**The end of the post-colonial state in Africa? Reflections on changing African...**
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# THE END OF THE POST-COLONIAL STATE IN AFRICA? REFLECTIONS ON CHANGING AFRICAN POLITICAL DYNAMICS

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**ABSTRACT**

Examination of the political trajectory of African states since the terminal colonial period suggests that, by the 1990s, the 'post-colonial' label still widely employed was losing its pertinence. The term acquired widespread currency not long after independence in acknowledgment of the importation into new states of the practices, routines and mentalities of the colonial state. These served as a platform for a more ambitious form of political monopoly, whose legitimating discourse was developmentalism. The colonial state legacy decanted into a patrimonial autocracy which decayed into crisis by the 1980s, bringing external and internal pressures for economic and political state reconfiguration. But the serious erosion of the stateness of many African polities by the 1990s limited the scope for effective reform and opened the door for a complex web of novel civil conflicts; there was also a renewed saliency of informal politics, as local societies adapted to diminished state presence and service provision. Perhaps the post-colonial moment has passed.

AT THE MOMENT OF THE GRAND ENTRY OF AFRICAN STATES into the world consort of nations in 1960 (17 out of 53 achieved sovereignty that year), the primary discursive referent for the new polities was 'post-independent'. From an African nationalist perspective, widely shared in the academic community, the achievement of independence was a defining historical moment, the culmination of an epic struggle. Incorporating visions of liberation, transformation and uplift, the independent African state was a newborn polity. As 'new states', African polities appeared to shed the colonial chrysalis.

By subtle metamorphosis, over time the routine descriptor for African states became 'post-colonial'. This semantic shift was not innocent of meaning. Formal sovereignty and anti-colonial struggle gradually became less salient as defining attributes than the colonial origins of the African state; more crucially the wholesale importation of the routines, practices,

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and mentalities of the African colonial state into its post-colonial successor became evident.[1] Indeed, post-colonial studies became an influential current in the larger tides of 'post-modern' academic discourse by the 1980s.

Now that more than four decades have passed since the great wave of African independence, the question arises whether 'post-colonial' remains a serviceable designation. The vocabulary of analysis is more than a merely academic issue; terminology is constitutive of meanings. But beyond the semantic dimension, there is value in reflecting upon the extent to which new elements in the contemporary political equation add up to a basic alteration in the parameters of stateness. The lexical habit of post-colonial usage to label the African political world persists, but in many countries little remains of the hegemonic apparatus which African rulers inherited and initially sought to reinforce and expand as an instrument of rapid development. Achille Mbembe in his remarkably prescient rendering of contemporary realities retains the title *On the Postcolony*, while his chapters portray an Africa 'out of the world' operated by 'private indirect government'.[2] The webs of conflict, violent social patterns and governmental dysfunctionalities in many parts of Africa make the state a far less dominating, agenda-setting actor than in the first post-independence decades. The *Bula Matari* (crusher of rocks) personification of the colonial state in the everyday expression of the Congolese subject in Belgian colonial times lived on in high Mobutist post-colonial times as a would-be leviathan (perhaps a lame one as Thomas Callaghy suggests), but the shrivelled, dishevelled and fragmented superstructure of Congo's governance in the Kabila age bears only a remote resemblance to its predecessors.[3] The paragon of the post-colonial Ivory Coast epitomized the arrival of a new, unsettling era, with the shattering of its stability in 1999, and its descent into civil disorder in 2002.

In this article, in delineating main trends since the terminal colonial period, I suggest closing the historical parentheses around the African post-colonial state, perhaps about 1990. The silent incorporation of many defining attributes of the colonial state in its post-independence successor for three decades validated the 'post-colonial' characterization. But by the 1980s a corrosive dynamic was visible, weakening most states, and by the

1. For an extended argument on this point, see Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1994).
2. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2001).
3. On the 'lame leviathan' notion, see Thomas M. Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in comparative perspective* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1984). For the *Bula Matari* metaphor and its origins, see Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI, 1985). *Bula Matari*, one may note, lives on as the *nom de guerre* of a UNITA warlord, General Galieno da Silva e Sousa; see *Angola Peace Monitor*, Issue No. 6, Vol. VIII, on www.reliefweb.int, IRIN Nairobi, 26 February 2002. But compare Denis M. Tull, 'A reconfiguration of political order? The state of the state in North Kivu', *African Affairs* **102**, 408 (2003), pp. 429–446.

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1990s eviscerating several. The state crisis became manifest by 1990 in the radically altered international environment of the collapse of the Soviet Union and irresistible pressures for liberalization. The reordering of politics which resulted had widely divergent results, poorly captured by the notion of post-coloniality.[4]

In developing this thesis, I begin by identifying the essential legacy of the colonial state. There follows a distillation of the core attributes of the post-colonial state. Its loss of ascendancy by the 1980s is examined, leading to a conclusion that the 1990s and beyond are a sharply demarcated era in African politics. In high politics, the fundamental nature of post-colonial arrangements was challenged economically and politically, through demands — external and internal — for market liberalization and democratization. In ground-level politics, a multiplicity of contradictory processes were at work. The dramatic erosion of stateness itself in many cases — in the Weberian sense of the routine capacity to exercise ultimate authority within the territorial domain of sovereignty — opened space for a multitude of actors: informal traders, smugglers, warlords, arms traffickers, youth militia, local associations ('civil society'), women's organizations, religious groups, refugees. These elements operate with varying degrees of autonomy, interacting with state agents as well as international agencies, donor representatives, and the non-governmental sector. No single designation emerges to capture the cross-currents and contradictions of the era beyond the post-colonial state, although the broad-front marginalization of much of Africa in the world at large seems a common condition. The vision of an 'African renaissance' articulated with eloquence by Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, and the summons to a New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) echoed by Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria pledging an economically reformed, politically democratic, and governmentally accountable and transparent Africa, offer a normative notion of a renovated African state. A rather different empirical picture emerges in recent influential analyses by Mbembe and others.[5]

4. For an example of the continuing robust hold of 'post-coloniality' as a master concept, see Richard Werbner (ed.), *Postcolonial Subjectivities in Africa* (Zed Books, London, 2002); also, Rita Abrahamsen, 'African studies and the postcolonial challenge', *African Affairs* **102**, 407 (2003), pp. 189–210. The applicability of this notion to some of the cases reviewed, such as southern Sudan, is dubious.

