

# **State and Crises of Political Legitimacy in Africa**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study examined the state and political legitimacy in Africa. The problem of the study is to evaluate the nexus between the low autonomization of the state and crisis of political legitimacy. We drew lessons from selected states in Africa; and anchored our investigations on some basic propositions arising from the Marxist political economy analysis of post-colonial state. At the end of our investigations, we noted among others, that the bane of most states in Africa lies in the flaunting of low level of autonomy. This fundamentally predisposes the state to become an instrument in the hands of economic notables for appropriation, expropriation and plundering of common wealth. The study recommended, among others, measures for improving the state autonomy and re-focusing the development enterprise along the demands and resource base of society.

**Key Words:** State; legitimacy; autonomy; power; authority.

## **State and Crises Of Political Legitimacy In Africa**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Historically, man, which remains the epicenter of social organization, has been engrossed in the absorbing and seemingly unending 'search to eke out a living and reproduce his social existence. Thus his ideas, creative energies and splashing inquisitions led man into varying degrees of modification of nature and the ecosystem. Therefore, from the primitive communal era, through slave owning mode to feudal, capitalist and 'socialist' modes of production, man had been pre-occupied with the task of shaping and reshaping his environment to conform to his expectations and ideals.

As society attained surplus production height, and more importantly as incongruence between social relations of production and productive forces reached the apogee and elastic limit, there was need to operate under an umbrella that would bring these contradicting conflicts and social disequilibrium into manageable order; hence, the emergence of an “impartial umpire”- the State.

Meanwhile, the state and government are often used synonymously, they do not mean, the same thing for government is a narrower term than the state and is a part and parcel of the state. In the words of Appadorai (2004:12), government is the “agency or machinery through which the will of the state is formulated, expressed and realized”. Hence, Shively (1997:29) note “the government/bureaucracy acts on behalf of the state, but the state obviously consists of more than just the government and the bureaucracy”.

Meanwhile, the fundamental point to note is that the ability of the state in a polity to stimulate development and perform primary responsibilities is inversely proportional to the quantum of sovereignty and legitimacy such a state commands. Indeed legitimacy manifest

the residues of power and authority and defines state system along the lines of masses oriented or autocratic mass umpire. In this paper therefore, we shall focus on the following issues: critical theories of the state, state and political legitimacy, political legitimacy, power and authority; State in Africa and prognosis.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

Most studies on the state and development anchored their analysis on specific framework arising from the mainstream western models/frameworks which tendentiously present bird’s eye views of the reality and at best rationalize, eulogize and describe the existing western models which they consciously present as the telos of man.

The present study was anchored on some basic propositions emanating from the Marxist theory of post-colonial state. The theory basically arose in reaction to the western liberal theory of the state, which, *inter alia*, contends that the state is an impartial and independent force as well as a neutral umpire that caters for the main interest of every member of the society. Fundamentally, the proponents argue that the state emerged to protect lives and properties, and hence rises above class interests in the process of production and distribution of material values.

Meanwhile, the western liberal theory has been criticized by Marxian-oriented scholars for their inability to see otherwise similar “function” of state as definite historical and qualitative circumscribe “natures”, according to the social modes where they are operative (details of the analysis are contained in the *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, January 1981:81).

The basic attributes of the state as adumbrated ‘by the Marxist-oriented scholars are:

#### **The state as an instrument of class domination period**

The centrality of the state and its apparatuses as the main instruments of primitive accumulation especially by the dominant class and their collaborators (for details on this, see Marx 1971: 31;

Alavi, 1973:146; Ekekwe, 1986; Aina, 1986:45; Miliband, 1977:38; Lenin, 1976:10 –11; Engels 1942:155; Jakubowski, 1973:41).

The classical Marxist theory of the state has been further developed to take into consideration the peculiarity of the neo-colonial states. However, the unique attributes of the neo-colonial state can be traced to the colonial era. In order to secure their economic interests, the colonial governments discouraged the emergence of a strong indigenous capitalist class. Worse still, the new indigenous bourgeoisie that inherited control over the neo-colonial state apparatuses had a weak economic base, and hence relied on this control for its own capital accumulation and self-reproduction. Consequently the state and its apparatuses and institutions, have become the main instruments for perpetuation of class interests and for willful alienation, appropriation and self-reproduction of the dominant class.

