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries (particularly British). With independence, the African middle class was now set to use the principle of sovereignty to lay the legal foundations for property ownership. The policies of Africanization and bringing the “commanding heights of the economy into the hands of the nation” through “nationalization” guaranteed the bourgeoisie access to avenues of capital accumulation. In fighting these class battles, the emerging bureaucratic bourgeoisie needed the political backing of the popular masses, hence it adopted a populist ideology and nationalist muscle-flexing couched in the language of socialism and Tanzanian nationalism. Analyzing state policies and their socio-economic impact on society, Shivji went a long way to prove his point and to show that, contrary to the claims of populist ideologues like Julius Nyerere, classes were being formed in Tanzania with the active aid of state power. There was actually “a silent class struggle” going on within the circles of the bourgeoisie, as well as between the bourgeoisie and the masses, while the populists were singing their chorus of “national unity.”

In the same manner, Mahmood Mamdani analyzed politics and class-formation in Uganda,⁶⁶ demonstrating that, contrary to anthropological and pluralist analysis of Ugandan politics, it was not just churches and tribes that made Ugandan history. Class struggle, mediated through religion and community, had been the motor of Ugandan history. Nobody could deny that the nationalist political entrepreneurs had used both religion and tribalism to gain constituencies. They had, nonetheless, very discernible “class projects” which they sought to implement once they acquired state power.

Colin Leys, influenced very much by Hamza Alavi,⁶⁷ was soon to accomplish the same task with regard to Kenya.⁶⁸ A central thesis that emerged in Leys’ work was that an “auxiliary bourgeoisie” was using state power to consolidate itself as a class. They were auxiliary to international capital in that they were both dependent on the latter and subordinate to it (junior partners) in the ownership of major means of production (“commanding heights of the economy”) in society.

The Fanonian streak in Colin Leys’ argument ignited vitriolic debates on the Kenyan case which spilled over into the pages of the *Review of African Political Economy*

66. See Mahmood Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda* (London: Heinemann, 1976).

67. See Hamza Alavi, “The State on Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh, *New Left Review*, 74, (1972): 59-81.

68. Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism* (London: Heinemann, 1975).

as a debate on the nature of “the African state” and the character of class formation and class struggles. Nicola Swainson⁶⁹ contended that, given the dependency perspective, the emphasis of any analysis of class formation must be on the way in which the dependent class in the periphery serves the interests of foreign capital. This, she was careful to add, tends to obscure the way in which the indigenous classes reproduce themselves, and denies any concept of the relative autonomy of politics within these formations and the particularities of different social formations.

In the Review of African Political Economy (20) of 1981, we carried forward the “Nairobi Debate” by focusing on analyses of social differentiation in Kenya and the ensuing class struggles then. We were emphatic on the need to understand peasant politics not simply as the “politics of tribes” but also as the “politics of class interests”. Further, we distinguished among various sectors and areas of the economy as the process of capitalist transformation was taking place. Kenya, we argued, had a ruling class very much located within the legal jurisdiction of the republic, but nonetheless connected to the metropolis by historical, ideological, cultural, economic and political ties under imperialism.

In many ways, Jomo Kenyatta and his government had been quite conscious of what they were doing. Soon after independence, the government engaged in a massive resettlement of landless peasants on former white settlers’ land. This came to be known as the “million acre scheme.” The peasants, now propertied, had a political stake in the new regime. Any political program that envisaged inciting these peasants against the regime for some romantic socialist revolution would definitely be ill placed. Our essays sought to explain the material basis for conservatism in Kenyan politics, contrary to the belief by some populists on the university campus that the peasants only needed to be “mobilized” so as to overthrow the neo-colonial regime.

The writers on the post - colonial state concede that there are different fractions of the petty bourgeoisie dominant in these areas, either bureaucratic, commercial or comprador, but the exploiter must always be located at the center. According to Michaela von Freyhold,⁷⁰ there can be no ruling class - hence a national bourgeoisie almost by definition - in a place like Tanzania. The ruling class, the class that determines the direction in which the socio-economic formation is moving, must be the bourgeoisie of the central economies, i.e. the imperialist bourgeoisie. What exists

69. Nicola Swainson, “The Rise of a National Bourgeoisie in Kenya,” *Review of African Political Economy*, 8 (1977): 39-73. *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918-1977* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

70. Michaela von Freyhold, “The Post-Colonial State and its Tanzanian Version,” *Review of African Political Economy* 8 (1977): 75-89.

71. Robin Murray, “The Internationalization of Capital and the Nation State,” *New Left Review*, 67 (1971): 84-109.

72. Bill Warren, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1980).

in Tanzania, as well as many other peripheral states, is a governing class. Von Freyhold justified her argument by pointing out that it is a normal feature of capitalism that the economically ruling class does not govern the state directly but leaves this to hierarchies of state functionaries and politicians who are conditioned and compelled in a number of ways to act according to the general interests of the ruling class. Unless the governing class actually determines the process of economic reproduction in the country it cannot be called a ruling class however large its formal powers may be. This is very much in line with Robin Murray's thesis on "the internationalization of capital and the nation-state"⁷¹ which argues that the nation-state is no longer that critical to the reproduction of capitalism. Since the Second World War, multinational and transnational corporations have increasingly been performing many functions previously performed by the state. The sheer rivalry among imperialist states, as Bill Warren points out, would make Murray's arguments rather tenuous.⁷² Synthesizing the two arguments, Nicola Swainson⁷³ rejects the positions of the "post-colonial statist" as well as that of Murray and concludes that, while at the level of economic relations the metropolitan bourgeoisie is indeed dominant, the very fact that the nationalists are now "in state power" makes a difference to the manner in which they make use of this power to organize socio-economic relations within the neo-colony. As Nelson Kasfir⁷⁴ observes, the state in the post-colonial situation is "a contested terrain" among the various factions and fractions of the bourgeoisie. Or, as Bjorn Beckman sees it, it is a site of struggle between various social forces including fractions and groupings of particular capitalist interests while, of course, essentially remaining "an organ of capital in general".⁷⁵ If we were to read the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte correctly and borrow lessons from it, we would realize that the economic dominance of the metropolitan bourgeoisie merely lays the parameters within which political power can be exercised through the state; exactly how this power is exercised and which fraction of the bourgeoisie determines the priorities of state policies will depend on conjunctural factors and class struggles which only an examination of concrete historical situations can reveal. This, as Swainson observes, is what will make a difference between Kenya and Tanzania regarding the manner in which surplus value is generated and used from one particular year to another. This will also mean that the way in which state power is used for class formation will also differ.

73. Swainson, "Introduction" to *Corporate Capitalism in Kenya*.

74. See Nelson Kasfir (ed.), *State and Class in Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1985), particularly the "Introduction" by Kasfir. See also F. Wilson.

75. B. Beckman, "Neo-Colonialism, Capitalism, and the State in Nigeria," in H. Bernstein and B. Campbell, *Contradiction of Accumulation in Africa* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985).

Moreover, a concrete analysis of class struggles, as Marx showed in *Class Struggles in France*, is a much more complicated exercise than simply determining places that people occupy in processes of production. What about those who do not occupy any specific place at all or those who occupy so many places that they may easily satisfy Ali Mazrui's novel category of the "trans-class man" in his famous essay "political superannuation and the trans-class man"?⁷⁶ Here, perhaps, we should note that we are not involved in polemics, but in discussing some very real problems that face concrete analyses of concrete political situations. The discussion becomes even more important when the necessity arises out of trying to predict what is likely to happen in a political setting. Which classes, for example, are likely to support a social democratic political party in Kenya in the twenty first century? On what basis is social democracy possible in Kenya? What slogans would lure which sections of society-which social strata-to such a party? With what kinds of basket of political claims do such strata make choices? Do they do so because they are social democrats or do they join in because they believe that social democracy will cater to their needs and political aspirations?

But where do the peasants and the workers feature in all this; they being the majority of the population in Africa, the majority without which democratic politics can make sense?

III. PEASANTS AND OTHERS IN AFRICAN POLITICS

Leftist literature regarding the nature of the state in post-colonial Africa has perhaps been too biased towards trying to find out who rules politically and who the dominant classes are. In comparison very little attention has been paid to the other classes within these social formations. We are not trying to suggest that Marxist literature has completely ignored the analysis of whole social formations. We are merely underlining the fact that, although this has been done, it has been done with the overriding concern of proving or disproving dependency theory.⁷⁶ John Lonsdale observes that this is to be expected. If researchers want to do a class analysis of how state power is used, they will find it easier to deal with the dominant classes for these have more direct access to state apparatuses since they actually operate such apparatuses while the dominated classes are mere supplicants. Moreover, adds Lonsdale, class cohesion and class-consciousness is usually felt at the top of the heap than at the bottom.⁷⁷ This would go a long way to explain why authoritarian presidential regimes, such as those of Moi of Kenya and Ayadema of Togo, survive for so long. In my essay on "The Disintegration

76. See, for example, the debate on Kenya in *The Review of African Political Economy*, 17 (1980)

77. Lonsdale, *op. Cit.*, p. 160.

of the Nationalist Coalition and the Rise of Presidential Authoritarianism in Kenya,” published in *Africa Affairs* in 1986, I argued that the coalition broke precisely as a result of the weak sinews that bound it together. The president, however, was capable of putting together pacts of domination using the ethnic loyalties of various elites to cement his rule through material payoffs.

The Marxist writers, whatever their differences in conceptual rigor and interpretation of events, shared one thing in common. They were all concerned with what Barrington Moore called “the chains of historical causation”.⁷⁸ Peter Gutkind and Immanuel Wallerstein, in an ‘introduction’ to a book they edited on *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa*⁷⁹ pointed out that this chain of historical causation is best studied by means of the model of political economy. The notion of political economy emphasizes the intermeshing of so-called political, economic and ‘social’ factors of change in one ongoing historical process. The dynamics of such change emerge from the continuing interplay of economic forces and related social classes; and these dynamics are reflected and furthered through institutional innovation and change.⁸⁰

Perhaps, this intermeshing led to more concentration on the study of the material basis of politics rather than politics itself (i.e. class struggle). We have ended up knowing more about what kind of capitalist development (or underdevelopment) is taking place in Africa than about the social conflicts that have arisen as a result of this development. Little attention has been paid to how dominated social classes cope with such conflicts and what modes of political domination (power - relations, ideology, etc) have emerged as a result of this development. If there has been a concern with modes of political domination, it has been more with regard to the study of dominant classes, not so much the dominated classes. There were, of course, studies of trade unions and working class organizations in the sixties and early seventies.⁸¹ Since then, however, very little has been done for reasons that we intend to look into subsequently.

Where are the peasants and the workers in African politics? Georges N. Nzongola⁸² (aka Nzongola Ntalaja), as early as 1970, drew our attention to the difficulties of unraveling African politics into its class components. Yet, in spite of this difficulty, Nzongola insisted that only class analysis, imaginatively and scientifically

78. See Barrington Moore, “Strategy in Social Science,” in *Political Power and Social Theory: Six Studies* (Cambridge, Mass: Howard University Press, 1958).

79. P. Gutkind and I. Wallerstein (ed.), *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976).

80. *Ibid*, pp. 7-8. But see also Anyang’ Nyong’o (guest editor) *Review of African Political Economy* (20), 1981, special issue on Kenya.

81. See, for example, Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul, *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa* (New York: Monthly Press Review Press, 1973) in which appear four of their essays on the working class, working class politics and the labor movement in Africa before and after independence. See also, R. Sandbrook and R. Cohen, *The Development of an African Working Class* (London: Longman, 1975); Richard Jeffries, *Class, Power and Ideology in Ghana: The Railwaymen of Sekondi* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978); R. Sandbrook, *Proletarian and African Capitalism: The Kenyan Case, 1962-70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); R. Cohen,

applied to the African situation, would enlighten us on what was politically going on in African societies before and after independence. His concern was with the nationalist movement in the Congo (formerly Zaire). Nevertheless, his schema and mode of analysis is valid for the post-colonial period as well.

Nzongola Ntalaja views independence as a bourgeois nationalist revolution in which workers and peasants, and other declassed social strata, took part with the hope of having a better future. Tom Mboya has also expressed this view in his autobiography, *Freedom and After*.⁸³ But the very way in which independence movements were organized meant that class contradictions were deliberately submerged for purposes of achieving unity of purpose within the movements. In the meantime, the petty bourgeois nationalists had their own class projects well in mind, and these projects very rarely took into account the interests of the popular masses except at a broad ideological level for purposes of building class hegemony. What happened to other classes in post-colonial times had a lot to do with how the dominant classes used state power and the alliances they still sought with the popular masses in pursuing their class projects.