5. See, for example, Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*; Jean-François Bayart, Stephen Ellis and Béatrice Hibou, *The Criminalization of the State in Africa* (James Currey, Oxford, 1999); William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO, 1998), and Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as political instrument* (James Currey, Oxford, 1999).

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*Legacy of the African colonial state*

The legacy of the African colonial state defined its post-colonial successor in a number of important ways.[6] The colonial state formation in Africa had unique features, when compared with counterparts in other regions. The subjugation of Africa occurred relatively late in the age of imperialism, and with exceptional speed. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, most of Africa was forcibly annexed to a half dozen European imperial domains. The conquest was highly competitive, and governed after the 1884–85 Berlin Conference by the doctrine of 'effective occupation'; imperial title was not secure until a skeletal presence on the ground existed.[7] Meanwhile, metropolitan parliaments insisted on fiscal self-sufficiency for the new colonies, in a setting where in much of Africa subsistence economies prevailed. Africa had to pay for its own subjugation; in the absence of existing revenue flows to intercept, as in India, the only solution was to monetize the African subject by the imposition of head taxes (necessitating cash agriculture) and fiscal extraction in kind through forced labour. The resources extractable through such mechanisms imposed sharp limits on the size of the European colonial establishment to exercise hegemony; a low-cost intermediary cadre of African chiefs, co-opted from customary hierarchies or created, remunerated in status, subaltern power, and a share of the fiscal proceeds, was the indispensable local armature of the colonial state. The command state which resulted, even though its expatriate superstructure was modest, achieved unchallenged hegemony by World War I, and enjoyed an ascendancy sufficient to appropriate a significant fraction of the meagre incomes of its subjects, and direct large amounts of labour into economic pursuits desired by the colonial state for fiscal and other reasons (export crop cultivation, plantation labour, mining workforces). Though some authors view the colonial state as weak, relative to its vocation of low-cost domination (decentralized despotism, in the apt phrase of Mahmood Mamdani[8]), prior to World War II the scope of its authority is striking. Although brute force and violence were at its core, its

6. This analysis is largely drawn from Young, *The African Colonial State*.
7. Simon Katzenallenbogen and others argue that the doctrine of effective occupation was not in a formal sense adopted as one of the articles of the Act of Berlin in 1885. Nonetheless, this critical notion, originally a creative reading of Roman law used by the British and French to contest Spanish and Portuguese claims to the entire Western hemisphere, was invoked by various imperial practitioners as if it had the sanction of settled international law, reaffirmed at Berlin. See Katzenallenbogen, 'It didn't happen at Berlin: politics, economics and ignorance in the setting of Africa's colonial boundaries', in Paul Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju (eds), *African Boundaries: Barriers, conduits and opportunities* (Pinter, London, 1996), pp. 21–34.
8. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1996).

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overpowering image of strength and authority meant that coercive powers did not require constant application.[9]

Major changes occurred in the final years of the colonial state following World War II. By this time, 'colonial science' aiding, the superstructure of imperial rule had become well professionalized, its European cadres trained in specialized institutes. The African intermediary structures as well were better honed instruments, with chiefly appointment now contingent on literacy and competence as well as customary qualifications. The command habits of the administration were deeply embedded in its practices and policies, finding sartorial reflection in the military-style uniforms worn by regional administrators when giving public performance on tour. The European command agents in the colonial hierarchy (Africans entered this echelon of state service only at the very end, or in the Belgian case never) enjoyed wide autonomy. The 'man on the spot' had broad latitude in the exercise of his powers, unless disorder broke out requiring central intervention. There was exceptional insulation from a civil society denied organizational scope by repressive colonial legislation, and from metropolitan instances which gave only distant monitoring, unless budget subsidies were requested or uprisings drew unwelcome attention. Field agents of the colonial state certainly faced a challenge in managing discontents arising within their domains; still, they enjoyed a wealth of legal and coercive instruments blended with the mystique of colonial power. Only when power transfer came into view after World War II did an African representative voice become legalized, political organization tolerated, and free expression accepted. In addition, the imperial centres reasserted their sovereignty in assuming control of decolonization negotiation.

The scope of the colonial state radically expanded in the postwar years. Developmentalism, which first appeared in the 1920s as state discourse, became central to the legitimation imperative of the terminal colonial state, now subject to an increasingly hostile international environment and a rising torrent of nationalist criticism.[10] The minimal social infrastructure, mostly provided by mission initiative earlier, now became an urgent target for expansion. Educational and health facilities multiplied. Dramatically swelling revenues facilitated this momentum of state expansion; Belgian Congo state expenditures increased eleven-fold from 1939 to 1950, then

9. For the relative weakness argument, see Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2000). Bruce Berman gives detailed exposition to the limits of colonial authority in Kenya, and the need for its agents to carefully navigate the boundaries of their coercive capacities: *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The dialectics of domination* (James Currey, London, 1990). Frederick Cooper argues the relative weakness thesis differently, suggesting that the essence of colonial power was its 'gatekeeper' role, astride the intersection with the international realm, rather than its internal capacity. Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The past of the present* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002).

10. Cooper, *Africa since 1940*, argues that developmentalism became the defining discourse of the late colonial state from 1940 onwards.

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tripled in the final colonial decade; comparable fiscal bonanzas occurred in other countries, nurtured by the prolonged boom in primary commodity prices.[11] As well, for the first time substantial aid came from imperial rulers; the doctrine of colonial fiscal self-sufficiency was finally abandoned. The command hierarchy was now fleshed out with a proliferating array of technical services, greatly enlarging the rosters of expatriate agents of the colonial state. This remarkable influx, wrote John Hargreaves, 'produced a "second colonial occupation" in the form of a large-scale infusion of technical experts, whose activities not only increased the "intensity" of colonial government, but seemed to imply its continuance in some form until the new policies had an opportunity to mature'.[12] But the new opportunities for state employment were not limited to European technicians; for the young Africans who began to emerge from secondary schools in large numbers in the 1950s (and universities in the 1960s), government service was the natural end object of education. For the youth generation, state expansion and then Africanization provided extraordinary opportunities for social ascension.