While corroborating the above, Ekekwe, (1986:12) remarked that in the periphery of capitalism, such as Nigeria, factors which have to do with the level of development of the productive forces make the state, through its several institutions and apparatuses, a direct instrument of accumulation for the dominant class or its agencies. Thus the state in the peripheral socio-formations have remained largely “the source of economic power as well as an instrument of it; the state is a major means of production” (Miliband, 1977). Indeed given the low level of autonomy of the state occasioned largely by low level of development of productive forces, the ruling class christened godfathers uses their economic advantages, social networks and political clouts and cleavages to influence and quite often determine the course of political processes. The prevalence of poverty and high illiteracy rate further enhance their capacities and capabilities to impose political leadership on the hapless, ignorant impoverished masses. Such godfathers have at their disposal instruments of violence which they unleash on the citizenry and deprive the latter of their rights to choose their political leaders.

However, the low autonomization of the state is further reinforced and preserved by the existence of low level of social atomization. This reduces the capacity of the state to regulate social interaction in dispassionate manner thus reducing the level of affective orientation and continuously plunge the state into near irretrievable legitimacy crises. Existing disempowerment, and ballot box now becomes symbolic means of legalizing illegality and renders participatory democracy ineffectual.

### **Critical Theories of the State**

The state refers to that living public power and custodian of the totality of instruments, structures, human and non-human elements as well as territorially designated cosmic order and ecological endowment of the given political unit. This public power regulates human conducts through governmental apparatus; promotes and shared societal values, norms and customary practices and more importantly enunciates and superintends behavioural currents and transactions within the defined enclave. Indeed, the character and intensity of these regulatory functions are largely influenced by the level of development of the productive forces. This public power effectively has monopoly use over available coercive instruments and uses same to regenerate itself and bring societal interaction within the bounds of prescribed order.

Basically, social science literature is littered by strands of thought on the conceptualization of the state. However, the series of intellectual debates can be broadly delineated under the **liberal** and **Marxist** theories. We shall attempt a recap of the basic propositions of these contending theories.

### **The Liberal Theory**

Proponents of the theory argue that the state emerged to protect private property. According to them, the state is an impartial umpire that emerged to keep social dissent within a manageable order. Thus they profess and advocate organic evolution of the state and indeed adumbrate that the institutions of the state exist for collective interests.

Hence, they, *inter alia*, argue that the liberal conception of the state is of a limited organization that represents popular will. The state plays a minimal role in the directing of society and economic affairs, but can play a significant supporting role in modern liberal (social liberal) theories. *Classical Liberals* favor a minimal state that only provides for basic services such as defense, enforcing contracts and protecting property rights. *Social liberals* accept more roles for the state, primarily in the economic sphere, such as regulation of capitalism, in order to protect consumers and workers, welfare programs to help the poor and disadvantaged in society and public services that benefit everyone. To the liberals, the state plays a supporting role in society, and is usually left to operate in the political and social spheres.

The views stated above were crisply enunciated by the pluralists. Pluralism refers to a liberal or open society where different classes of groups compete for power, domination, and influence. Pluralism is the theory that a multitude of groups, not the people as a whole, govern the State. These organizations, which include among others unions, trade and professional associations, environmentalists, civil rights activists, business and financial lobbies, and formal and informal coalitions of like-minded citizens, influence the making and administration of laws and policy. Since the participants in this process constitute only a tiny fraction of the populace, the public acts mainly as bystanders.

### **The characteristics of pluralism are:**

- The Society is dominated not by single elite but rather by a multiplicity of relatively small groups, some of which are well organized and funded, some of which are not and the scope of their power is restricted to relatively narrow areas such as defence, agriculture, or banking.
- The groups are politically autonomous, or independent.
- Intergroup competition leads to countervailing influence: The power of one group tends to cancel that of another so that a rough equilibrium results. Group memberships overlap as well. In other words, members of one association might belong to another, even competing group.
- It is open in two senses. First, most organizations are seldom if ever completely shut off from the outside. They continuously recruit new members from all walks of life. Second, the availability of unused resources constantly encourages the formation of new groups.