With reference to Tunisia, Abdelkader Zghal has shown how, during the national liberation movement period, a “new team of intellectuals of the petty bourgeoisie” found it vital to mobilize both peasants and workers to achieve independence. Nonetheless, these two social classes did not have their interests properly articulated within the movement. Consequently, the movement had no policy for either the working class nor for the peasantry after independence. With regard to the landless peasantry without any regular employment, there was nothing other than “a great silent force”. It was not surprising, therefore, that soon after independence the agrarian question posed a problem which had to be solved by fiat from above. This needed a framework of political participation in which the petty bourgeoisie - now elevated to the level of a ruling class - could dictate terms: hence neo-Destourism.⁸⁴ Similar stories could be told with regard to Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Sudan.

Workers suffered the same fate. Almost everywhere, as Michael Chege⁸⁵ has tried to show, workers’ movements and trade unions that were so central to the

Labour and Politics in Nigeria (London: Heinemann, 1974).

82. Georges N. Nzongola, “The Bourgeoisie and Revolution in the Congo,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 8.4 (1970): 511-30.

83. T.J Mboya, *Freedom and After* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1963).

84. Abdelkader Zghal, “Changement de systemes politiques et reformes des structures agraires en Tunisie,” *Revue Tunisienne de sciences sociales*, Tunis, 5,12, (January 1968)

85. M. Chege, “State and Labour in Kenya,” *Africa Social Science Research Review* 2,1 (January 1986).

86. See also Sandbrook and Cohen (eds.), *African Working Class*.

87. H. Goulbourne, “The State Development and the need for Participatory Democracy in Africa”, *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review*, op. Cit. And also in Chapter 5 of Anyang’ Nyong’o (ed.), *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*.

independence struggle⁸⁶ have been either etatised or banned. Harry Goulbourne⁸⁷ attributes this phenomenon to the primacy of “the politics of control” over “the politics of participation” at a time when political power is so vital in aiding and abetting processes of primitive accumulation by those who hold political power and occupy state bureaus. Mahmood Mamdani also argues that these processes of accumulation from above (by the bureaucratic bourgeoisie) - and from below (by the peasant bourgeoisie) make it difficult for democratic politics to thrive in Africa.⁸⁸ In both cases the peasants (and we could add workers) are forced to enter into unequal relationships with both the state and the bourgeoisie, participating in politics, quite often as a result of coercion, strictly within the bourgeois terrain and hoping to gain, through cultural, regional or religious affiliation, from the politics of bargaining and patron-client relationships. It is the concrete divisions within these dominated classes along the lines enumerated that make it possible for the dominant classes to control the working class and prevent it from achieving internal unity in their struggle as a class. Such divisive tendencies, however, as Paul Lubeck⁸⁹ has shown in his study of the Kano workers in Nigeria, do not rule out altogether possibilities for waging a political struggle as a class after many lessons have been learnt, and in view of persistent crises of social reproduction in the neocolonial social formations of Africa. Some “very well off workers” have proved capable of taking ‘class action’ when their class interests are threatened.

The old Fanonian thesis that it was only the poor peasantry and the lumpen-proletariat who were the revolutionary classes in Africa has now been rendered invalid by history. Even where these classes have played decisive roles in the revolutionary struggle for national liberation, as in the case of the former Portuguese colonies, they have only done so as an outcome of political leadership and organization by classes “from the outside”, especially revolutionary intelligentsia and elements of the working class. Nor was Fanon correct to brand the African working class as a privileged social stratum and subsection of the middle class fundamentally allied with the elite.⁹⁰ The politics of unionized workers, and the contradictions that have ensued between the working class and ruling class in one African country after another has made this Fanonian thesis rather difficult to sustain.

88. Mahmood Mamdani, “Contradictory Class Perspectives on the Question of Democracy: The Case of Uganda,” *Ibid.*

89. P. Lubeck, “Unions, Workers and Consciousness in Kano, Nigeria: A view from Below,” in Cohen and Sandbrook, *op. Cit.*

90. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth.*

Giovanni Arrighi's and John Saul's labor aristocracy theory⁹¹ has also been put to the test by some working class initiatives which have been taken in Africa, for example, in South Africa. Saul and Arrighi were of the opinion that working class politics would, at best, be "reformist opportunism" and prove largely irrelevant to the growth of mass revolutionary movement in Africa.⁹² This is mainly because the economic interests and the political affinities of the African working class, on the one hand, and the post-independence elites, on the other, become increasingly complementary in the course of economic development. Both groups join, through the agency of government and overseas firms, in expropriating the economic surplus generated by the peasantry - the main (even the sole) productive force in most African societies, and the poorest and potentially most revolutionary class. Within the framework of this argument, the main domestic polarization of interests occurs, to put it very simply as Jeffries does⁹³ between two economic sectors: urban and rural, rather than within one mode of production as Marxist political sociology would put it.

The mass of unskilled laborers are to be regarded as peasants temporarily engaged in wage employment, who derive the bulk of their subsistence from outside the wage economy, rather than as part of the urban proletariat proper. Together with the unemployed, they possess interests sharply antagonistic to the existing social order and might, as in Fanon's vision, come to act as the urban spearhead of a peasant-based revolutionary movement.

Richard Jeffries has taken Saul and Arrighi to task on several counts. To begin with, their rendition of the class structure of post-colonial African social formations is simply factually wrong. One cannot speak of peasants en masse; the peasantry in Africa comprises several class components with regard to ownership of means of production, production and appropriation of surplus value/product, employment of wage labor and sources of off-farm incomes. The debate on the class structure of peasant society in Africa perhaps became more advanced after Arrighi and Saul wrote their essays but, as Marxist sociologists, they should not have embraced Fanon at the expense of reading Lenin on the Development of Capitalism in Russia.⁹⁴ Referring to the case of Ghana which was the subject matter of his book, Jeffries notes that the Ghanaian peasantry comprises capitalist cocoa farmers as well as agrarian workers and rural strata of the unemployed, all of whom cannot possibly be predisposed to the political-administrative elite in the same way. Similarly, the politics of skilled and

91. See Giovanni Arrighi, "International Corporations, Labour Aristocracies, and Economic Development in Tropical Africa," in Arrighi and Saul, op cit.

92. See Saul and Arrighi, "Nationalism and Revolution in Sub Saharan Africa," Ibid.

93. See R. Jeffries, *Class, Power and Ideology in Ghana*.

94. V.I. Lenin, "The Development of Capitalism in Russia", in Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (Moscow Foreign Languages Press, 1972).

unskilled workers in the towns differ not so much because the former are a “labor aristocracy”, but because quite often they are the ones who feel secure enough to take very strong stands against capital through union organization, articulation of working class interests and even strike actions. Secondly, to argue that workers enjoy incomes three or more times higher than those of the unskilled laborers is also not factually correct for all African countries. Moreover, even if this were the case, this would still not make them a labor aristocracy since, quite often, it is the skilled workers who are the most exploited in terms of the appropriation of surplus value by the capitalists.

Thirdly, it is equally absurd to suggest that workers, together with the elites and sub-elites in bureaucratic employment in the civil service, absorb a significant proportion of the surplus produced mainly by the peasantry. It is quite clear that state apparatuses would not be reproduced in a neocolonial situation were surpluses not extracted from all the productive sectors of the economy for this purpose. By the very fact that workers live on their wages, and even supplement this by off-work sources of income, is enough testimony to the fact that they are both exploited and are essential to the survival of the system as a whole. The bureaucratic elite is in a league of its own when compared to the working class. The majority of this elite are quite often state employees who enjoy wider class privileges than the working class. When one considers where they live in the African towns, the allowances they get, the political power they wield and the lifestyles they lead, one cannot assign them the same class status and consciousness as the working class. While workers may not take class action in political struggles that posit them against the bureaucratic elite, this is a completely different argument from the one that seeks to identify them with this elite because their interests converge or result from a common appropriation of surpluses from the peasantry.

The African working class has been further accused of lacking this class solidarity precisely because the members of this class are largely apolitical and, whenever they get organized into unions, they always seek to achieve immediate economic goals which, once achieved, render sustained working class struggle unnecessary. In the opinion of Elliot Berg and Jeffrey Butler,⁹⁵ the large majority of African labor unions are either apolitical by inclination or simply weak, too weak to resist the government’s attempt to control and incorporate them. The one group of workers possessing the organizational ability and collective strength necessary to play a significant political role - the skilled workers - has, they suggest, become relatively privileged since independence and therefore disinclined to present any kind of radical option to the government or radical opposition against the status quo. They have been known to take ‘tough stands’

95. E. Berg and J. Butler, “Trade Unions,” in C.G Rosberg and J.S Coleman, *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

nonetheless, stands that posit them squarely against the authorities and which would not be construed as politically naive. If anything, as Jeffries shows with regard to the railway workers in Ghana in the sixties, such workers have shown a great deal of class solidarity, consciousness and ability to pose economic questions in political terms. Susan Mueller has also shown that the reduction in militancy in the working class movement in Kenya, and the apparent withdrawal of workers from overtly political activities into more “condition-of-work” oriented struggles, was more the result of the state use of the carrot and the stick against critics, opponents and political opposition than a voluntary or traditional character of the working class movement itself.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, given the rather prolonged docility of the working class the carrot and the stick strategy seems to have worked in reproducing the neocolonial status quo.

When workers experience political obstacles in organizing themselves as a class as a result of “the politics of demobilization” undertaken by the post-colonial state, it is incorrect to blame them for having failed to assert their interests as a class in the political arena. Class membership depends upon becoming aware of one’s position within the production process. Hence, it often remains concealed behind all kinds of other forms of membership to which the individual becomes immediately aware in daily interaction with other individuals. There are, for example, memberships that are given by birth, nationality, ethnicity, region and family. Any system will, no doubt, propagate an ideology that downplays class membership in preference to other types of membership more immediate to the individual. It is quite possible that class struggle will be mediated through these other forms of membership. This is how the ideology of tribalism, as Mafeje contends, has found root in African politics. In analyzing the place of the working class in African politics, these considerations must be taken into account and analyzed in a dynamic and intellectual way.

Secondly, class-consciousness is arrived at through organization and struggle. If the form of existence of a social class makes it difficult, if not impossible, for it to organize as a class, it will not become a “class for itself”: its class-ness will only exist as an objective fact. For it to become subjectively relevant in politics, class membership must be invoked in political struggles, and members must be seen as working together towards some common objectives as opposed to other social categories in society. This is as true of the proletariat as it is of other social classes. In Marxist literature, however, this organization, and the identification of working class interests and correct forms of struggle, has often been regarded as the province of intellectuals and vanguard parties. This was the theory of revolutionary organization that Lenin advanced. In contrast

96. See, for example, S.D Mueller, “Government and Opposition in Kenya, 1966-9,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 22,3 (1984): 399-428.

97. Nzongoloo Ntalaja, “The Second Independence Movement in Congo-Kinshasa, (Zaire): 1963-68,” in Anyang’ Nyong’o (ed.) *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa* (London: Zed Press, 1987).

to the Leninist conception, Rosa Luxembourge gave prominence to the role of social experience, the experience of class struggle in the formation of class-consciousness. Even errors in the course of class struggles can contribute to the development of an appropriate class-consciousness that guarantees success, while the patronizing of the proletariat by intellectual elites leads only to the weakening of the ability to act, and to passivity.

The predicament of both workers and the intelligentsia is one in which both antagonism against and collaboration with established regimes can be discerned. In general, however, the neocolonial states in Africa have approached the popular masses in the political arena through the politics of corporatism as well as outright repression from time to time and from one setting to the other.

The general lack of democratic policies seems to have been the norm in Africa rather than the exception in the post-independence period. But since the mid-eighties, there have been pressures for democratization of society in which workers and the progressive intelligentsia, including petty bourgeois professional workers, have played very decisive roles. One would, of course, here refer to the long struggle waged by the National Alliance for National Salvation in the Sudan as a case in point, a case that disproves the pessimistic thesis of Arrighi and Saul. On a much more general level, Nzongola Ntalaja has asserted that, with decreasing options to change their life status within the established political systems, the popular masses in Africa will seek more and more to wage "struggles for a second independence"⁹⁷ which will take diverse forms from one African country to another. That this process of democratization is already under way in some African countries - notwithstanding possibilities of failure - is a testimony to the fact that this is an area of African politics to which political scientists need to pay attention. We shall return to it later.