Wartime imperatives of controlling the supply of basic primary commodities, especially for the British, led to important new forms of state intervention in the economy. After the war, the mantra of developmentalism, and the new creed of economic planning, led to the institutionalization of a number of wartime emergency controls, and in particular consolidation of agricultural marketing monopolies under state management for key export crops. The premise of state control and management of the economy as a necessary responsibility in the struggle for development was solidly implanted in state reason well before the imperial flags were lowered.

A striking paradox of the terminal colonial state is that, in the large majority of countries where decolonization was managed by negotiation, internal security was maintained with strikingly small military forces, notwithstanding the rising challenge of an impatient nationalism. Uganda in the immediate pre-independence period was garrisoned only by a single battalion of the East African King's African Rifles. Giant Nigeria had an army of only 10,000 at independence; the Belgian Congo *Force Publique* had merely 20,000 troops in the 1950s, and was responsible for internal security in Ruanda-Urundi as well as the Congo. The disproportion between these figures and the 500,000 troops deployed in Algeria by France, and by Portugal in its African colonies, to combat armed liberation movements, illustrates the magnitude of potential military requirements,

11. Young, *The African Colonial State*, p. 213.
12. John D. Hargreaves, *The End of Colonial Rule in West Africa* (Macmillan, London, 1979), p. 41.

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had the authority of the colonial state been violently contested.[13] I read these figures as reflecting the robust authority the colonial state continued to hold in its decolonization phase.

*Anatomy of the post-colonial state*

Some core elements of colonial state ideology passed intact to its successor. In the war against poverty, ignorance and disease to which African nationalism was committed, the state bore an historical mandate as manager of transformation, at once the architect of development and its primary theologian. The racial subtext of colonial administration — that European agents by their presumed innate superiority and role as natural bearers of 'civilization' had an unquestioned right to rule — was transformed into a comparable prerogative of the youthful educated nationalist generation to exercise tutelage over an unlettered citizenry. The new governing elite, wrote Jacob Ajayi, 'staked their claims to leadership on their superior knowledge' of external models of rule and development, and 'took for granted the masses and the traditional elite's willingness to accept their leadership'.[14]

In part the silent incorporation of the colonial state legacy into the post-colonial state simply reflected natural inertial forces. The formal language of a state is law, and the legal codes assembled in a row of volumes on the office shelves of its agents were a colonial codification. Even where an alternative codified legal tradition was available, in predominantly Muslim states, a number of years passed before the ascendancy of imperial legal orders outside of personal status issues was challenged. The dossiers shaping the policy knowledge and guiding the actions of government servants were from the colonial files. The default option for any bureaucrat is to continue the policies in place, a choice naturally pursued in the everyday actions in most instances. Unless circumstances provide some sharp rupture, as in the case of countries winning independence after a protracted armed struggle, the subliminal forces tending towards a reproduction of the state are formidable.

But the outcome went well beyond mere continuity. Building upon the extant structures, policies and practices, the post-colonial rulers sought a rapid expansion in the mission and scope of the state. These expansive ambitions drew energy from some exceptional conjunctural factors influencing state-building designs. The developmental state was not merely a product of terminal colonial statecraft; the moment of African independence

13. The only other territories where metropolitan troop intervention was required in the decolonization era were Kenya and Cameroon. These uprisings had very limited armament, no external support or supply, and were repressed with a modest number of metropolitan troops.
14. J. F. Ade Ajayi, 'Expectations of independence', *Daedalus* **111** (1982), p. 2.

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coincided with the zenith of confidence in state-led development. Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah spoke for a generation in writing that 'most of our development so far has had to be carried out by the Government itself. There is no other way out.'[15] The command role for the 'political kingdom' promised a dazzling future; with independence, pledged Nkrumah, 'we'll transform the Gold Coast into a paradise in ten years . . .'[16] In part this certitude of state capacity derived from the attachment of much of the African intelligentsia to socialist doctrine in its various forms. European left parties had provided important support to nationalism, and were a natural source of policy ideas. Capitalism was represented by the colonial corporations and pariah entrepreneurs of South Asian or Levantine antecedents widely viewed as alien exploiters. Further, in 1960 the Soviet Union and China appeared to enjoy remarkable double digit growth rates; not even Western specialists at the time cast serious doubt on these claims, and many years would pass before the world at large learned that the 'great leap forward' in China which inspired many young African intellectuals at the time created a famine which claimed an estimated 30 million lives. More broadly, a vision of a 'high modernity' achievable by state action inspired the young generation of post-colonial rulers: a rendezvous with abundance within a decade or two.[17]

Socialist orientation was not a necessary prerequisite for commitment to state-led development. The Western model for African intellectuals was the welfare state, especially its highest form in the Nordic states. Keynesian economic theory dominated Western economics at the time. Within the new sub-discipline of development economics, mainstream doctrine, in the words of Tony Killick, was 'highly interventionist'. It established powerful theoretical and practical arguments against reliance upon the market mechanism and advocated a strategy of development which placed the state at the centre of the stage.[18]

All available conceptual mappings of pathways towards rapid development pointed towards the same basic choices. Even the small number of countries such as Ivory Coast whose leaders did not recoil in horror when

15. Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A statement of African ideology* (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p. 117.
16. Tony Killick, *Development Economics in Action* (Heinemann, London, 1978), p. 34.
17. One may recollect the soaring ambitions for Congo-Kinshasa defined by Mobutu Sese Seko in 1970; '*Objectif 80*' promised massive new investments around the three 'poles of development' of Kinshasa, Kisangani, and Lubumbashi. With some discount for hyperbole, such visions seemed plausible to both domestic and international audiences at the time. On the allure of 'high modernity', see the engaging study by James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1998).
18. Killick, *Development Economics in Action*. The Killick monograph is a painstaking inquest into the interaction of currents of professional economics theory and Ghana development choices. See also Douglas Rimmer, 'Learning about economic development from Africa', *African Affairs* **102**, 408 (2003), pp. 469–492.

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observers characterized their basic development orientation as 'capitalist', carved out a central role for the state in the management of the agricultural sector, and the creation of a very large array of state enterprises.[19] If the parastatal enterprise was not legitimated by socialist orientation, it found justification in the argument that, in the absence of indigenous capitalists, the state had to serve as surrogate collective capitalist.