Therefore the Liberal theorists reflect the three of the major tenets of the pluralist school, as stated below: (1) resources and hence potential power are widely scattered throughout society;

(2) at least some resources are available to nearly everyone; and (3) at any time the amount of potential power exceeds the amount of actual power.

### **Marxist theory of the State**

Marxism contains two rather interfacing views of the state. It views the State as the instrument of domination by exploiting classes that are defined by their position within the process of social production. Thus it defines the State as the executive committee of the ruling class. Marx subsequently defined the State as a parasitic body. Basically, the Marxists conceive the state from these seemingly exclusive but interrelated senses:

- **The State as an instrument of the Ruling Class.**

In its most crudely stated form, the instrumentalists argue that the state is an instrument in the hands of the ruling class for enforcing and guaranteeing the stability of the class itself. Within this distinctive school, the functioning of the state is understood in terms of the instrumental exercise of power by people in strategic positions, either directly through the manipulation of state policies or indirectly through the exercise of pressure on the state.

- **The state as an ideal collective capitalist.**

Proponents argue that capital is neither self-reproducing nor capable on its own of securing the conditions of its own reproduction. For the very continuity of the capitalist social formation is dependent upon certain interventions being made which, though in the general interest of capital collectively, are not in the individual interest of any particular capital (Hirsch, 1978:66).

- **The State as a factor of Cohesion within the Social Formation.**

Proponents include Nicos Poulantzas, Bukharin, Jessop, Gramsci etc. They are generally ascribed to the **structuralist** analysis of the state. Within this conception, the state is understood in terms of its effects and is defined in terms of its role in maintaining the unity and cohesion of a social formation by concentrating and sanctioning class domination.

Indeed, the **Instrumentalist** and the **Structuralist** analyses of the state dominate the Marxian thesis on the state. Miliband's writings are most notable for re-establishing an instrumentalist theory of the state. Prior to Miliband, the instrumentalist theory of the state had been articulated cryptically by Paul Sweezy, who asserted that the state is "an instrument in the hands of the ruling class for enforcing and guaranteeing the stability of the class structure itself" (p. 243). Miliband (1969:23) identifies the ruling class of a capitalist society as "that class which owns and controls the means of production and which is able, by virtue of the economic power thus conferred upon it, to use the state as its instrument for the domination of society" Both authors trace this concept of the state to Marx's famous dictum in *The Communist Manifesto* that "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."

One of the most direct indicators of ruling-class domination of the state is the degree to which members of the capitalist class control the state apparatus through interlocking positions in the

governmental, administrative, coercive, and other apparatuses. Miliband (1969:54) emphasizes that: “It is these institutions in which ‘state power’ lies, and it is through them that this power is wielded in its different manifestations by the people who occupy the leading positions in each of these institutions”.

Nicos Poulantzas became the leading spokesperson for a **structuralist theory** of the state. Poulantzas claims that the basic structure of the capitalist mode of production generates contradictory class practices and crisis tendencies that inexorably disrupt the capitalist system at the economic, political, and ideological levels. These crisis tendencies and contradictions necessitate a separate structure to specifically maintain and restore its equilibrium as a system. Although Poulantzas modified systems analysis by introducing class conflict as a disequilibrating mechanism, he was nevertheless clearly indebted to the American functionalists and systems theorists in arguing that the general function of the state in the capitalist mode of production is its function as “the regulating factor of its global equilibrium as a system” (Poulantzas, 1969:45).

Whereas Miliband articulates an institutionalist conception of power, Poulantzas articulates a functionalist conception of power anchored by the methodological assumptions of structural functionalism. Poulantzas draws a sharp analytic distinction between the concepts of state power and the state apparatus. Poulantzas defines the state apparatus as: “(a) The place of the state in the ensemble of the structures of a social formation,” that is, the state’s functions and “(b) The personnel of the state, the ranks of the administration, bureaucracy, army, etc.” (p. 116). The state apparatus is a unity of the effects of state power (i.e., policies) and the network of institutions and personnel through which the state function is executed. Poulantzas emphasizes the functional unity between state power and the state apparatus with the observation “that structure is not the simple principle of organization which is exterior to the institution: the structure is present in an allusive and inverted form in the institution itself (Poulantzas, 1969:115).