IV. THE POLITICS OF CONTROL: ARMIES AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Politicians are men who compete with one another for power, not men who use power to confront their country's problems. The military formations, the uniforms, the starch, the saluting aides-de-camp, the parade-group precision might look, at last, like the decisiveness of purpose that Africa needs in its leadership. They however camouflage a regimented sterility of ideas and social policy.

When James Coleman and Carl Rosberg published their book on African Political Parties,⁹⁸ the central concern of the essays in the edited volume was to analyze the "role of political parties and other groups in the functioning and the development of the new African societies and the political systems which they are a part". The editors emphasized the primacy and centrality of political parties in African political

98. Roseberg and Coleman, op cit.

processes. “At this stage of Africa’s political development,” they argued, “political parties not only illuminate most clearly the nature of African Politics, but also are important determinants of the unfolding African political scene.”⁹⁹

The very year that the Coleman-Rosberg book was published, there were eight coups d’etat in seven African countries: Central African Republic (1 January 1966), Upper Volta (4 January 1966), Nigeria (15 January 1966), Ghana (24 February 1966), Nigeria once again (29 July 1966) and Burundi (18 November 1966). Subsequent to this, military rule, rather than rule by civilians in multi-party or mono-party states, became the order of the day to the extent that by 1986 only eighteen out of the fifty or so African states were under civilian rule. Under circumstances of institutional fragility and the absence of national culture traditions, Rosberg and Coleman had argued, power within the new states had passed by default into the hands of the leaders of the organized groups. These organized groups were enumerated as middle-class led political parties for purposes of acquiring and keeping power was acclaimed as being useful for achieving national integration vertically and horizontally as competitive political systems tended to bring too much schisms within the ruling elites of the new nations.

But no sooner had the ink dried on the Coleman-Rosberg volume than the military started to take over power in one African country after another, rendering the centrality and primacy of the political party invalid in the political management of the new nations. Claude Welch¹⁰⁰ quickly took pen and paper and accused students of African politics of having unfortunately ignored an aspect of political change in the continent which might prove even more central to political processes in the future than the celebrated political parties namely the role of the military in African politics. But the neglect of the study of the military was, however, understandable for until 1966 there had been only four military take-overs in Africa: the General Ibrahim Abboud coup in Sudan in November 1958, the Algerian coup on June 19 1965, Joseph Mobutu’s coup d’etat in Congo-Kinshasa on 25 November 1965 and the Dahomeyan coup on 22 December 1965. Unlike S. Huntington,¹⁰¹ J. Johnson and others¹⁰² who were much more concerned with studying army rule in the underdeveloped countries with the view of looking into the roles they would play in the modernization process, Welch’s immediate concern was to look into why there were army takeovers in Africa in the first place. What mistakes had political parties made? Why could they not ensure political stability and national integration that Coleman and others had expected from them?

Welch came up with eight reasons why coups d’etat were occurring in Africa. To begin with, soon after independence, the major political parties rapidly lost their

99. Ibid. “Introduction.”

100. Claude Welch, “Soldier and State in Africa,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 5,3 (1967): 305-22.

101. S. Huntington, *Changing Patterns of Military Politics* (New York: 1962).

prestige and legitimacy in the eyes of those they ruled. In quick succession they resorted to the reliance on force and naked power rather than authority to rule the people, expecting the populace to follow the ruling elites involuntarily rather than as a result of an effective political choice through the ballot box. Secondly, as this commandant style of politics took hold, growing schism among prominent politicians weakened the broadly based nationalist movement and forced it to break into its component parts as leaders of the independence coalition were now faced with internecine struggles over state power. Thirdly, once a coup occurred in one country, it became more or less a contagious disease spreading from one country to another as neighbors tried to emulate neighbors in search of a quick and surgical solution to crises of nation-building soon after independence. This emulation was easy to undertake because, fourthly, the new armies rarely feared external intervention by a more superior force, particularly the troops of the former colonial master. Fifthly, where domestic social antagonisms could not possibly be solved through peaceful political processes, especially where a minority ruled on the basis of past inequalities as in Zanzibar, it was quite understandable that majorities would be impatient and capture power through the coup d'état. Sixthly, the new ruling elites were not always very good at coming to grips with the economic and social problems facing the new nations. Quite often the measures they took hurt the very articulate and mobilized social classes from which they expected political support. Under such circumstances, other problems added to the socio-economic malaise, provided coup makers with very useful recipes with which to discredit those in power. Seventhly, corruption and blatant self-enrichment by those in political power jeopardized their legitimacy beyond repair at times. Under conditions of economic backwardness in which the army was itself not that socially privileged, such ostentation simply increased the elite-mass gap and created problems of both credibility and legitimacy for those in power. Finally, once the army men realized that they were the last repository of power to which civilian groups would resort in the event of stalemate in the political process, they were quick to take power and proclaim themselves acting in the name of the people even if their immediate project was to guarantee their own positions and to subsequently entrench themselves in political power.

By the end of the sixties, army rule was no longer a novelty in Africa. Studies of army rule in Africa increased more or less at a geometric progression, almost eclipsing any more concern for political parties, charismatic leadership and institutional political

102. John J. Johnson (ed.), *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962).

transfers as political scientists were wont to do in the “age of national integration” that the sixties were.

Ruth First's *The Barrel of a Gun*¹⁰³ was an incisive sociological expose on why army rule was becoming a daily phenomenon in Africa. It is perhaps correct to argue that *The Barrel of a Gun* was the first exhaustive political sociology of military intervention in African politics. Ruth First looked into the sociological basis of African politics in general, how political power gravitates towards the men in uniform, given the configurations of political conflict in the neo-colonies, the various historical conditions which ignite army coups, the reasons why army men rule the way they do, the role and interest of foreign powers in the kinds of “political stability” guaranteed by their allies - whether military or civilian - in the neo-colonies, and the plight of the ordinary masses in the ever increasing politics of command by military men, whether they proclaim themselves revolutionary or conservative. Coups d'état, concluded Ruth First, occur because governments are too weak to rule, but radical forces too weak to take power.¹⁰⁴ Further, by their very nature, armies could not be expected to produce fundamental changes in the running of society despite the justifications they give for taking over power. What is more likely to happen is that army rule will be riddled with crises: the very factors which produce the army coup d'état make it impossible for the army to produce a regime free of crises.¹⁰⁵ And this is where the way the political parties rule and the way the armies take over from them requires a unified study, and not one that assumes that the political sociology of army rule is fundamentally different from that of political party rule. When political parties in power conduct themselves in such a way that control rather than participation becomes the dominant political culture, then any major conflict is likely to be settled by force rather than discussion, by fiat rather than legal procedure or compromise. Major political conflicts may range from a cabinet reshuffle (viewed by some as a loss of opportunity for access to wealth) to the location of an industry in one region (viewed by other regions as presidential favoritism to his own region).

The solution to all this, argued Ruth First, was to democratize society and the political process in Africa: “not on the force of armies or the power that flows out of the barrel of their guns”.¹⁰⁶ Much more recently, the Thirteenth Special Session of the United Nations Organization summoned to discuss “The Critical Economic Situation in Africa”, resolved that development, however it was defined - can only occur in Africa

103. Ruth First, *The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power and the Coup d'Etat* (London: Allen Lane, 1970). It is interesting to note that, when the American version of this book was published by Pantheon Books (a division of Random House) in New York, the title was changed to “Power in Africa”.

104. *Ibid.* P. 452 (American Edition).

105. *Ibid.* P. 440.

with the participation of the people. Although this can be a mere empty slogan, the Session categorically stated that “policies will need to be pursued to ensure the effective development and utilization of human resources in all fields and sectors through: ensuring the effective participation of the people in all dimensions of development ... establishing sound basis for political, economic and social justice”.¹⁰⁷

After two decades of fumbling with development from above, or the politics of control, even international organizations are realizing that meaningful change can only occur if the people who are to benefit from this change are actively involved in it. If the state is going to be the agent for such a change, it must somehow be a people’s state. To what extent can those in power realize this? What kinds of political struggles are likely to ensue in pursuit of this objective? This is the direction towards which this discussion must now travel as we seek to address ourselves to the issue of “State, Governance and Democracy in Africa.”

106. *Ibid.* P. 465.

107. See, United Nations General Assembly, A/S-13/AC.1/L.3, “and Consideration of the Critical Economic Situation in Africa.” Draft Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Thirteenth Special Session, p. 13.

3

The present as history:

State, governance and democracy in Africa

The concern for good governance in Africa is now closely associated with the resurgence of struggles for democracy in the 1980s in African countries that had become independent in the 1960s. Led by the World Bank, the donor community had started to be apprehensive about financing a development pattern in Africa which was characterized by high administrative costs, gross waste through corruption and mismanagement and the marginal involvement of the people in project designs as well as in decision making.

In 1981 Elliott Berg shot the first salvos in the celebrated World Bank report, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action*. The report did not only pave the way for reducing state involvement in the economy (through liberalization and privatization), it also pointed out the dangers of over-blown bureaucracies to “good governance”. Scarce reference was made to democracy as a preferred system of government that would enhance development. It

remained, however, implicit in the argument in the report, that without substantial democratization, kleptocracy and rent seeking would not be checked and that both would continue to undermine opportunities for economic growth.

In an exchange in the columns of the CODESRIA Bulletin and the CODESRIA journal, *Africa Development*,¹⁰⁸ we debated the relationship between democracy and development. While I contended that in the context of Africa of the eighties, little hope could be put on chances for development unless and until there was substantial democratization of society, Thandika Mkandawire, on the other hand, contended that there was little causal relationship between democracy and development. Citing the cases of the South East Asian “Tigers”, he averred these were living examples of where authoritarianism had husbanded very high levels of economic growth. However, economic growth, as we shall presently see, is not necessarily the same thing as development.

Without necessarily repeating this debate, it would be important to revisit a few theoretical issues that lay the contours around “development” and “economic growth”, and how these two are further related to or closely associated with “good governance”. Good governance, on the other hand, may simply mean “good and competent management of public affairs”, with or without encompassing all the major tenets of democracy. If this is the case, then Mkandawire’s argument could easily hold water. If, on the other hand, good governance is of necessity inseparable from democracy, then both have to be closely associated with necessary conditions for development in Africa.

The concept “sustainable development” essentially entails “institutionalizing development”. Any concern for good governance and democracy must also be about institutionalizing both. Asking the question “under what political conditions can development be sustained in Africa” leads to asking a corollary question on the economic conditions that can likewise sustain good governance in Africa. In order not to engage ourselves in a circular argument, we need therefore to trace the problems historically. We need to see in a diachronic manner how things that are done today may influence those that will follow tomorrow.

In this regard, therefore, confronting issues of governance seems to come logically and historically before thinking about how development can be sustained. If public officials are corrupt, resources are misallocated, rent seekers do not make rational decisions within the bureaucracies, and investors lack confidence in the government, then very little saving and capital formation can be expected as foundations for future

108. See P. Anyang’ Nyong’o, Thandika Mkandawire and Shadrack Gutto contributions during the period 1985-89. Also P. Anyang’ Nyong’o, (1987) “Introduction”, *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*, London, Zed Press.

economic growth. Logically and historically, good governance in terms of competent management of public affairs becomes a prerequisite for sustainable development. This competent management can either be democratic or authoritarian.

This chapter will go through this argument and seek to show how authoritarianism has undermined development in Africa. It will further trace democratic struggles and their pitfalls, and how the difficulties in sustaining democratic reforms have been blocked by economic problems, and how, likewise, economic growth has been handicapped by “still-born” democratic reforms. Is democracy “stillborn” in Africa because of the so-called “low development of civil society”? If so, how can “civil society” thrive without the mushrooming of capitalism? What are the “life chances” of capitalism in Africa, given conditions in the continent and the current globalization?

Both development and democracy cannot be discussed without reference to the actors or to the social forces at play. Hence, this discussion will of necessity visit the age-old argument regarding how bearers of certain relations and ideas in society can support, or fight for certain changes in society. Where are the democratic social forces in Africa and what is their development project? Are they to be found in the state, political parties, professional associations, international organizations, cultural groups, social classes or whatever else?