African independence coincided as well with the apogee of the Cold War, guaranteeing that the new states would become a diplomatic battlefield. The two major blocs competed maximally for the affiliation of African states, or minimally to pre-empt alignment with the other side. The currency of this competition was aid, economic and military. Although 'non-alignment' was orthodoxy in African diplomacy, the doctrine had many shadings, and its effectiveness in insulating the continent from global rivalries was necessarily limited. However, the primacy of a global security reason for the major powers through the post-colonial decades provided insulation of a different sort: the state qualities subsequently coded by the donor community as 'governance' measured less than the alignment thermometer.[20] The logic of the Cold War gave all players a stake in the competitive engagement in 'state-building' and 'nation-building'.

Rapid state expansion in the early post-colonial years was driven by several potent factors. Anti-colonial mobilization was achieved through a number of promissory notes. The young militants who provided the muscle of nationalist movements expected opportunities for employment, which they counted upon the state to provide. The new intellectual class now emerging from the universities expected guarantees of incorporation into the upper ranks of the state bureaucracy, an assurance which usually continued until the 1980s even in countries such as Egypt and Senegal with large university cohorts. Parents hoped that pledges of rapid school expansion, even universal primary education, would materialize. Clinics, safe drinking water, roads: social infrastructure promises resonated with rural and urban audiences. The colonial state was chastised for its lethargy in meeting these needs; the fruits of independence would be social uplift. In the 1960s and 1970s, a very large down-payment on the pledges of a better life were made; a hefty fraction of the swelling rosters of state employees were teachers and agents of the technical and service sectors.

The doctrine of nationalism was far from satisfied by mere nominal political sovereignty. The colonial economy soon became a target as well, a movement powerfully abetted by the 1970s through the importation of dependency theory from Latin America. Not only was the dominant

19. For data see Crawford Young, *Ideology and Development in Africa* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1982).
20. See Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The politics of state survival* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996).

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position of the colonial corporations an affront to sovereignty; it was also an engine of underdevelopment through siphoning of resources and the profits from their extraction to the metropolitan centres.[21] At ground level, often a greater irritant was the stranglehold which South Asian or Mediterranean mercantiles held over wholesale and retail trade. The impulse to assert national control over these sectors drew further inspiration from a brief assertive moment in Third World populism in the early 1970s, whose epitome was the movement for a 'New International Economic Order' and whose dramatic culmination was the Arab oil boycott of 1973.

Across the continent, a two-front assault on alien economic dominance took shape: nationalization for the colonial corporations, indigenization for the pariah entrepreneurs. Countries operating from a self-consciously socialist orientation tended to be first to undertake nationalization of major colonial enterprises: Algeria, Guinea, Tanzania from the 1960s. Reginald Green, long an economic adviser to the Tanzanian government, reported that by the mid-1970s, 80 percent of the medium- and large-scale economic activity lay in the public sector, which accounted for 80 percent of total investment.[22]

Other countries soon followed; by 1979, ostensibly capitalist Nigeria had achieved 60 percent control of the petroleum sector through the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. In 1969, Milton Obote in Uganda pledged to impose state majority control over a large part of the colonial private sector in the name of a 'Move to the Left', only partially implemented by the time of his overthrow by Idi Amin in 1971.[23] Mobutu nationalized the mineral giant *Union Minière du Haut Katanga* in 1967; Kenneth Kaunda followed suit with the Zambian copper mines in 1969.[24] In tackling the multinational giants, African states were unable to control downstream operations or directly manage many production operations; profitable opportunities remained for foreign corporations through management contracts or operation as a minority holder. But the key point here is that the state role in managing resource extraction greatly expanded, and a large array of parastatal bodies emerged to assume these responsibilities.

21. Particularly influential statements of this thesis are found in the abundant writings of Samir Amin, such as *Accumulation on a World Scale: A critique of the theory of underdevelopment* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1974). Walter Rodney popularized the theory in his lucid polemic, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Bogle-L'Ouverture, London, 1972).
22. See Bismarck U. Mwansasu and Cranford Pratt (eds), *Towards Socialism in Tanzania* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1979), pp. 19–45.
23. James H. Mittelman, *Ideology and Politics in Uganda: From Obote to Amin* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1975).
24. On the nationalization dynamics, see, *inter alia*, Thomas J. Bierstaker, *Multinationals, the State, and Control of the Nigerian Economy* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1987); Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, pp. 276–362; Kamitatu Massamba, 'Problématique et rationalité dans le processus de nationalisation du cuivre en Afrique centrale: Zaire (1967) et Zambie (1969)', (Ph.D. dissertation, Institut d'études politiques de Paris, 1976).

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From 1968 to 1973, a wave of indigenization measures swept Africa. The most spectacular was the racial cleansing of Asians conducted by Amin in Uganda in 1972, ordering their departure within 90 days. Of the 83,000 Asians resident in Uganda in 1970, 30,000 of whom held citizenship, only 10,000 remained by 1975.[25] In Ghana, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Malawi and Nigeria, governments enacted indigenization decrees designed to squeeze immigrant traders out of the commercial and light industrial sectors in favour of nationals. In Congo-Kinshasa, Mobutu in 1973 and 1974 issued sweeping 'Zairianization' and 'radicalization' decrees which in effect confiscated foreign-owned agricultural and commercial enterprises, allocating them as patrimonial rewards for henchmen and clients (and reserving some of the most lucrative for himself).[26] In other cases policies which did not ostensibly target immigrant minorities had the effect of dispossessing them. In Tanzania, for example, which had been generous at independence in offering citizenship to long-resident Asians and Europeans, the 1971 Acquisition of Buildings Act hit the Asian community hard; 97 percent of the nationalized buildings were owned by Asians, nearly half of whom had emigrated within three months of the act.[27] In some cases, as in Tanzania, mercantile minority assets entered the parastatal sector; more frequently, indigenization linked to state expansion more indirectly, through the channel of patrimonial aggrandizement. Such properties became prebendal goods available to lubricate ties of clientage to state managers.

The size of the state-owned sector also grew through the state role as surrogate capitalist. A corollary of the dependency perspective which influenced the African intelligentsia and ruling classes throughout the 1970s was import substitution industrialization. Virtually everywhere state initiative launched plants for processed foods, beverages, apparel, and other light industries, most frequently under state ownership. Though management might be contracted to foreign operators, liability for the capitalizing, debts and deficits of the enterprises rested with the state.