Poulantzas defines state power as the capacity of a social class to realize its objective interests through the state apparatus. Bob Jessop observes that within this framework “state power is capitalist to the extent that it creates, maintains, or restores the conditions required for capital accumulation in a given situation and it is non-capitalist to the extent these conditions are not realised” (Poulantzas: 1969:221). In structuralist theory, the objective effects of state policies on capital accumulation and the class structure are the main objective indicators of state power.

Despite the seemingly divergence in the conceptualization and application of the state, the Marxists still appreciate the following as the underlying principles of the school:

- There is a capitalist class defined by its ownership and control of the means of production.
- The capitalist class uses the state to dominate the rest of society.
- State policies further the general interests of the capitalist class in maintaining their domination of society.

### **State and Political Legitimacy**

The term legitimacy is broad and encompassing. It denotes the following:

1. The condition of being a child presumably lawfully begotten or born in wedlock, having or involving full filial rights and obligations; or
2. A condition of positive valuation, validity, and acceptance enjoyed by individual rulers, political institutions and movements, and by systems of authority, by reason of the accordance of such rulers, institutions, movements, and systems of authority with some law, principle, or source of authorization.

In political science parlance, legitimacy may denote an important act of the title of a sovereign: the condition of being in accordance with law or principle requiring acceptance of the claims of sovereign power. Legitimacy is therefore conceived as *the belief in the rightfulness of a state, in its authority to issue commands, so that those commands are obeyed not simply out of fear or self-interest, but because they are believed in some sense to have moral authority, because the subjects believe they ought to be obeyed* (Barker, 1990:11).

As aptly noted by Gilley (2006:499):

*The concept of political legitimacy is central to virtually all of political science because it pertains to how power may be used in ways that citizens consciously accept. In this sense it is 'the core of political organization' (Alagappa, 1995:3), the basis of the creation of political community that is the focal point of political science. Beetham (1991: 41) called it 'the central issue in social and political theory', while Crick {1993 [1962]: 150) said it was 'the master question of politics'. Political legitimacy is a major determinant of both the structure and operation of states. There is a general presumption that its absence has profound implications for the way that states behave toward citizens and others. States that lack legitimacy devote more resources to maintaining their rule and less to effective governance, which reduces support and makes them vulnerable to overthrow or collapse.*

While underscoring the relevance of state legitimacy, Gilley (2006:500-501) remarks that:

*The definition of state legitimacy that I will use is as follows: a state is more legitimate the more that it is treated by its citizens as rightfully holding and exercising political power. This definition includes several substantive matters. It covers the subjects (citizens), object (state, holding and exercising political power), orientation (rightful), variable type (more/more) and expressions (treated) of state legitimacy. Indeed, at a deeper level, it implies much more: the ability of citizens to make autonomous judgments, the separability of political power from other types of social power and the validity of subjective views as the basis of legitimacy. In this definition, legitimacy is a concept that admits of degrees.*

It is nonetheless pertinent to note that legitimacy refers to 'the sentiment and feelings that if the activities and decision choices of the authorities come within some definable 'zones', they, the authorities, can expect compliance on the part of the members of the society' (Nwosu, 1977:6). Indeed political legitimacy can be acquired through the following processes:

- Legitimacy by procedure
- Legitimacy by representation
- Legitimacy by results

Meanwhile, Wiechnik (2013:2) outlined five major components that will allow us to make the connection between legitimacy and values. These include:

- First, legitimacy is a belief.
- Second, it applies to the appropriateness of the government to issue orders and decrees. It is right to govern (Coicaud & Curtis, 2002:10).
- Third, political legitimacy is an attribute of a political entity. But it can be associated with different levels, from the individual leader to the government as viewed by other states.
- The fourth part is that legitimacy stands in contrast to other means used to gain compliance such as “fear or self-interest”, what I define as coercion.
- The fifth is its nature as its “ought to be obeyed” quality. It is a feeling akin to morality.

Meanwhile, State legitimacy can be measured by analysing indicators of legitimacy as contained in Table 1 below:

*Table 1.* Examples of indicators of legitimacy

Views of legality      Views of justification

Acts of consent

Attitudes

Actions

attitude surveys about legality      attitude surveys about corruption

\* acceptance of electoral or revolutionary mandates

\* views of police, judges and civil servants

\* demonstrations

or social movements over legal or constitutional issues

\* importance of laws or constitution in political life

\* dissonance over election results

surveys of

political system support, political trust, alienation,

etc.