This chapter ends on a somewhat speculative note on the future of democracy, good governance and development in Africa. It strikes a cautionary note on “not judging history too early,” more or less along the lines of Chairman Mao when he also noted that, during his own time, it was too early to judge the effects of the French Revolution on the history of humankind.

I. AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES AND THEIR SHORTCOMINGS

In 1980 the majority of African states were under one-party or military regimes. In almost all of them competitive elections had not been held for most of the post independence period. Where they were held, elections were conducted under semi-competitive conditions where their results did not affect the executive power. Quite often, they were more of a formality for legitimizing the existing power structure and eliminating a few individuals who were out of favor with the chief executive or his closest supporters. (A substantial part of this argument I have already made in my essay on Institutionalization of Democratic Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa published by the European Center for Development Policy Management in the Netherlands in June 1997).

Any form of political dissent was ruthlessly repressed and eliminated. This could be seen in the legal regimes themselves. Detention without trial existed in most African countries. Constitutions prohibited the formation of political parties and canonized

the ruling party as the only genuine and authentic guide towards “democracy”, “African socialism” and what was believed to be “development.”

The impulse towards one-party systems of government cannot be said to have all the time been imposed on African societies by the ruling regimes. At independence there was a sense of hope, what one might call some “blind faith” in nationalism. What was needed was not so much an elaborate system of government, but a government that could deliver the promises of independence. Something called “development” or “nation building” was the secret behind the delivery of these promises. People wanted employment, education, hospitals, you name it. If these could be delivered by the benevolent one-party state, what else could they ask for?

If the people did not understand this, or were somehow confused about the objectives, then the nationalist governments had the duty to give the people proper guidance. The Uganda People’s Congress (UPC) regime in Uganda put it very well in the Common Man’s Charter, the first steps for Uganda to move to the Left:

“We have no doubt whatsoever about the high priority which must be given to nation-building, and we are fully aware that there may be many people in this country who are either uninformed or misguided, who have not yet come to appreciate the importance of nation-building. We, therefore, consider it our responsibility to inform the misinformed, and guide the misguided. It is also our responsibility to enlighten the people about the necessity of all the institutions in this country and the people as a whole being actively involved in the joint endeavor to serve the nation.¹⁰⁹

The phrase “the People of Uganda”, the Charter went on to argue, always meant “One People, One Government, One Country.” This unitary conception of political organization and the project of nation-building was repeated in the nationalist ideologies of ruling parties in Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, Zaire, Central African Republic, Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire. Without necessarily adopting the same style of one-party rule, nor implementing similar economic projects, the overall result was the establishment of authoritarian regimes as s and regional components differed from one country to another.

In Cote d’Ivoire it was a coalition of indigenous peasant farmers and southern plantation owners, all of whom were dependent on immigrant cheap labor from neighbouring countries. In Kenya it was a coalition of a rising bourgeoisie and a peasantry dispossessed of its land by the colonial state, both spearheading a movement for the colonial discontents for independence that promised “everything to everybody”. In Zambia it was a similar movement as in Kenya, with migrant labor in the mines taking the place of the disinherited peasantry in Kenya.

109. Obote, A.M. (1969), *The Common Man’s Charter*. Kampala, Ministry of National Service.

In all cases the rising bourgeoisie, positioning itself to rule within political parties that were hierarchically organized around single personalities at the top, started their consolidation of power through populist ideologies that were quite successful during the first decade of independence. In Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire, the opening up of the frontiers of private property to the peasantry and the middle-classes alike gave the regimes a wide base of popular support, notwithstanding the restriction of the political space to a few. In Zambia, the nationalization of the mines and the setting up of diverse state enterprises that quickly provided upward mobility to both the workers and the middle class, gave Kaunda's party substantial legitimacy in a similar manner. In all the three countries, economic growth figures were impressive during the first decade of independence.

With the closing up of the frontiers of private property in both Cote d'Ivoire and Kenya by the mid-seventies and the collapse of the international price for copper around then, the social basis of "popular authoritarianism" started to wane in these countries. Voices of discontent from within "the pacts of domination" started to emerge. The reaction of the wielders of state power was to criminalize the discontent and introduce more repressive laws.

Claude Ake in his book *Democracy and Development in Africa* published by the Brookings Institution in Washington in 1966 put it very well. He argued that the political context of the development project has rendered it improbable. In postcolonial Africa, he went on to state, the premium of power is exceptionally high, and the institutional mechanisms for moderating political competition are lacking. As a result, political competition tends to assume the character of warfare. So absorbing is the struggle for power that everything else, including the quest for development, is marginalized.

In this process of marginalizing peoples, institutions and interests discontent will increase as development itself remains at bay. But the elites in power will continue, at almost all costs, to manipulate and retain power as they consume the scarce savings needed for development.

The discontent is quite often expressed in terms of unfairness in the share and distribution of "development resources", either between tribes or between regions. At other times, as in Togo and Uganda, it was over which elite, from which tribe or region, controlled the state and benefited from rent-seeking opportunities. Most military coups of the sixties and seventies emerged from such forms of discontent, always leading to subsequent coups as one rival elite after another claimed it was its turn now to benefit this or that tribe, this or that region, by exercising state power.

Occupying state bureaucracy became an end in itself, a means of self-enrichment for the individual, and a means for the redistribution of public resources for the region or ethnic community. It was a process that logically led to the tremendous expansion of state bureaucracy, with a corresponding inflation of budgetary provisions for the

administrative machinery. When there were no sufficient revenues for the state to sustain this, it resorted to both domestic and foreign borrowing. Non-performing public projects, set up for political reasons to satisfy this or that tribe, this or that region, became the major sources for the drain in public finances as well as the major causes of public indebtedness. In debt and not growing, the economies of African countries were the veritable victims of authoritarian politics and rent-seeking regimes.

Towards the end of the 1980s, internal and external pressures against one-party regimes in Africa started to show signs of success. At the beginning of that decade, the World Bank had complained against the top-heavy bureaucracy that these regimes had created and perpetuated in Africa. These bureaucracies were said to be generally detrimental to Africa's development. They were wasteful, corrupt, inefficient and politically repressive. They stifled people's liberties and entrepreneurial opportunities.
110

Rather than calling for democratic change in Africa, the World Bank advocated "good governance" as a cure for this malaise. Good governance here meant government that ensures relative freedom and security in society,¹¹¹ with public affairs run by a relatively "clean" state, keeping corruption at bay as much as possible, properly delivering services and maintaining a high degree of transparency and accountability. Soon these "good governance indicators" were to provide the conditionalities upon which aid would be granted to African countries, thereby constituting a form of pressure that quite often speeded up the process towards multi-party elections as the first litmus test for restoring good governance. Thus it became quite possible for authoritarian regimes to hold competitive or semi-competitive elections, without necessarily guaranteeing full democratization.

II. THE DEMANDS FOR DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The demands for democracy went far beyond mere holding of elections. In a research project financed by the United Nations University and carried out by a dozen African scholars and edited by Peter Anyang' Nyong'o (1987), it was found that a variety of movements and organizations had, throughout the post-independence period, pressurized for democratic change in Africa.¹¹² They called for freedom of the people and respect for human rights. They also called for the granting of the vote to all citizens, the establishment of representative government, the end of political

110 World Bank (1981), *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action*. World Bank: Washington DC.

111 Cohen, H. (1995), "Good Governance, Democracy and 'Citizen Expectation' in Africa, *Africa Demos*, 3(4).

112 Anyang' Nyong'o, (1987). *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*. London: Zed Press. Also in French as *Afrique: La Longue Marche Vers la Democratie: Etats autoritaire et resistance populaires*. Paris: Publisud.

repression and the establishing of the rule of law. They emphasized the need to end forced contributions by the people to state-sponsored political parties and presidential projects, and encouraged the participation of the people in a process of development that would improve the conditions of their livelihood. They demanded social policies that would address the basic needs of the people for education, health, food, housing and security.

Banned trade unionists, exiled politicians, and intellectuals led these groups and movements. They ranged from professional associations to rebel spiritual sects. They included youths, students, radical academics, and clerics preaching in mosques and churches. Thus, their conception on how democracy could be won and what types of government could guarantee it also varied. They did, however, share one thing in common, namely, the aspiration for democratic governance and the rejection of the authoritarian one-party and military rule. The Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) in Liberia was perhaps the most articulate in espousing what later became known as “the struggle for the Second Independence in Africa.” Equally vociferous was the Second Independence Movement in Congo.¹¹³

As the affected regimes started to crumble in the late eighties and early nineties, questions were raised as to whether or not such democracies would last. Questions were also asked whether the challengers to the old regimes were ready and capable of institutionalizing democracy as a principle in good governance. Or whether multi-party elections were yet another mechanism that could be manipulated to retain or to acquire power by those who had presumably lost in the democratization process.

It has been argued that, as authoritarian regimes fall, their principal architects and beneficiaries may easily “cross over” and become democrats. Or if they do not cross over but lose in elections, they may become the strongest advocates of the rule of law as they seek to claim the same in defense of their properties and newly discovered rights. Hence, in the post authoritarian period, authoritarian rulers can easily re-invent themselves as the new democratic rulers, thereby sabotaging the democratic projects from within. The so-called democratic regime remains democratic only in form. In content its policies, programs and values continue essentially to be authoritarian.

In West Africa some of the diverse social forces described above gathered together in National Conferences that proclaimed popular rebellions against one-party and military rule in the region. The “fever of national conferences” soon spread to Central Africa as well. And following the successful National Conference in Benin, others were to follow in Mali, Gabon, Togo and Zaire. In Benin, a free and fair

113. Wamba dia Wamba E., (1987). “The Struggles for the Second Independence in Congo”, in Anyang’ Nyong’o (ed.), *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*.

election was held and Nicephore Soglo, a former World Bank executive, defeated the incumbent, Mathieu Kerekou, to become the new President in 1991 only to face defeat from Kerekou five years later.

In Cameroon, Gabon and Togo the old regimes have stayed put, frustrating all attempts by those who originally congregated at National Conferences proclaiming the dawn of a new democratic era. In Zaire, the Mobutu regime collapsed in the wake of the death of Mobutu himself, leaving behind a state that had long collapsed and an economy that has been reduced to patches of subsistence. With the invasion by the loose alliance of military forces that put Laurent Kabila in power, the stage was set for the repeat of another long-drawn internal conflict a-la-Angola. This time, however, with a difference: there was no government in situ that could claim any semblance of international legitimacy.

In Cote d'Ivoire as well as Senegal, the national conference idea hardly took root, and multi-party elections only confirmed the old regimes in power under highly contested electoral arrangements. Across the continent on the East African side, Kenya and Tanzania also went through the same root: semi competitive elections were held under constitutions and a political culture that guaranteed victories for the regime under challenge. Malawi was a perfect case where the authoritarian regime successfully negotiated a transition with its challengers, precisely because the "cross-overs" from the ancient regime became the champions for the democratic conversion. In South Africa, the old white rulers "traded in their political privileges" with the ANC so that their properties and capital could be protected by the rule of law under the new democratic regime led by the ANC.

III. THE LIMITS OF COMPETITIVE ELECTIONS AND THE CRITERIA FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Competitive elections, while good indicator of democratic governance,¹¹⁴ are not, in and of themselves, what democracy is all about. Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl¹¹⁵ point out that we need to be aware of the "fallacy of electoralism"; the vote is not enough. Democratization requires the establishment, not only of a series of regular elections (which South Africa had under the half century of apartheid rule), but also a wide battery of other institutions and procedures. These institutions and procedures may be lacking in those African countries where elections themselves are difficult to

114. Schumpeter, J. (1950). *Capitalism, Democracy and Socialism*. New York: Harper Bros.

115. Schmitter, P. and T.L. Karl (1991), "Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe,

hold, and even if they are held, they seldom lead to sustainable democratic governance. The institutions and processes include legislative, judicial and investigative bodies within the state, plus interest groups, civic associations, and political parties within society interceding between the individual citizen and the state. It is these institutions and processes that make it possible for political executives to be accountable to the citizens in making public choices, allocating values and resources.¹¹⁶

Thus, while we can use competitive and pluralistic elections run on the principle of universal adult suffrage and secret ballot, organized by reasonably independent umpires¹¹⁷ and held at known periodic intervals to distinguish democracies from other political systems,¹¹⁸ the consolidation or institutionalization of democracy requires much more. Consolidation and institutionalization are two phenomena closely related to the phenomenon of sustainability.