Rapid fulfilment of the high modernity visions of the post-colonial polity, in the logic of the times, necessitated the concentration of authority. Developmental energies, for a state, were finite, ran the thinking. The dissipation of such energies in political debate and conflict over the policy direction corroded state capacities for purposeful action. Further, open

25. See Michael Twaddle (ed.), *The Expulsion of a Minority: Essays on Ugandan Asians* (Athlone Press, London, 1975).
26. Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* and sources cited therein provide full detail; see also Michael G. Schatzberg, *Politics and Class in Zaire: Bureaucracy, business and beer in Lisala* (Africana Publishing Company, New York, 1980), pp. 121–53.
27. Aili Mari Tripp and Crawford Young, 'The accommodation of cultural diversity in Tanzania', in Daniel Chirot and Martin E. P. Seligman (eds), *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes, consequences, and possible solutions* (American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 2001), pp. 269–74.

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political competition opened the door for ethnic entrepreneurs to engage in divisive mobilization of communal partisans. The dual imperatives of state and nation-building beckoned centralization of power and erection of a political monopoly, for which the single party was the ordained instrument. 'At the present stage of Ghana's economic development,' wrote Nkrumah, 'the whole community must act in the national interest.'[28] Sympathetic academic observers proposed a reasoned brief at the time for the single-party system.[29] The most thoughtful African official argument for the single party was the report of the 1965 Tanzania Presidential Commission on the Establishment of a Democratic One Party State.[30]

Implementation of the single-party model quickly centralized authority in the ruler. Parliamentary institutions existed, but had little voice. Local representative institutions, often accused of paralyzing factionalism, were brought under central and party tutelage, or simply dissolved. Elimination of political competition and participation was hailed as a necessary device for the management of ethnicity: the departicipation strategy identified by Nelson Kasfir.[31] The single-party system dominated the African landscape until 1990. Military intervention became the sole mechanism to displace incumbents, but the putschist in power normally formed a new single party to legitimize permanent status for his rule. Thus citizen became once again merely subject, facing an exclusion from the public domain reminiscent of colonial times. One important difference: whereas the colonial state asked only obedience, the post-colonial polity demanded affection. Mere submission did not suffice; active participation in rituals of loyalty (support marches, assemblies to applaud touring dignitaries, purchase of party cards, display of the presidential portrait, participation in plebiscitary elections) was mandatory.

Successful centralization of power and monopolization of political space did not suffice to ensure the unhindered hegemony of the post-colonial state, which could never match the autonomy from society enjoyed by the imperial bureaucracy. The command state could not operate on the basis of ultimate impersonal authority and coercive force alone; indispensable were supplementary mechanisms translating state rule into personalized linkages with key intermediaries and their ramifying networks of clientele:

28. Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, p. 117.
29. For example, see Immanuel Wallerstein, *Africa: The politics of independence* (Vintage Press, New York, 1961); Ruth Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964).
30. Substantial extracts from the report are reprinted in Lionel Cliffe (ed.), *One Party Democracy: The 1965 Tanzania general election* (East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1967), pp. 438–65.
31. Nelson Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena: Participation and ethnicity in African politics, with a case study of Uganda* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1976).

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the rhizome state of Jean-François Bayart.[32] At the summit, state power was personalized through cults devoted to the ruler. Not simply personalized but paternalized: in the moral matrix of legitimacy, argues Schatzberg, 'government stands in the same relationship to its citizens that father does to his children'.[33] Patrimonial webs of personalized circuits of distribution reciprocated with clientelist loyalty created a honeycomb of networks by which the ascendancy of the ruler was maintained.[34] In turn, clienteles exerted great pressure for access to government resources, since state power was the key source of accumulation.

In all its aspects, the health of the post-colonial polity was entirely tributary to expanding revenues, both to pay for its proliferating apparatus and growing functions, and to lubricate the patrimonial channels assuring its legitimacy. In the first post-colonial decade, conditions were relatively favourable. Commodity prices were more volatile and less consistently advantageous than in the 1950s, but still high by historical standards. The aid flows from the former colonizer, which helped produce the robust growth of the 1950s, by and large continued, even increased. Major new sources of development assistance became available: Canada, the Nordic countries, Netherlands, Japan. The major Cold War powers — the United States, the Soviet Union, China — made their competitive entry onto the aid scene. Initially, assistance was often provided in grant form, but gradually became in large part loans. The developmental impact of the aid was uneven at best; econometric analysis could detect no relationship between aid levels and growth. Nonetheless, aid flows were a significant component of the resource base of many countries; in the case of a particularly favoured country, such as Tanzania, aid accounted for over 15 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in more than a third of the years between 1970 and 1993.[35] Jannik Boesen and his collaborators in noting the scope of the crisis by the early 1980s identified as core factor policy choices 'increasingly concentrating all development activities in the state'. They added that few foresaw the coming crisis of the state:

> . . . it is striking that up to as late as 1979 there was no fundamental concern about overall economic developments in Tanzania. Few inside or outside the country seem

32. Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The politics of the belly* (Longman, New York, 1993).
33. Michael G. Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, family, food* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2001), p. 1. See also Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1982).
34. These arrangements are well dissected by Richard A. Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The rise and fall of the Second Republic* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1987).
35. Carol Lancaster, *Aid to Africa: So much to do, so little done* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1999), pp. 42, 59. See also Nicolas van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979–1999* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001).

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> to have realized the deeper problems behind the speed and pattern of development since the end of the 1960s, and fewer still expected the decline to follow after 1979.[36]

By the end of the 1960s, new funds were needed to finance state expansion. African external debt at this juncture was still negligible, and especially countries with promising natural resources could mortgage these assets for loans. With large eurodollar reserves and Western economies in the doldrums, major commercial banks briefly found African lending attractive in the early 1970s. Gigantic development projects, such as the multibillion Inga-Shaba power scheme in Congo-Kinshasa, lined up for external public finance, with the major private contractors pushing hard for their governments to provide loan funds. Within a decade, the African external debt ballooned from very low levels to approach $300 billion.