- \* views of effectiveness of political institutions
- \* popularity of embedded polity (authoritarian leaders or parties)
- \* political violence
- \* size of internal secret police
- \* political prisoners
- \* anti-system movements/ secessionism/civil war
- \* mass emigration
- \* crime levels

N/A

election turnout,

voter registration \* military recruitment, use of mercenary soldiers \* tax

payments/reliance on foreign loans or

resource export -taxes

- \* popular mobilization in authoritarian states

**Source:** Gilley, 2006:505

### **Sources of Political Legitimacy**

Basically, political legitimacy is derived from three sources: the population's norms, its laws, and the population's consent (Coicaud & Curtis, 2002). Indeed Schroeder (2010:609-13) stated that norms are the social rules that describe and prescribe appropriate behavior and establish expectations about how others will act. By doing so, norms reduce uncertainty and allow for coordination among the various members of a society. Norms can be either descriptive, in that they describe appropriate behavior in a specific situation, or prescriptive, in that they establish informal standards of conduct.

Wiechnik (2013:4) also states that another source of legitimacy is societies' laws. He thus notes that legitimacy is gained through adherence to the law that is accepted by the population. This can be tricky. There are a number of different sources of law. There is law based on religious beliefs, natural law that is considered the basis of human rights, and positive or rational law. This can make determining which type of law a population accepts difficult, but doing so is critical to isolating which type of legitimacy a population will find acceptable. Since norms are the source of laws, looking to the important social norms may help.

A third source of legitimacy is consent of the people. In many ways consent represents a direct link to legitimacy. People consent to the rule of a leader. Without this consent the leader must use coercion to maintain power. The consent of the people involves an implicit duty to obey the government; to recognize its right to rule. Rights, by their nature, involve an agreement of what is owed by one person to another. A single person living on a desert

Nonetheless Wiechnik (2013:5) emphasized that all three sources of legitimacy lack a specific characteristic; none of them is an internal motivator. That internal benchmark is the reason for initiating actions to obey or disobey. Since legitimacy is based on internal motivation we must look elsewhere for the source of that internal benchmark. When we examine the three sources of legitimacy we find that each has a common thread: a foundation upon which each rests. That foundation is the values of the people. A shared value system is the basis of the law. For the law to be willingly obeyed, it must conform to the fundamental values of the society. Norms amount to activities that are in concert with, or even represent, society's values. "Norms also may be internalized when individuals come to value the behavior specified by a norm for its own sake, that is, they follow social norms because they want to.

### **Types of Legitimate Rule**

There are basically three types of legitimate rule, as identified by Max Weber (1978:215). These include the following:

- **Rational-Legal authority**

This is based on a system of rules that is applied administratively and judicially in accordance with known principles. The persons who administer those rules are appointed or elected by legal procedures. Superiors are also subject to rules that limit their powers, separate their private lives from official duties and require written documentation (Bendix, 1977:294). Indeed rational-legal authority in modern societies is bureaucracy.

- **Traditional authority**

This is based on a system in which authority is legitimate because it "has always existed". People in power usually enjoy it because they have inherited it. Officials consist either of personal retainers (in a patrimonial regime) or of personal loyal allies, such as vassals or tributary lords (in a feudal regime). Their prerogatives are usually similar to those of the ruler above them, just reduced in scale, and they too are often selected based on inheritance (Bendix, 1977:295). Simply put, it is based on tradition and the subjects naturally obey because they think it is traditional and customary to do so. Authority in the traditional system is hereditary.

Recruitment is not based essentially on merit but on personal loyalty and relationship to the king or chief. Again remuneration is not fixed and rulers claim to have divine power.

- **Charismatic authority** is based on personal qualities or personality of the leader. It is also based on the charisma of the leader, who shows that he possesses the right to lead by virtue of magical powers, prophecies, heroism, etc. His followers respect his right to lead because of his unique qualities (his charisma), not because of any tradition or legal rules. Subjects feel that he/she is a messiah, a redeemer and indeed their saviour. The office takes the character the personality of the leader gives it and there are no rules to guide behaviour. Officials consist of those who have shown personal devotion to the ruler, and of those who possess their own charisma (Bendix, 1977:295).