Using the competitive elections yardstick alone, Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Malawi, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe could all qualify as democratic.¹¹⁹ But the ways in which elections were held in these countries, the extent to which they were free and fair, and the degree of legitimacy they accorded to the post-election regimes differed substantially.

It is therefore possible to go further and categorize these regimes regarding how far democratic political processes and practices were being institutionalized. Important in this menu are the following:

- ❑ The extent of competition between organized groups;
- ❑ Opportunities for popular participation of all adult citizens in free and fair elections as well as in public affairs;
- ❑ Regularity with which elections are held at the local and national levels;
- ❑ Constitutional guarantees for checks and balances in government
- ❑ Effective enforcement of civil liberties and human rights
- ❑ The extent of access of the citizens to their basic human needs.

On these key components of democracy, African regimes begin to appear as having varying degrees of democratic governance, or varying degrees of the absence of the same, competitive elections notwithstanding. These differences can be described

International Social Science Journal, 128.

116. Easton, D. (1964). *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

117. These "umpires" are quite often called "electoral commissions" in Africa, but state officials in a democratic state can play the same role.

118. Epstein, L.D. (1967), *Political Parties in Western Democracies*. London: Pall Mall; LaPalombara, J., and M. Weiner (1966), *Political Parties and Political Development*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

in terms of regime commitment to democracy. But this would make it appear as if these regimes have a choice to be committed or not committed. What makes Benin hold a successful free and fair election that sees Mathieu Kerekou back in power after five years? What makes Frederick Chiluba and his MMD regime, on the other hand, panic when there is a possibility that a repackaged Kenneth Kaunda and UNIP can come back to power in a second multi-party election in Zambia? To what extent can ruling elites, who for a long time used to benefit from rent-seeking activities, voluntarily give in to the demands for democratic governance? Or, much more generally, can democratic governance be successfully institutionalized in relatively backward economies where an individual's occupation of public office is closely linked to personal accumulation of wealth to the exclusion of serving the public good?¹²⁰

IV. 'DEVELOPMENT', AUTHORITARIANISM AND DEMOCRACY

Samuel Huntington ¹²¹ once argued that in young nations where development or modernization is a priority for the ruling elites, it is difficult, and may even not be necessary, to establish and sustain democracy. The tendency is therefore towards authoritarian rule, justified by its modernization outcome. While this argument may have been born out by facts in a place like Singapore, it could not be sustained in Malawi. Hastings Banda of Malawi contended that "he was a dictator that the people had to put up with due to the good things he was doing to society." Over thirty decades of his authoritarian rule he left Malawi with a sorry balance sheet of underdevelopment.

For any political system to be stable or to reproduce itself over time, it must be able to transform demands (inputs) into useful values (outputs). Thus, David Easton went further to argue that if a system cannot do this authoritatively, then it may experience stress and might not be able to survive. Where a system has limited resources to authoritatively allocating values, it cannot afford too much demand. Thus the very nature of developing societies where modernizing elites need to maximize resources for purposes of economic growth (read modernization), demands must be kept at bay. The system does this by being authoritarian, a "gate keeping" mechanism that selects only those demands to which scarce resources can be allocated. Thus, to maximize resources for economic growth, consumption demands must be kept at bay.

This justification of authoritarianism was a rather hollow and mechanistic theory. Depending on the class or self-interest of the ruling elites, demands may be

119. See, for example, Richard Joseph, (1995), "The Promise of Democracy", Africa Demos.

120. See, for example, Peter Ekeh (1975), "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17: 91-112.

121. Huntington, S. (1968), *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

kept at bay for purely self-serving reasons. Reasons that have to do with reinforcing rent seeking rather than economic growth, or reasons that may as well accentuate personal and public consumption, thereby undercutting savings and capital formation.

Counter arguments have therefore been advanced seeking to find out whether these elites have been authoritarian for purposes of rapid economic growth, or they have been authoritarian so as to preserve power for serving self-interest through corruption and rent seeking. Neither could be said that these regimes lacked resources with which to meet increasing demands. The 1960s and 1970s were a time when the foreign exchange earnings of most African countries were highest due to good prices of export commodities in the world market. Ghana got independence with vast foreign reserves in London accounts. Cote d'Ivoire's earnings from cocoa and coffee were highest by the mid seventies. Kenya experienced a coffee boom in the late seventies. Tanzania, for the whole of the sixties and seventies, was lavished with foreign aid from the Scandinavian countries.

But none of these favorable economic circumstances led either to relaxation of authoritarian control or to structural change and substantial investment for economic development. If anything, most of these countries accumulated huge foreign debts for which they had very little to show in terms of economic development. The position earlier cited as being held by the World Bank in 1981 summarized the general perception of post independent African regimes: they had stifled democracy without necessarily being modernizing or developmental. They had, for certain, managed to reproduce themselves for thirty years or more, with the original high hopes of what independence could bring to the "nationalist coalition" long dead and buried. Had the world conjuncture not changed towards the end of the eighties, authoritarian "first republics" in Africa would still be in business, with no hopes for democratic governance in emerging "second republics".

But what are the major social agents or actors that will deliver the second republic?

V. POLITICAL PARTIES, THE AUTHORITARIAN STATE AND THE HOPES FOR A SECOND REPUBLIC

One of the first casualties of the rise of authoritarianism in Africa was the mass political party. A political party, by its very nature, brings people together in the process of political competition for resources in society. In democratic political systems, when elections are held and a party wins, it forms a government and thereby acquires the opportunity to use state power of the state authoritatively to allocate values in the

122. Op. cit.

interest of its citizens.

The political party, as LaPalombara and Weiner put it,¹²² is a creature of modern society and modernizing political systems, and not just of democratic societies. Whether in a free society or under totalitarian regimes, the organization called “the party” should organize public opinion and communicate demands to the center of government power and decision. The party articulates to its followers the party policy, the goals, and the kind of interests it is likely to pursue when it gets state power. But to get power in a democratic society through elections, the party must win majority support of the electorate.

In its attempts to win this majority support the party will try to appeal to diversity of interests even though it may not satisfy all of them while in power. Thus, party manifestos and policy documents produced to win elections are either always too broad in their appeal, or tend to simplify issues that face the conflicting class, ethnic, regional, economic, cultural, or ideological interests to which parties must appeal. Further, since these parties are weak in organization and discipline, even the ability to “sell” what may be appealing ideas is lacking. It is, therefore, much easier for political demagogues to resort to the only constituency that can be mobilized on natural ties, the ethnic group or the clan. This further enhances the place of the ideology of tribalism in such demagogic political parties in Africa.

In colonial Africa, Africans were not allowed to participate in politics, nor could they form political parties. They were regarded as subjects not citizens, with the exception of the few évolués who were accepted into the French culture as citizens capable of representing overseas provinces in the French parliament. It was not until after the end of the Second World War that, owing to nationalist pressures for freedom and reforms, groups emerged which sought to mobilize the people against the colonial regimes. Some of these nationalist movements were organized around trade unions,¹²³ ethnic and regional associations,¹²⁴ or peasant revolts against exploitative and repressive agricultural policies, like the Syndicat Africain Agricole de Cote d’Ivoire.¹²⁵

Political parties emerged out of these diverse movements and groups, and quite often in settings where the colonial regime was neither prepared for the rise of these parties nor willing to accommodate them. In Congo (previously Zaire) political parties functioned in an environment where the state was weak, infrastructure poorly developed and civil society almost non-existent. In Kenya, while party organization

123. Mboya, T.J. (1957), *Freedom and After*. London: Penguin.

124. Sklar, R. (1967), “Political Science and National Integration: A Radical Approach,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 5(1).

125. Morgenthau, R. S. (1964), *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa*, London: Clarendon.

was initially only allowed within district boundaries (thereby coinciding with ethnic and regional interests), associative life at the national level was more highly developed, with the trade union movement being one of the strongest in Africa. It was, therefore, possible for nationalist political parties to emerge at the national level once restrictions were removed.

Using the trade union base as a vehicle for nationalist struggle, Tom Mboya expanded the unionist agenda to include demands for independence that could appeal to other groups suffering under colonial oppression. As Mboya put it, freedom (or *uhuru*) meant various things to various people. Hence, ideological discussions within the nationalist party had to be limited so that support could be maximized to achieve the single goal of independence. Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika (now Tanzania) used the same approach to organize the nationalist party there centered on the teachers' union movement.

Confronted with demands from diverse interests and expectations, and lacking coherent ideologies in the post-independence period that could bind the diverse social forces together in a political party, the nationalists moved fast to use the state administrative machinery to consolidate political power. In many cases the political party became an extension of the state, a state party. Political parties ceased to be mass movements and became instruments of political control rather than mobilizers of members of society for popular participation.¹²⁶ This was the case with the Kenya African National Union (KANU) in Kenya, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in Tanganyika, and the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) in Uganda. It was also the case with the Parti Democratique de Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) in Cote d'Ivoire, le Mouvement Populaire por la Revolution (MPR) in Zaire (Congo), Parti Democratique de Guinea (PDG) in Guinea Conakry, and the Rassemblement Populaire Togolais (RPT) in Togo. Power became highly centralized, local authorities were subordinated to the center, and traditional rulers were eliminated without necessarily transforming their social base (as in Uganda), or effectively brought under party control (as in Tanzania and Ghana). Associative life, where it already existed, was corporatized within the state-party structure. Where it showed signs of developing, it was stifled, stunted and even blocked from developing.

Ethnic-based politics became the means of manufacturing consent, without giving room to dissent. This made the one-party regimes politically insecure as well as brittle. The appeal for ethnic support whenever faced with a challenge to their power made African presidents even more vulnerable to ethnic politics.

126. Anyang' Nyong'o, P. (1987), *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*, London: Zed Press.

With the growing pressures for democratization in the late eighties and early nineties, there emerged an increasing use of the ethnic factor to maintain power. By 1995, it was quite clear that the increasingly desperate manipulations of clan divisions in Somalia by Siad Barre, or the anti-Luba sentiments in Shaba by Mobutu Sese Seko and the Rift Valley land conflicts engineered by Daniel arap Moi in Kenya all pointed to the very narrow base of these regimes. This led to their resort to the only form of popular support they could manufacture overnight, the ethnic support from “the home boys”.

But the success with which the one-party state suppressed civil society organizations depended on the level of development of the different African economies before and after independence. At independence there were hardly any lawyers in Tanzania. Uganda, on the other hand, had a bevy of lawyers owing to its more highly developed educational system in colonial times. Most import-substitution industries in East Africa that started in the 1940s were based in Kenya, thus explaining the more advanced trade unionism there. Again Kenya was the only plantation colony in East Africa, explaining the interests the settlers had in developing a more sophisticated infrastructure, with civil servants and professionals among the Africans to run this infrastructure. Dahomey (now Benin) was the center of recruiting professionals and civil servants for the French West African colonial state, a distinction it only shared with Senegal.

Thus associative life was more advanced in Uganda, Kenya, Benin and Senegal, compared to Togo, Cote d’Ivoire, Zaire (now Congo) and Mozambique. Try as they might, the one-party regimes in these “advanced former colonies” could not completely stifle civil society even under the worst periods of authoritarianism and military rule.

It was these associations in civil society, repressed or trying to emerge, that became centers for organizing “second independence” movements, heralding the birth of the “second republic”. In Zambia it was the church, associations of journalists and lawyers, the mineworkers’ union and the teachers’ union that formed the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD). In Kenya similar forces, but excluding the highly state-centred unions, formed the bedrock of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD), subsequently split into pieces by ethnic rivalry among its leaders. In Benin, the National Conference of Living Forces of the Country comprised academics, journalists, unionists and lawyers, all of whom belonged to or had been members of one association or the other. The middle class nature of all these social forces needs to be noted, hence the importance of this social class in bearing and advancing democratic values, or squandering its historical opportunities by recoiling into its pre-capitalist ideological/cultural past.