At their high water mark in the mid-1970s, African post-colonial states appeared to enjoy a robust hegemony over their populations. Rulers seemed bent upon and close to realizing what Jean Copans, writing about Senegal, termed an 'integral state':

> The objective of the dominant groups in the state apparatus is the control, the maintenance, the augmentation of surplus extraction. . . . The lesson of recent years is the following: the interests of the Senegalese state have won over local private interests . . . this growing role of the state, rendered concrete through the remodeling and multiplication of institutions for control of the peasantry, leads to a new policy. The Senegalese state aims more and more at a direct administrative, ideological and political control over the dominated masses, be they urban or rural.[37]

This unencumbered dominance over civil society by comprehensive instruments of social control through single party and administrative encadrement, a pervasive security apparatus, and a total monopoly on print and other media gave the would-be integral state the appearance of unchallenged strength.[38] This was accompanied by an extravagant personalization of power, exemplified by the rapturous encomium to Mobutu expressed by then Interior Minister Engulu Baanga in 1975:

> In our religion, we have our own theologians. In all religions, and at all times, there are prophets. Why not today? God has sent a great prophet, our prestigious Guide

36. Jannik Boesen, Kjell J. Havnevik, Juhani Kopenen, and Kie Odgaard (eds), *Tanzania: Crisis and struggle for survival* (Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1986), pp. 21, 66.
37. J. Copans, *Les marabouts et l'arachide: La confrérie mouride et les paysans du Sénégal* (Editions le Sycamore, Paris, 1980), p. 248. For a parallel argument based on close observation of Senegal at the same time, see Christian Coulon, *Le marabout et le prince: Islam et pouvoir au Sénégal* (Editions A. Pedone, Paris, 1981), p. 289.
38. For insightful exegesis of the ubiquity of state security organs at the apogee of Mobutu, see Michael G. Schatzberg, *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 1988). See also Crawford Young, 'The shattered illusion of the integral state', *Journal of Modern African Studies* **35** (1997), pp. 249–63.

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> Mobutu — this prophet is our liberator, our Messiah. Our church is the MPR. Its chief is Mobutu, we respect him like one respects a Pope. Our gospel is Mobutism. This is why the crucifixes must be replaced by the image of our Messiah. And party militants will want to place at its side his glorious mother, Mama Yemo, who gave birth to such a son.[39]

*Crisis of the post-colonial state*

By the end of the 1970s, the first clear signs that the post-colonial state was not only falling short of its ambitious designs, but facing a systematic crisis, began to appear. The then director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Adebayo Adedeji, asked mournfully in 1979, 'How have we come to this sorry state of affairs in the post-independence years which seemed at the beginning to have held so much promise?' A report submitted to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in 1979 came to the sobering conclusion that 'Africa . . . is unable to point to any significant growth rate or satisfactory index of general well-being.'[40] The summary judgement of Paul Nugent in the Ghana case illustrated a general pattern: 'State entrepreurship in the fields of agriculture and industry proved to be a monumental failure . . .' leading to huge consumer shortages, a 50 percent fall in cocoa output, a 1981 inflation rate of 116 percent, and public revenue covering only half state expenditures.[41]

The post-colonial state became the object of withering criticism. An array of novels portrayed the state as predator, pirate, or even vampire, terms that crept into everyday vocabulary.[42] Questions began to appear about the 'empirical' reality of the state. Carl Rosberg and Robert Jackson suggested that its juridical sovereignty was sustained above all by the international system; such polities were mere 'quasi-states'.[43] Naomi Chazan illustrated this thesis in an influential 1982 monograph on Ghana:

> By the early 1980s it was apparent that Ghana had forfeited its elementary ability to maintain internal or external order and to hold sway over its population. Although its existence as a *de jure* political entity on the international scene was unquestionable, these outward manifestations did raise doubts as to its *de facto* viability. . . . Indeed,

39. Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, p. 169.
40. Young, *The African Colonial State*, p. 4.
41. Paul Nugent, *Big Men, Small Boys and Politics in Ghana: Power, ideology and the burden of history, 1988–1994* (Pinter, London, 1995), p. 26.
42. The label 'vampire state' was given added currency by a former senior official of the Bank of Ghana, Jonathan H. Frimpong-Ansah, *The Vampire State in Africa: The political economy of decline in Ghana* (James Currey, London, 1991).
43. Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, 'Why Africa's weak states persist: the empirical and the juridical in statehood', *World Politics* **35** (1982), pp. 1–24; Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, international relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990).

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> some kind of disengagement from the state was taking place . . . an emotional, economic, social, and political detachment from the state element.[44]

Ghana was soon to demonstrate that state rehabilitation was possible in the later Rawlings years,[45] but the Chazan portrait came to fit a growing number of post-colonial states by the 1980s.

In its growing economic disarray, the post-colonial state encountered a suddenly more hostile international climate. A paradigm shift occurred in development economics, with the 'Washington consensus' taking shape within the international financial institutions and much of the donor community touting the supremacy of the market. Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan aggressively articulated an anti-state ethos. The restoration of neoclassical economics to intellectual hegemony meant that African states seeking assistance encountered reform demands informed by what became known as 'neoliberalism'. Meanwhile, the Soviet bloc was confronting a deepening economic impasse of its own, and the 'new thinking' associated with Mikhail Gorbachev included a growing reluctance for aid commitments in Africa.

The 1980s were a decade of growing distress for much of Africa. For sub-Saharan countries, there was an average negative growth rate of 2.8 percent from 1980 to 1987.[46] Utterly beyond reach, save for the two deviant cases of Botswana and Mauritius, were the performances of the Asian 'tiger' economies. Overwhelmed by unsustainable debts, facing negative trends in many primary commodity markets, shunned by much of international capital, African states had little option but to accept, at least formally, the 'structural adjustment' programmes proposed by the international financial institutions backed by the donor community as the condition for continuing assistance. 'State crisis' began to seep into everyday characterizations of the post-colonial polity.

Other fatal shortcomings in the nature of the state became evident. The extreme centralization of decision-making, its consequent exposure to the policy whims or prebendal logic of autocrats, and the venal dynamics of multinational enterprise bidding for huge contracts carried high risks of outsized debts for unviable projects. The Inga-Shaba project in Congo-Kinshasa was a model of such misfortune, accounting for most of the original Congo debt. This scheme involved tapping the undeniably vast hydroelectric potential of the Congo River in its 300-metre drop between Kinshasa and the sea, with an 1,800-kilometer high tension direct current

44. Naomi Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing political recession, 1969–1982* (Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1982), pp. 334–5.
45. See Jeffrey Herbst, *The Politics of Reform in Ghana, 1982–1991* (Universiity of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1993).
46. World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From crisis to sustainable growth* (World Bank, Washington, DC, 1989), p. 221.