### **Political Legitimacy, Power and Authority**

*Authority at any level in the society presumes a superior-subordinate relationship. At the level of the polity, authority refers to the right to speak on behalf of the state, and making binding decisions that control the behaviour of individuals and groups in the society... Power is the capacity to enforce decisions. Power possession invariably involves the ability to do something, to act, enforce, sometimes to reward the compliant, persuade the recalcitrant, punish the offender, mediate over conflict and coerce, the emergent states of Africa is how to create a legitimate authority (Nwosu, 1977:9).*

The above indentation is very instructive. There is a synergy among political legitimacy, power and authority period. Power is the ability and capacity to control. The ability to get someone do what otherwise he/she would not have done basically by the application of coercion. Again, it refers to the ability to command obedience. It is therefore the possibility for an actor to impose his or her will on others, even in the face of resistance.

Technically speaking, authority is power legitimate. Power becomes legitimate when it must have been accepted by the people as conforming to their shared values, norms and morality. Therefore, authority is frequently said to be force rightly or justly applied. It is rightful power. Indeed, authority is a kind of 'hidden reasoning'. It might in this be called 'the faculty of gaining another man's assent'. It is thus the capacity for the kind of reasoning that relates technical requirements to transcendent values and beliefs.

It is necessary to highlight that authority is not strictly speaking a substitute for power, but something that accompanies power. It creates power but not in itself power. Authority then is a source of power, primarily of consensual power. In fact, authority is not just what is based on relative knowledge of certain truths. Authority may be derivative of superior knowledge, but political authority rests partly upon shared values. Indeed we shall reiterate that political authority needs to be oriented to truth in order to be genuine; and in order to elicit the compliance of the people. From the foregoing analysis, we can conveniently conclude that authority is an active power, residing in a person and exercised through a command, that is, through practical judgment to be taken as a rule of conduct by the free will of the people.

Arising from the above, authority becomes a derivative of political legitimacy, and some scholars even use both as synonyms. This is largely because they conceive rightful power as

legitimate power, and rightful force as legitimate force. Meanwhile, exercise of power can be reflected in demonstration of confidence and quality of leadership. As correctly noted by Nwosu (1977:9):

*The possession of societal resources confers a regime potential power to exercise authority... for it is possible for occupants of authority roles to have resources and acquisition of authority roles are not by themselves enough to make the exercise of authority effective. A regime must in addition earn the legitimacy of the wider society in order to secure compliance with and support of policy choices.*

The preceding indentation unfolds the critical challenge facing most states in Africa. Although some of these states have abundant resources, the leadership by infringing upon legitimacy by procedure lacks the support and acceptance of their respective peoples. Hence they resort to rule by coercion. By coercion, we refer to the use of any means other than legitimacy to gain compliance to an order. It is therefore the antithesis of legitimacy. Nwosu (1977:7-8) observes that “given the low legitimacy that marks several emergent (African) states, their regimes are usually tempted to rely on coercion as a primary means of attaining compliance. Instances of these are:

- Mobutu used coercion to eliminate powerful contenders of state authority who were accused of “conspiring” against his regime.
- Milton Obote used force to consolidate national authority in Uganda. He forcefully eliminated the independent power enjoyed by Uganda’s historic kingdoms. Obote himself was later a victim of coercion. He was ousted by General Idi Amin who removed Obote’s supporters from positions of influence and also eliminated all his real and potential enemies.
- Micombero of Burundi used force to rid themselves of Hutu leaders who challenged the dominance of the central authority by the Tutsi, who constituted only 15% of the population (Legum, 1971:6416).

Some critical points to note are that the excessive use of coercion erodes the sense of legitimacy and hence depletes the effectiveness of national political authority (Nwosu, 1977:8). Among others, it results to the following:

- It reduces the reliance on formal structures as a means of conflict resolution and decision-making;
- It alienates people against the government and thus may lead to power deflation;
- It encourages the opponents of incumbents of government to rely on violence as a means of attaining their goals;
- It turns round to erode consolidation of national authority (Nwosu, 1977:8).