VI. PROMISES AND LIMITS OF MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACIES

Like their counterpart nationalist parties, recently established political parties have been mass movements: weak in organization, single-issue oriented and not ideological. They have been elite-dominated, top-down in mobilizing supporters, largely urban-based and with little or no elaborate programs and policies for their projects in assuming state power. Where they have come to power, as in Benin under Soglo, Zambia under Chiluba and Malawi under Muluzi, they have accepted the structure of the state as given. They have continued to implement more or less the same policies as their predecessors and have been very heavily subjected to World Bank and IMF-initiated structural adjustment programs (SAPs), without offering any of their own models for economic growth and renewal. Faced with pressures or challenges from the electorate, they have resorted to “gate keeping” tactics reminiscent of the authoritarian regimes they purport to have replaced.

In Zambia, for example, privatization has seen many state workers lose their jobs, the state sector having been the biggest employer given the dominant role in the economy of the nationalized copper industry. Liberalization, too, opened the local industries to cheap imports, thus leading to their being closed and more people losing jobs. The unemployed found a voice in Kenneth Kaunda, the former president who founded the mammoth state sector. Kaunda blamed the MMD and Chiluba for the social costs of SAPs. The MMD has not been able to explain or sell the austerity measures undertaken in the wake of SAPs. The MMD elite is in the least favorable position to justify such measures to the ordinary citizens since they continue to live the life style of their UNIP predecessors and have been accused of practicing corruption. Rent seeking has not been forsaken and the MMD, as a party, has not developed any sense of values and work ethics so as to discipline state officials and socialize them in a new way. Quite often state-owned enterprises, in the name of privatization, are sold opaquely for a song to the MMD elite, thereby discrediting any argument that such reform projects are for the public good.

In Kenya, where the opposition parties won a majority of the popular votes but failed to form a government due to constitutional bottlenecks as well as divisions within the opposition itself, the political arena has continued to shrink in favor of the ruling party, KANU. The latter has continued to use the repressive apparatus of the state to ward off democratization, refusing to reform laws and procedures that would expand the political space. Thus, even when laws have been passed by Parliament that may go to some extent in dismantling authoritarianism, the President has a way of employing delaying tactics in the implementation of such laws. In this regard, Kenya seems to be going through a long transition from authoritarianism in a multi-party

regime to some democratic form whose nature and contours are not yet clear.

It must be noted that this nascent process of democratization is taking place at a time when African economies are experiencing their worst decline in the world economy. Notwithstanding increasing globalization, or perhaps because of this globalization, African economies have become increasingly marginalized. Africa's share of world trade declined from 4% to less than 1% between 1980 and 2000. Official Development Assistance (ODA) has also drastically gone down and direct foreign investment declined so substantially that in certain countries it is no longer a factor. This comes at a time when foreign indebtedness is at its highest: in 1999, Kenya's foreign debt was 106% of her GNP; Mozambique's was about 210%. Debt servicing in Kenya consumes 28% of export earnings; in Mozambique it consumes 21%, and in Uganda 144%.¹²⁷

Thus even with the very best of intentions, these governments are in an extremely difficult position to initiate processes of economic growth that would generate employment opportunities, create higher incomes and give the state a fiscal basis for increasing its capacity in social welfare spending. If such an atmosphere of economic growth prevailed, it would be easier for democratic governance to take root. But matters are made worse when, the unfavorable international environment notwithstanding, the new regimes have taken no serious reform measures to change wastefulness on the part of the state, kleptocracy and the same inept practices for which the authoritarian regimes were discredited. This may be a function of the attitude that the élites have towards state power, the belief that it must first and foremost be used for personal gain in terms of wealth, prestige and social status rather than in the service of some ideal or public good.

VII. INSTITUTIONALIZING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

With the background of authoritarianism, highly centralized power, constitutions which still presuppose the existence of the one-party regime, élites with the one-party culture still largely in charge of state apparatuses, local government structures which have over the years atrophied, a culture of low level political participation, economies which are still largely agricultural and peasant-dominated and an international environment that has marginalized Africa, the institutionalization of democracy is indeed a gargantuan task. This is not to say that there are no well-intentioned social forces struggling for democracy, civic society organizations with vested interests in opening up the political arena through democratization and certain forces in the international environment which are positively predisposed to democratization

127. UNDP. 1996. Human Development Report. London: Oxford University Press.

128. Michels, R. 1958. Political Parties. Glencoe: The Free Press.

projects in Africa. These observations are, however, made to underline the objective conditions within which democracy is to be institutionalized, hence the possibilities and limits of building democratic governance whatever the subjective factors may be. Such an analysis will further help to design programs that will respond to concrete situations rather than satisfy the ideological sentiments of those engaged in the project within as well as outside Africa.

First, political parties need to be properly organized. We have noted earlier the importance and centrality of political parties in organizing the people in modern democracies. Active associative life by itself is not enough in the process of institutionalizing democracy. Further, Roberto Michels noted¹²⁸ that democracy is inconceivable without organization. A class which unfurls in the face of society a banner of certain definite claims, and which aspires to the realization of a complex of ideal aims deriving from the economic functions which that class fulfils, wrote Michels, needs organization.

The mass movement background of the parties that have been in this “second independence” democratic opening have caused them to neglect organization, and once again rely more on the administrative structure of the state when in power. This has further alienated these parties from the very civic associations that supported them.

Second, political parties need to develop visions with which to mobilize and sustain support among the people. There is really no short cut to stating the universal principles for which parties seek power at the national level. Otherwise, parties will continue to be based on “natural ties”, tribal or ethnic, for which no sophisticated ideology is needed except to appeal to the sentiments of defending sectarian interests quite often justified on the basis of past injustices, perceived or real, carried out by the old regimes.

Third, politics in Africa as elsewhere will always be based on distributive issues since each group is looking for what has popularly been known as “the share of the national cake”. This share can at times be seen as a zero sum game: if last time ethnic group X was in power and its élites gained from the state in corrupt ways, this time it is the turn of ethnic group Y whose élites should take their turn in the share of corruption. This, obviously, is a question of political culture and political socialization. Verba and Pye¹²⁹ noted that political culture is important in the orientation of people towards political action. In terms of existing beliefs, expressive symbols and values that define the situation in which political action takes place like voting or allocating resources within the state, political culture is vital. Political culture - that set of beliefs that

129. Verba, S., and L. Pye. 1965. *Political Culture and Political Development*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

defines a person's orientation in the public sphere - provides structure and meaning to political life in the same manner as culture in general gives coherence and integration to social life. Through political socialization in schools, clubs, associations, the party and the mass media individuals get orientation and adopt certain cultural traits.

Fourth, political parties need people with the knowledge and commitment to organize and run them. In Kenya, in particular, political parties are creatures created for electioneering by people looking for careers in politics. As soon as elections are over they pay very scant attention to these parties. What is even worse is that a good number of people interested in party politics and political careers are quite often "social misfits," people who have been failures in other life endeavors and seek to find a source of livelihood in politics. Such people are very likely to be opportunists of the worst sort.

The one-party political systems, having existed for over thirty years, have perpetuated a political culture that cannot be voluntarily wished away. This is an anti-democratic, egoistic, provincial, authority fearing, quite often insular, ethnic-protective culture which has continued to limit the individual's freedom for civic association and tends to entrench personal rather than community-oriented attitudes towards public life. Thus when corruption is committed by "one's own kind" this may not necessarily receive approbation from one who speaks in favor of accountability and transparency, for these concepts are not truly universalized within neo-colonial culture. To break from this culture, a deliberate process of social engineering will be necessary, undertaken by democratic political parties and organizations (including the mass media) which are consciously committed to transforming society and institutionalizing democratic governance. But this project may itself not be successful unless it is accompanied by a process of rapid economic growth so that the social structure is transformed, and so that bearers of new modern social relations who will eventually cut the umbilical cord of provincialism in politics are created.

Fifth, the one-party culture, with its centralizing tendencies and institutionalized "top-down" politics, not only subordinates local government institutions and renders them redundant, but also creates a general idea that politics only exists at the national arena. In Kenya, for example, although elections are held for municipal and county councils, they do not receive much attention from the major parties. The caliber of the individuals elected is often very low. Remuneration of the elected councilors is equally low.

Hence, where democracy really matters - at the local level - it is neither properly

institutionalized nor do the existing institutions encourage effective participation. The new process of social engineering and democratic orientation will have to lay emphasis on local level democracy so as to confront the question of “who governs” from the bottom - up, not the other way round.

The importance of this process of social engineering (including civic education) and economic growth cannot therefore be overemphasized; the successful experience of Mauritius and Singapore attest to this.¹³⁰ Herein lies the role of NGOs and northern partners, not in patronizing the institutions and the people involved, but in sharing experiences and joining hands with them. The city conventions that were organized in Nairobi and Kisumu¹³¹ under the auspices of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation demonstrated that there are individuals and groups who only need to be exposed to the appropriate organizational framework to begin activities that would strengthen community organizations, municipal councils and neighborhood organizations in the process of democratization. Parties with specific programs and ideological orientations are therefore likely to emerge in the near future, given the disappointment with the present mass-based and loosely organized ones. When such parties emerge, it will no doubt be necessary for them to have fraternal relations with similar parties elsewhere on the basis of mutual interests.

With regard to economic growth, the campaign for debt cancellation is vital. There is no doubt that this is an area where northern partners can play a major role in as much as they should also support initiatives for transparency in international relations.

For Africa's indebtedness is not only a self-inflicted wound. It also has a lot to do with the iniquities of globalization, a subject that continues to be as controversial as it is illustrative of the lack of social democracy at the global level.

130. Brautigam, D. 1995. *The Paradoxes of Democratization in Mauritius*. Africa Demos.

131. Mugwanga, A.H. (Ed.) 1993. *Actions to Restore the Past Glory of Kisumu*. Nairobi: FNE

4

The future as history in the making

The present generation of Africans has very little recollection of the struggle for independence. By present generation I mean those born after 1960; those who were not yet 45 years of age at the turn of the twentieth century. For those of us who actually experienced the struggle for independence—if we exclude the experience of South Africa and the former Portuguese colonies—we have a tremendous sense of having been let down.

I remember standing at the ceremony marking the independence celebration in Kenya on December 12, 1963. The Union Jack had just been lowered as Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and the Duke of Edinburgh stood at attention. As the new Kenyan flag went up and the army band played our new national anthem, we from the Alliance High School and the Alliance Girls High School—a choir of 24—sang along with them. After midnight, there was the sound of several gun salutes that made the crowd become extremely excited.

In his autobiography called *Freedom and After*¹³² written soon after independence, Tom Mboya contended that the mass political party that mobilized people for the nationalist struggle had to contain people who had different—if not totally contradictory—aspirations for independence. It had to have workers hoping for higher wages. It had to have employers hoping for higher profits. It had to have the landless looking for land on which to settle, and landowners growing commodities that would fetch better prices in the world market, and so on. It was no wonder, therefore, that what Mboya observed before independence became a drama enacted in violent conflicts after independence, leading to military takeovers, the break up of the nationalist parties and even the rise of new liberation movements.

Rene Dumont,¹³³ writing more or less at the same time, observed that independence in Africa was started on a false footing. At that point in time, people thought that the French sociologist was too pessimistic. But his argument was potent. Given the class interests of the new nationalists now in power, the configuration of their external relations with outside powers and the dominant imperialist interests, it was difficult to envisage how the new states could deliver the fruits of independence to the masses. Underdevelopment was likely to continue. Poverty would grow. A system of political and economic decay would set in if there were no major structural changes in terms of internal power relations and external economic relations.

Frantz Fanon, writing after his experience in the Algerian civil war, more or less confirmed Dumont's thesis in his *Wretched of the Earth*¹³⁴ where he saw little future for the masses of the third world after the political independence of their various nations.

What Fanon, Dumont and even Patrice Lumumba of the Congo (in his farewell letter to his wife before being murdered by the Mobutu mercenaries in 1960) saw in those early years has been experienced in contemporary Africa. In other words, these visionaries saw the future being made in the present of their times. The future, to them, was history already in the making. And they could predict the future because they could very clearly read the social and political dynamics of their time.

Quite often those who are engaged in practical politics fail to see the future. They are so much preoccupied with the immediate that they fail to make the future according to what they perceive "ought to be done." Perhaps that is why history is so full of skeletons of major mistakes made by political leaders or would be makers of history.

132. Tom Mboya, *Freedom and After*, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1963.

133. Rene Dumont, *False Start in Africa*, London: Penguin, 1963.

134. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press, 1963.