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transmission line to the Katanga mineral complex. The project was plagued by cost overruns which quadrupled its initial estimated cost, and was completed five years behind schedule at a time when low copper prices had led to cancellation of new mine developments on which the financial viability of the project depended. Most fundamentally, the project was structured so that the key actors (Mobutu and the prime contractor) made their profit on the transaction, leaving the country and its citizenry liable for the long-term costs when revenues fell far short of requirements for servicing the debt.[47] Inga-Shaba was unusual in its scale, but prototypical of a large number of development projects in its nature. Another equally striking example was the Ajaokuta integrated steel project in Nigeria, launched in 1977 with great fanfare. This scheme, which has yet to produce any steel, swallowed up several billion dollars in capital, mostly borrowed abroad.[48]

Beyond exposure to massive miscalculation, the post-colonial state found its parastatal sector a growing burden. Far from constituting an engine of growth by generating profits for new investment, most of the huge state-owned enterprise sector was in deficit. The state thus became liable for the parastatal sector debt, making it all but impossible to adequately capitalize the modest number of enterprises that were profitable. The privatization solution promoted with increasing insistence in structural adjustment programmes has proved nettlesome; many of the enterprises are beyond salvation and unattractive to buyers; sale of the more viable state companies often generates fierce controversy among a public quick to suspect windfall profits for foreign buyers or insider deals with cronies of rulers.

Yet another liability of the post-colonial state was the sheer magnitude of the corruption to which it gave rise. The costs of patrimonial management of politics by African rulers were modest at first, but steadily increased over time. Increasing diversion of state resources into prebendal circuits became a growing drain. Although personal enrichment also drove ruler behaviour, there was a constant need to divert state revenue flows or collect rents on power by demanding large commissions on development contracts.[49] The atmosphere of venality surrounding patrimonial politics led to

47. For detail on this development disaster, see Jean-Claude Willame, *Zaire — L'épopée d'Inga: Chronique d'une prédation industrielle* (Harmattan, Paris, 1986); see also Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, pp. 298–301.

48. The Ajaokuta debt gave rise to a scam of colossal proportions even by Nigerian standards. The late, unlamented dictator Sani Abacha, through family intermediaries in league with two former ministers, created a shell company to buy for 20 cents on the dollar $2.5 billion of Nigerian debt to Russia incurred for Ajaokuta. The Nigerian treasury was then ordered to provide full repayment of the debt at par value to this combine. *New York Times*, 3 December 1998.

49. Michela Wrong, an unusually tenacious journalist, sought to unravel the scale and location of the Mobutu fortune. She concluded that, by the end of his reign, much had been dissipated in the desperate effort to remain in power, and large sums were embezzled by his own clientele; Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the brink of disaster in Zaire* (Fourth Estate, London, 2000).

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huge sums being diverted and secreted abroad, and trickled down through the state apparatus to make even petty transactions with the state subject to side payments. Nigerian President Obasanjo told an OAU meeting in 2002 that an estimated $140 billion had been exported into secret holdings abroad by African rulers and leading politicians.[50]

Futile efforts to defend currencies undermined by large budget shortfalls and external trade deficits generated large currency black markets and accelerating inflation in a number of countries. The incapacity to sustain the personnel costs of the over-extended post-colonial state often led to the expedient of reducing the effective state payroll costs by letting inflation erode real public wages, and accumulating pay arrearages. State agents were demoralized, and survival imperatives put even more pressure upon them to extract rents from their administrative functions, and devote part of their working day to private pursuits. In addition, the budget reductions required by structural adjustment programmes compelled in practice cutbacks in social expenditures; in Tanzania, the primary school enrolment ratio fell from 93 percent to 66 percent from 1980 to 1996. Maintaining security forces tended to trump social expenditures. These trends substantially weakened states for which studies already showed that educational and health expenditures had less success in improving health and educational attainment than comparable outlays in Asia and Latin America.[51]

In this phase of economic decline, informalization permeated the public economy. The 'real economy' of Congo-Kinshasa, wrote Janet MacGaffey, was managed by parallel market traders, a number of whom accumulated surprising fortunes very quickly (and could lose them with equal speed).[52] Aili Tripp shows that structural adjustment in Tanzania by the time of its implementation generated strikingly little public resistance, in good part because the integral state economic superstructure had already been eviscerated by the informalization of the market.[53]

At the beginning of the 1980s, the external diagnosis of an emerging African state crisis was essentially economic. The influential 1981 Berg Report of the World Bank set the tone, with a naive faith that recovery could soon be achieved by abandonment of the statist economy in favour of market-based reforms and export-oriented growth.[54] But by the end of the decade, the exegesis of the post-colonial state condition led to more far-reaching conclusions: the malady afflicting Africa was not simply economic

50. *New York Times*, 14 June 2002.
51. Van de Walle, *African Economies*, p. 94.
52. Janet MacGaffey, *The Real Economy of Zaire: The contribution of smuggling and other unofficial activities to national wealth* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1991).
53. Aili Mari Tripp, *Changing the Rules: The politics of liberalization and the urban informal economy in Tanzania* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1997).
54. World Bank, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* (World Bank, Washington, DC, 1981).

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but more fundamentally political. African recovery required not just the miracle of the marketplace, but the blessings of democracy. The now deeply enrooted structures of patrimonial autocracy were not reformable by economic tinkering; the post-colonial state required political surgery in order to make a liberalized economy possible.

*Reinventing the state*

Thus circumstances demanded a virtual reinvention of the state. The magnitude of the challenge was widely underestimated at first. The kinds of political and economic arrangements which characterized the post-colonial state had become fundamentally unviable in a changing global environment. The necessity of a comprehensive reformulation of extant institutions, political and economic, was matched in scope only by the transition from Communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In spite of the optimism, even euphoria, at the prospect of rapid democratization and shock therapy marketization at the beginning of the 1990s, results fell far short of expectations.