### **State in African Context**

Presently, studies on the African state comprise individual researches of the state based on certain themes and case studies, and studies on the comprehensive theory of the state (Kawabata, 2006:2). He further introduced trends in the comprehensive theory of the state as follows:

1. The first period is from the early 1980s to the mid 1990s. As stated by Young (1982), theory of the African State could be classified into three path ways, that is Afro-Marxism, people's socialism and African capitalism;
2. The second period in the evolution in the theory of African state appeared from the end of the 1990s' through to the beginning of the 2000s. Emphasis shifted to the role of African state.

Meanwhile, the character of the state in Africa rules out a politics of moderation and mandates a politics of lawlessness and extremism for the simple reason that the nature of state power makes the capture of the power of state irresistibly attractive. The winners in the competition win everything and the loser loses everything. Nothing can be worse than losing, nothing better than winning. Given this scenario, everyone seeks power by every means legal or otherwise, and those already in control of it try to keep it by every means. What emerges from this *is a politics which does not know legitimacy or legality, only expediency*. Thus those who get it first use it without restraint to put their opponents out of business, to expropriate them and even to deprive them of their liberty (Ake ,1996:7).

### Basic Character of the State in Africa

1. The low level of development of social atomization combine with the low level of development of productive forces and distorted social relations of production to water-down autonomy of most states in Africa.
2. The persistence of the above scenario is orchestrated by the incidental capture of state power by psychologically-impaired, melancholic, ideological *tabula rasa*, inept, incompetent, rapacious and unabashed opportunists whose major credentials are idleness, and mundane criminality.
3. The above leaderships depend for their survival, relevance and self-reproduction on clinging tenaciously to political power which remains the only convenient and available source of livelihood.
4. The major strategy for survival and self-reproduction remains ethnic, religious and primordial bigotry, misinformation and dissemination of ascriptive values and propaganda of fear, destruction and doom. The concerned political leaderships rely essentially on fraudulent practices as means of legitimizing their stay in power via periodic elections.

The above persist because of low autonomisation of the State in Africa. The overall consequences are persistence of conflicts, underdevelopment and human capacity underdevelopment and penury in the midst of plenty. Thus most states in Africa manifest indices of failed states which include:

- Loss of physical control of its territory, or of the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force therein,
- Erosion of legitimate authority to make collective decisions,
- An inability to provide reasonable public services, and
- An inability to interact with other states as a full member of the international community.

Often, a failed State is characterized by social, political, and economic failure. Common characteristics of *a failing state* include a central government so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over much of its territory, non-provision of public services, widespread

corruption and criminality; refugees and involuntary movement of populations; and sharp economic decline.

### Conclusion/Prognosis

The bane of most states in Africa lies in the flaunting of low level of autonomy. This fundamentally predisposes the state to become an instrument in the hands of economic notables for appropriation, expropriation and plundering of common wealth. Autonomy gives a given state the capacity to govern and determine the goal of the society. It makes the state differentiated and dissociated from the social classes and basically promote the emergence and development of strong state agencies and institutions.

Indeed, states with remarkable autonomy serve as effective agents of change and in fact drive the course of societal transmogrification. It thus becomes a developmental state that drives the process of autochthonous transmutation of the polity. Meanwhile, **Developmental state**, or *hard state*, is a term used by international political economy scholars to refer to the phenomenon of state-led macroeconomic planning in East Asia in the late twentieth century. In this model of capitalism (sometimes referred to as *state development capitalism*), the state has more independent, or autonomous, political power, as well as more control over the economy. A developmental state is characterized by having strong state intervention, as well as extensive regulation and planning. The term has subsequently been used to describe countries outside East Asia which satisfy the criteria of a developmental state. The developmental state is sometimes contrasted with a predatory state or weak state. Among the basic characteristics of the Developmental state are the following, emphasis on market share over profit, economic nationalism, protection of fledgling domestic industries, focus on foreign technology transfer, large government bureaucracy, rationality, meritocracy, and professionalizing bureaucracy (Weberian), improved infrastructure for business by state, institutional encouragement for saving and strategic credit, export oriented policy, alliance between the state, labour and industry called corporatism, skepticism of neo-liberalism and the Washington Consensus, prioritization of economic growth over political reform; legitimacy and performance, and emphasis on technical education

Indeed, most states can acquire the following characteristics by improving the state autonomy and re-focusing the development enterprise along the demands and resource base of the society.

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