Contemporary African studies no longer provide such sharp observations about the present. Whether in sociology, political science or economics, there seems to be a growing feeling that the future now belongs to solving the present problems “together”. One such problem is poverty; and the way out of poverty is sustainable development. However defined, sustainable development simply means development that can endure through time, benefiting all “stake holders”. There also does not seem to be the notion that “stakeholders” can have contradictory interests in the process of social change (i.e. development), thereby seeking to determine the outcome in different ways. Once the term “stakeholders” is used, all contradictions disappear, and Fanon’s fear of “the pitfalls of national consciousness” disappears.

In the annals of planning bureaucracies, both at the national and international levels, there must already exist volumes of documents neatly defining how development should be carried out in Africa. The Lagos plan of Action was faulted because it relied too much on the discredited—let alone collapsed—African state to undertake industrialization with foreign aid. The “new visions” for Africa’s future development cannot possibly do away with the role of the state; but the concept “state” is now replaced by the phrase “institutions of good governance”.

But institutions of good governance cannot exist and act by themselves; they must be created, used and propelled into action by individuals and social forces with concrete interests in history. That is why, try as we may, we cannot banish the questions that both Fanon and Dumont raised. Which social forces will sustain development in Africa?

At the moment a lot of faith is being placed in the private sector propelled into action by a state in which basic political order exists, political power is held legitimately, things happen according to the rule of law and there is popular participation in public affairs. In essence, the future of Africa, secured through sustainable development, is dependent on how successful something akin to the bourgeois democratic revolution is. This revolution, assumed to be occurring today, must have its agents among the so many stakeholders who, in turn, need to be enlightened enough to see the logic and necessity of this revolution. Is this the case?

Sadly enough, this may not be the case. Political struggles in Africa today are so engrossed in the issues of the immediate that “building for the future” becomes more or less esoteric as a political concern. When the concern of politics and politicians is with the immediate, where are we going to get the captains of industry who are willing to invest for the future? After all, capitalism is not a mode of production that completes its life in one cycle; it needs to be reproduced over time. That concern for the future, that innermost compulsion that the present must be the future in the making is what makes it possible for the expanded reproduction of capital. No wonder the state elite finds it so easy to consume public resources to satisfy the immediate even when this

leads to the utter destruction of public institutions themselves because they really are not conscious of what it takes to build capitalism. They are the enemies of the captains of industry even when they strive to straddle and become captains themselves. The very people that one would assume would benefit from capitalism are those that strangle its development.

This phenomenon is now moralized in terms of corruption, and remedies are sought through stiff anti-corruption laws that are now the conditions that governments in Africa must satisfy before they receive donor funds. What we should face rather squarely is that the solution to the problem is not to be found simply through stiff laws, but through a radical change in the values of our societies.

Francis Fukuyama, in his controversial book *The End of History and the Last Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992) argues that whether in authoritarian regimes or in democracies, capitalism can only develop where people in public life run their affairs with a certain amount of honesty, trust and predictability. They do not do this voluntarily. They do it because they have been brought up in a certain way, have been groomed under certain laws and regulations and they have internalized certain values. In other words, there is a certain culture of civility that is needed for capitalist development. Even among the mafia, breaking one's word can amount to the execution of the death penalty!

When I attended the Alliance High School, we had a school motto: Strong to Serve. The legendary educationist, Edward Carey Francis, the headmaster during my first year at Alliance (and his last year at the school), never tired in reminding us what this motto should mean in our lives when we left the school. We were more or less being indoctrinated to be servants of the people. As a missionary, perhaps Francis wanted to produce students in his own image, whether they were going to be doctors, teachers, farmers or clergymen. Our school prayer went something like this:

“Have in thy keeping, oh Lord, our God, this school; that its work may be thorough, and its life joyful. That from it may go out men who, in thy guidance and with thy keeping, may serve their fellows faithfully.”

Saying such a prayer year in year out, one evening after the other, Sunday after Sunday, had a profound impact on some of us. Work, thoroughness, integrity, keeping one's word, but enjoying life all the same, was a culture we carried with us from the school and beyond. But soon we were to learn that the outside world was a little bit meaner than the likes of Carey Francis and Laurry Campbell—his successor—expected.

When I joined Makerere University to study Political Science, Literature and Philosophy, I found that our University motto was *Pro Futuro Edificanos*, which simply means “We Build For the Future”. From being strong to serve I was now expected to

build for the future. Max Weber would perhaps have said that I was now complete with my protestant ethics, a perfect cultural tool kit for a capitalist of the future.

I do not think that what is really ruining Africa's chances for development is simply corruption. Corruption is the end result of a trait that is pathological in the culture of the ruling elite. It begins with the endemic impulse to want to escape poverty through the use of political power and the exhibition of a culture of richness that must be displayed in ostentation and consumption. The more ostentatious one becomes the more one wants to improve on the artifacts of ostentation, be they houses, cars, wives, holidays, rings, public donations and so on. This propels a never-ending consumer culture that, of necessity, must misappropriate public goods and misuse public power.

Julius Nyerere was perhaps right when he started with searching for a code of conduct for leaders in Tanzania, and emphasizing—beginning with himself—the need for simplicity and lack of ostentation, among leaders. He may not have succeeded in keeping corruption at bay—perhaps because there were few Nyereres in Tanzania—but he established a culture of leadership that Africa should inherit and put to good use.

Both Fanon and Dumont saw the nationalists, who only wished to replace colonial rule without doing away with the values of this rule, as the original sewers of the problem that we now have: bad governance in all its forms.

In the final analysis, it is not stake holders in general who will bring about the revolution in values that will bring good governance and sustainable development to Africa, but a committed band of people, inspired by these values and faithful to the vision of a prosperous Africa. These must be people with some faith in their society burning in their bellies. A faith based on some deep values and moral tenets that they hold dear.

In 1994, the African Leadership Forum, under the leadership of Retired General Olusegun Obasanjo—now president of Nigeria for the second time—took us to Singapore on what was called “the Singapore-Africa Encounter”. There were a dozen of us from all over Africa, people the Forum thought would play leadership roles in Africa. The aim was to discuss with our Singaporean counterparts to learn what was behind the Singaporean “miracle”.

Lee Kwan Yew, the first Singaporean Prime Minister—and now Senior Minister in the government—gave us a two-hour lecture on what he thought we could learn from one another. He accepted that Singapore had done better than Africa without having one tenth of the resources that Africa has. But he said that Singapore was different in that it had two important assets that it harnessed and used well: its people and its leaders. The rest of the story he has now published in his latest book, *The Story of Singapore*.

During question time, I asked the Prime Minister the following question. In

1969, Singapore was more or less at the same level of development as Kenya. What could we have done to follow the same path that you followed?

Mr. Lee Kwan Yew looked at me calmly and answered, equally calmly. "In 1969, while we here in Singapore consolidated our leadership and our programs in light of the aspirations of our people, you in Kenya assassinated Tom Mboya." The answer was pregnant with meaning.

All revolutions have been led and executed by men and women of conviction and devotion; Africa cannot be an exception. Otherwise the process of social and economic decay, a process that marks our present history, may as well mark the future as we see it being made today. This is the relevance of the politics of vision, politics of proper organization and productive ideas, and not the mere mouthing of good governance and other phrases that may soon become hackneyed as they lose meaning and relevance in our daily lives.

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Index

- AAPS 14,16
- AAS see African Academy of Sciences
- ANC see African National Congress
- Abboud , General Ibrahim 75
- Abdelkader Zaghal 68
- Academic staff 31-32
- Accountability 83, 95
- Action Group of the Western Region 59
- Action Group Political Party
- Adam Smith 39
- Addis Ababa 7, 10
- Adelman, Irma 53
- Africa's political development 79
- African Academy of Sciences 8
- African Americans 26
 - bureaucracies 5
 - citizens 15
 - elites 50
 - intellectuals 14-18
 - labor unions 72
 - laborer 44
 - leaders 15
 - liberation 44
 - peasantry 44
 - rebirth 1
 - regimes 86
 - renaissance 11-12, 18
 - resurgence 11
 - scholars 8-9, 17
 - societies 42, 68, 74
 - state 64
 - subsistence farmers 48
 - union 7
 - villages 12-13
- African Leadership Forum 101
- African National Congress 59, 85
- African Social Scientist Reflection 8, 10
- African-American philosophers 26
- Africanization 63
- Afrika Study Centre 8
- Afrocentrism 22
- Agrarian question 69
 - workers 71
- Agriculture 56-57

- Ake, Claude 20, 21, 82
 Alavi, Hamza 64
 Algerian civil war 98
 coup 75
 Alliance Girls High School 97
 High School 97, 100
 Almond, Gabriel 50
 American sources 19
 Americans 45 see also United States of America
 Amin, Samir 56
 Andre Gunder Frank 55
 Anthropologists 42
 Anti-corruption laws 100
 Apter, David 46
 Army rule 70
 Arrighi, Giovanni 62, 70-71, 73
 Asian see bourgeoisie, immigrant
 Assane Seck 61
 Audrey Richards 40, 43
 Authoritarian regime 80, 84, 93, 100
 presidential 67
 ruler 87
 state 88
 Authoritarianism 79, 80, 87-88, 92-93
 Authority 35-37
 Awolowo, Chief Abafemi 59
- Balandier, George 42
 Banda, Hastings 87
 Baran, Paul 51
 Barre, Siad 90
 Beckaman, Bjorn 66
 Behaviorism 46, 50
 Behaviorist analysis 52
 approach 45
 Behaviorists 46, 57
 Benin 84, 86, 91
 Berg, Elliot 72, 78
 Botswana 86
 Bourgeois democracy 45
 democratic revolution 99
 Bourgeoisie 51, 66
 African 48
 auxiliary 64
 bureaucratic 20, 63, 69
 immigrant 63
 national 12, 52
 nationalist revolution 68
 peasant 69
 petty 69, 73
 rising 81
 scholarship 55
 territorial 12
 western 52
 Bourghiba, Habib 61 see also Tunisia
 British anthropology 39-40
 colonial office 43
 political history 44
- Brookings Institution 82
 Brown, Radcliffe 40-41
 Brownes, Orde 44
 Buell, Raymond 43
 Buganda 12
 Bureaucracy 36
 Bureaucratic elite 71
 Burundi 74
 Butler, Jeffrey 72
- CHUNA 32-33
 CODESRIA 12-13, 21
 Bulletin 79
 Journal 79
 Cabinet reshuffle 77
 Cameroon 85
 Campbell, Laurry 100
 Cape Verde 86
 Capital 49
 Capitalism 100
 Capitalist 101
 development 51, 56-57, 67
 societies 52
 Carey Francis see Francis, Edward Carey
 Carl Rosberg 74
 Central Africa 84
 Central African Republic 74, 81, 86
 Chairman Mao 38, 80
 Chege, Michael 18, 69
 Chiefs 43
 Chiluba, Frederick 86, 91
 Civic education 95
 Civilian rule 74
 Class formation 63, 66
 interests 69
 structure 71
 struggle 66, 73
 Class-consciousness 73
 Class-divided African societies 44
 Cold War 45
 Coleman, James 19-20, 74
 Colonial administrator 43
 Africa 44, 89
 African societies 53
 economies 43-44
 governors 44
 politics 43
 society 44
 Uganda 60
 Committee on Comparative Politics of the Social
 Science Research Council in New York 50
 Comprador bourgeoisie 51
 Congo 57, 68, 86, 89
 Constitution 80
 Copans, Jean 40
 Copper industry 92
 Copperbelt in Zambia 42
 Corruption 100

- Cote d'Ivoire 20, 81-82, 85, 88, 91
 County Councils 95 see also Municipal Councils
 Coup in Sudan 75
 Coups d'etat 75-76
 Critical anthropology 26
- Dahomey see also Benin 91
 Dahomeyan coup 75
 Daily Nation 34
 Dakar 27
 Davidson, Basil 44, 53
 Democracies 100
 Democracy 80
 in Africa 35
 Democratic governance 85-87, 93, 95
 modernization 57
 orientation 95
 politics 44
 regime 84
 state 13
 Democratization of society 73, 79
 Dependency theory 19-20, 51, 56-57, 59, 67
 Detention 80
 Developing countries 45
 Development 49, 79-81
 Development in Africa 53, 80
 Developmental processes 58, 59
 Dia, Mamadou 61 see also Senegal
 Diop, Chiek Anta 28
 Disinherited peasantry 81
 Division of labor 42
 Domestic Hotel Workers Union 32
 Dominant classes 67, 69
 Donor community see also World Bank 78
 Duke of Edinburgh 97
- East Africa 91
 East African Journal, The 37
 Eastern Africa 60
 Easton, David 19, 40, 87
 Eastonian environment 50
 Economic growth 79, 95
 Elite 93
 Employment of wage labor 71
 Engels, F 42
 Epstein, A.L. 42
 Eshete, Andreas 10, 24-27
 Ethiopia 8
 Ethnicity 19, 22
 Euleu, Heinz 45
 Eurocentrism 10, 17
 Europe modernization 48
 European Administrator 48
 colonialism 42
 intellectual 17
 social science 12
 Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 40-41, 46
 Exiled politicians 84
- FORD see Forum for the Restoration of Democracy
 Faculty of Arts 33
 Fallers, Lloyd 40
 Fanon, Franz 47, 52, 64, 70, 98-99
 First, Ruth 76-77
 Firth, R. 43
 Fortes, Meyer 40-41, 46
 Forum for the Restoration of Democracy 91
 France 26
 Francis, Edward Carey 100
 French colonies 61
 Equatorial Africa 42
 Parliament 89
 Revolution 80
 sociologist 98
 West Africa 91
 Freyhold, Michaela von 65
 Friedrich Naumann Foundation 95
 Fukuyama, Francis 100
- Gabon 84-85
 Gerontocracy 12
 Ghana 46, 72, 81, 88, 90, 92
 Globalization 11, 15, 17, 55, 92, 96
 Good governance 79-80, 83
 indicators 83
 institutions of 99
 Governing class 65
 Government 36
 Great Lakes region 27
 Grundy, Kenneth 59
 Gunder, Frank 20
 Gutkind, Peter 67
- Health 32
 Healthcare 15
 Heinrich Boll Foundation 7-8, 10
 Hodgkin, Thomas 44
 Housing 32
 Human rights 83
 Huntington, S. 75, 87
- IDEP 14, 16
 ILRI see International Livestock Research Institute
 IMF see International Monetary Fund
 Ideology 37, 72
 Imperialism 25
 Independent churches 43
 Indigenisation of social sciences 10
 Indirect rule 43
 Industrial revolution 51
 Industrialization 57
 Infrastructure 15
 International justice 25
 Livestock Research Institute 10
 Monetary Fund 92 see also World Bank
 relations 96

- Jeffries, Richard 70
 Johnson, Dale 55
 Journal of Modern African Studies 60
- KANU see Kenya African National Union
 Kabila, Laurent 85
 Kano workers 69
 Kariithi, Peter 35
 Kasfir, Nelson 65
 Kaunda, Kenneth 82, 87, 92
 Keita, Modipo 61 see also Mali
 Kenya African National Union 90
 Kenyatta, Jomo 64, 97
 Kerekou, Mathieu 84, 86
 Kisumu 95
 Kleptocracy 93
- Labor aristocracy theory 70-71
 Landes, David 47, 52
 Latin America 20
 Le Movement Populaire por la Revolution 90
 Lenin 71
 Leys, Colin 20, 46, 64
 Liberia 84
 Literature and Philosophy 100
 Local government 95
 Lonsdale, John 67
 Lord Hailey 43-44
 Lugard 44
 Lumumba, Patrice 98
 Luxembourg, Rosa 73
- MOJA see Movement for Justice in Africa
 Madagascar 86
 Mafeje, Archie 8-10, 22, 27-28, 30, 42-43, 72
 Mair, Lucy 40
 Makerere University 100
 Malawi 28, 69, 85, 86, 87, 91
 Mali 61, 84
 Malinowski, B. 40-41
 Mamdani, Mahmoud 21, 60, 63, 69
 Management of public affairs 80
 Martin, Doornbos 20
 Marxism 45
 Marxist 34, 45, 53, 57, 59-62
 literature 47, 73
 mode of analysis 57
 paradigms 45
 perspective 62
 political sociology 70
 thinkers 60
 writers 67
 Marxists literature 67
 Mauritius 86, 95
 Mazrui, Ali 66
 Mbembe, Achille 12
 Mboya, Tom 61, 68, 89, 98, 101-102
 McNamara, Robert 53
- Mechanistic theory 87
 Metropolitan bourgeoisie 52, 65
 Mexico 8
 Middle class 52, 70, 81, 91
 African 63
 Migrant labor 81
 Military coups 82
 regime 80
 Mill, John Stuart 37
 Millenium Renaissance Program 7
 Mineworkers Union 91
 Mitchell, Clyde 42
 Mkandawire, Thandika 10, 15-17, 54,
 Mobutu, Joseph 85, 90, 98
 coup 75
 Modern society 49
 Modernization 47-50, 52, 87
 of society 50
 of the political system 50
 process 48-49
 theorists 49, 50-51, 57
 theory 48, 50-51, 57
 Modernizing elites 87
 Moi, Daniel arap 67
 Mombasa 35
 Moore, Barrington 67
 Morgan, L.H. 42
 Morris, Cynthia T. 53
 Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) 84
 Multiparty Democracy 91
 Mozambique 91-92
 Mueller, Susan 72
 Mukherjee, Ramkrishna 42
 Multi-party democracies 91
 Muluzi, Bakili 91 see also Burundi
 Municipal Councils see also local government
 Murray, Robin
 Mutunga, Willy 32
- NEPU see Northern Elements Progressive Union
 Nabudere, Dani Wadada 8, 10-14, 17, 19, 24-25
 Nairobi 64, 95
 Nairobi Times 35
 Namibia 86
 Nation building 11, 15, 27, 47, 75, 81
 National Alliance for National Salvation in
 Sudan 73
 National question in Africa 13
 Nationalism 81
 African 44, 62
 Nationalist movement 14, 16, 67
 Nationalists of Africa 62
 African 48
 Nationalization 63
 Native associations 43
 discontent 43
 education 43
 problem 43

- Neo-colonial regime 65
 status quo 72
 Neo-colonialism 52, 62
 Neo-Europe 11
 Marxism 24
 Marxists 47
 traditionalism 11
 Ng'weno, Hilary 35 see also Weekly Review
 Niger 12
 Nigeria 59-50, 74, 101
 Nigerian government 12
 political parties 60
 society 59
 Nkrumah, Kwame 61-62
 Non-academic staff 32
 North America 8, 12
 Northern Elements Progressive Union 59
 Nyerere, Julius 61, 53, 90, 101 see also Tanzania
 Nyong'o, Peter Anyang 8-10, 18-22, 28-29
 Nzongola, Georges N. 21, 68, 73
- ODA see Official Development Assistance
 Obasanjo, General Olusegun 101
 Ocampo, Jose 55
 Official Development Assistance 92
 Okumu, Professor John Joseph 37
 Omega Plan 7
 One party regime 83
 One-party culture 95
 One-party political systems 95
 Orthodox development theory 56
- Palestinian Issue 26
 Pan-Africanism 16-17
 Parsons, Talcott 45-46
 Parti Democratique de Cote d'Ivoire 90
 Parti Democratique de Guinea 90
 Peasant society 71
 Peasant-based agriculture 56
 Peasantry 48, 81
 Peasants 66
 Philips, Anne 54, 57
 Plantation colony 91
 Plato 36
 Political development 55
 Political economy 58
 Political parties 77
 African 74
 Political processes 58
 Political repression 83
 Political science 21, 23, 45, 49, 99-100
 Political scientists 57
 African 23
 Politics 31, 35-39, 43-44, 46, 59, 60 66, 72, 115
 Popular authoritarianism 82
 Populist ideology 82
 Portuguese colonies 70, 97
 Post colonial state 65, 72
 Post colonial statist 65
 Post-authoritarian period 84
 Post-colonial era 46
 Post-independence elites 70
 Post-independence imperialism 47
 period 59, 83
 Post-traditional democracies 12
 Pre-capitalist societies 52
 Presidents for life 16
 Primitive subsistence economy 42
 Private sector 99
 Progressive intelligentsia 73
 Proletarianization 48
 Provincial Commissioner 34
 Public administration 49, 58
- Rassemblement Populaire Togolais 90
 Redfield, R. 43
 Reflexive anthropology 26
 Rene, Dumant 98-99
 Representative government 83
 Revolutionary class 70
 Ricardo, D. 39
 Roberto, Michels 93
 Rodney, Walter 33, 53
 Rostow, W.W. 49
 Rousseau 35, 46
 Rule of law 83
 Ruling elites 87
- SAPEM 14, 16
 SAPs see Structural Adjustment Programs
 Said, Edward 26
 Sao Tome and Principe 86
 Saul, John 62, 70, 73
 Scandinavia 10
 Scandinavian countries 88
 Schmitter, Philippe 85
 Second independence 16, 94
 in Africa 84
 movement in Congo 84
 Second republic 88
 Second World War 35, 44-45, 56, 65, 89
 Seers, Dudley 54
 Sekou Toure 61 see also Guinea
 Senegal 61, 85, 91
 Senghor, Leopold Sedar 61 see also Senegal
 Shils, Edward 50
 Shivji, Issa 63
 Singapore 87, 95, 101 see also Yew, Lee Kwan
 Singh, Makhn 60
 Skilled workers 72
 unskilled workers 71
 Sklar, Richard 59
 Social anthropologists 43
 anthropology 46
 class 73, 75, 91
 democracy 13

- Democratic Political Party 66
- engineering 95
- in Africa 12
- sciences 10, 45, 27
- scientists 8, 47 see also Sociologists
- services 43
- Socialism 63
 - African 62, 80
- Sociologists 49 see also Social scientists
- Soglo, Nicephore 84
- Somalia 12, 90
- South Africa 70, 85, 97
- Southern Africa 33, 59
- Soviet Union 59
- Staff association 31
- Stalin 35
- Stalinist 45
- State bureaucracy 82
 - employees 71
- Structural Adjustment Programs 92
 - see also International Monetary Fund and World Bank
- Sudan 52, 69, 75
- Sustainable development 79, 99
- Swainson, Nicola 64, 65
- System analysis 46

- TANU see Tanganyika African National Union
- Tadesse, Zenebework 10, 29
- Tanganyika 90 see also Tanzania
- Tanganyika African National Union 90
- Tanzania 63, 65, 69, 81, 88, 90-91, 101 see also Tanganyika
- Teachers Union 91
- Theories of dependency 57
 - justice 25
 - Modernization 50 see also Modernization Theory
 - revolutionary organization 73
- Third World 45, 25-27, 51-54, 57
- Togo 82, 84-85, 91
- Totalitarian regimes 88
- Trade unionism 91
 - unionists 84
 - unions 69, 89
- Traditional African societies 42, 48
- Trans-class man see Mazrui
- Transparency 83, 95-96
- Tribal associations 23
 - entity 59
- Tribalism 19, 27, 33, 42, 89
- Tribe 37, 42-43, 82
- Tunisia 68

- UPC see Uganda People's Congress
- USA see United States of America
- Uganda 12, 82, 91
- Uganda People's Congress 81, 90
- Underdeveloped countries 54
- Underdevelopment 52
 - theory 51, 54-57, 59
- United Nations Organisation 77
 - University 83
- United States of America 48
- University Health Clinic 33
 - of Dar es Salaam 13, 20, 63
 - of Nairobi 31, 33, 35, 37
 - of Uganda 8
 - staff union 31, 33, 35
- Upper Volta 74
- Urban industries 43
- Urbanization 43, 48

- Wage economy 70
 - employment 44
 - labor 44
- Wallerstein, Immanuel 67
- Washington 82
 - consensus 13
- Weber, Max 19, 41, 45, 46, 101
- Weekly Review 34-35
- Welch, Claude 74
- West Africa 61, 84
- Western social science in Africa 59
 - social scientists 48
- White settler plantations 43
- Wilks, Ivor 53
- Workers movement 69
- Working class 69-71
 - movement 72
 - interests 71
- World Bank 14, 18, 25, 78, 83, 88, 92
 - Executive 84
 - in Africa 13
 - President 53
 - statistics 53
- World economy 92
- World Trade Organization 53, 55

- Yew, Lee Kwan 100 see also Singapore

- Zaire 81, 84-85, 91
- Zambia 81, 87, 91-92
- Zanzibar 75