A remarkable alignment of the planets propelled the Huntingtonian 'third wave' of democracy to wash over Africa.[55] Beginning with urban riots in Algerian cities in October 1988, street challenges to fossilized single-party autocracies sprang up in many countries, emboldened by the dramatic fall of the Berlin wall. At the beginning of 1990, a striking new pattern of civil society confrontation emerged, with Benin's ruler Mathieu Kérékou compelled by an empty treasury and a mobilized populace to accept a 'sovereign national conference', which proceeded to dissolve the existing order in favour of a democratic constitution.[56] Through the national conference process, in parts of francophone Africa, or other avenues elsewhere, nearly all regimes had to make at least some gestures towards political opening. In the initial phases of the democratic tide, the regime changes were numerous; depending on the mode of calculation, between a dozen and eighteen long-standing presidents were ousted or compelled to retire.[57]

An irresistible confluence of external and internal factors drove these

55. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK, 1991).
56. Against the odds of an economy of woefully limited resources and a history of unusual instability and ethnic conflict, the Beninese transition has proved exceptionally stable and effective. See Bruce A. Magnusson, 'The politics of democratic regime legitimation in Benin: institutions, social policy, and security' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1996).
57. See for a balance sheet on African democratization Crawford Young, 'The third wave of democratization in Africa: ambiguities and contradictions', in Richard Joseph (ed.), *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO, 1999), pp. 15–38. See also Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime transitions in comparative perspective* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997).

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changes. Externally, the wholly unexpected collapse of state socialism sent shock waves through the continent. Western powers, and even for a time the international financial institutions, made political as well as economic reform a condition for assistance. Internally, a potent contagion effect from the first episodes of successful confrontation of perennial autocrats operated. The utter delegitimation of the post-colonial state as mere predator in the popular mind made stonewalling seem impossible.

But by the middle of the decade the euphoria regarding democratization had faded. The political opening was in many cases only partial. Some of the external trappings of democracy were adopted without its internal substance. In many instances, external presentability seemed to drive political reform rather than a genuine commitment to liberalization: 'virtual democracy', in the words of Richard Joseph.[58] From a different perspective, one might characterize the outcome as institutionalized semi-democracy.[59] But despite the cosmetic nature of a number of transitions, and the success of such perennial autocrats as Ben Ali of Tunisia, Paul Biya of Cameroon, or Gnassingbe Eyadéma of Togo in splintering and sometimes repressing opposition forces, some important changes did occur.

Some scope for opposition survived the autocratic restoration in most instances. State media monopolies were abandoned, and a critical press appeared. In some countries, such as Uganda and Ghana, new low-cost frequency modulation radio appeared, importing the 'talk show' format for political debate. Human rights groups, often with courageous leadership, documented abuses of power, assisted by their linkages with the international human rights community.[60] The infrastructure of a 'civil society' took shape, making improbable that an autocratic restoration could restore anything resembling the state ascendancy over the citizenry of the integral state years. Women in much of Africa used the opening to greatly enhance their role, supplying much of the leadership for the proliferating associations which define 'civil society'.[61] In a paradoxical way, political opening,

58. See Richard Joseph, 'War, state-making, and democracy in Africa', in Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young (eds) *Beyond State Crisis?: Post-Colonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective* (The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, DC, 2002), pp. 241–62.

59. William F. Case, 'Can the "halfway house" stand? Semidemocracy and elite theory in three southeast Asian countries', *Comparative Politics* **28** (1996), pp. 437–64. Marina Ottaway, in an insightful analysis, argues that semi-democracy (or semi-authoritarianism) in much of Africa will prove a stable form of rule, not containing any internal propensity to evolve into a fuller democracy. Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The rise of semi-authoritarianism* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, 2003).

60. On the growth and impact of an international human rights community, see Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy networks in international politics* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1996).

61. For persuasive detail on the ability of women in Uganda to take advantage of the newly opened social space, see Aili Mari Tripp, *Women and Politics in Uganda* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI, 2000).

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while by no means erasing widespread public cynicism about state predation, created new demands states were ill equipped to meet. As Thomas Hansen and Finn Stepputat observe, enfeebled governments were challenged by the emergence of discourses of human rights linked to a reawakened imagining of the state as 'representation of the *volonté générale* producing citizens as well as subjects, as a source of social order and stability, and as an agency capable of creating a definite and authorized nation-space materialized in boundaries, infrastructure, monuments and authoritative institutions'.[62]

Although the 1990s produced somewhat less disheartening economic trends than the 1980s, and some countries like Uganda, Ghana or Mozambique achieved respectable macroeconomic measures, performance overall failed to vindicate the optimistic promises made for 'neoliberal' policy prescriptions. A number of analysts, especially external commentators, pointed to the incomplete and half-hearted implementation of reforms, their subversion to entrenched patrimonial practice, and the shrinkage of state capacity.[63]

*New patterns of civil conflict*

Thus, although neither democratization nor economic reform came close to meeting the expectations of their initial advocates, taken together they did erase the earlier post-colonial state's claim to unencumbered hegemony. However, the partially reformed state proved to be substantially weakened, a condition which new forms of violence and disorder in the 1990s illuminated. Novel patterns of internal warfare dramatized the limitations of stateness in a number of countries, including much of the Great Lakes region. The scale and spread of civil disorder in Africa fed upon two altered international circumstances. At the global level, the end of the Cold War removed the motivation for outside powers to intervene militarily in support of friendly African regimes. Within Africa, a new-found disposition for involvement in armed conflicts in neighbouring states, in support of either incumbents or rebels, eroded the older OAU doctrine of non-intervention. The Tanzanian invasion of Uganda in 1979, as spearhead for Ugandan opponents of Amin, attracted criticism in much of Africa for the violation of sovereignty. By the time that eight African armies took part in the Congo-Kinshasa civil war in 1998, earlier OAU norms had all but

62. Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat (eds), *States of Imagination: Ethnographic explorations of the postcolonial state* (Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2001), p. 2.
63. The meticulous Van de Walle monograph, *African Economies*, exemplifies this approach. Many African intellectuals, on the other hand, excoriate structural adjustment, held responsible for a continued evisceration of basic social services and reducing the state to a servile instrument of the international financial institutions and the Western donor community.

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vanished. Conflict thus readily flowed across borders, and instability had spillover effects in neighbouring countries: the 'bad neighbourhood' syndrome.

Several critical new factors influenced the shape and nature of internal conflict.[64] The overthrow of Amin in 1979 in Uganda introduced a novel pattern of regime change, whose consequences have been insufficiently noted. The destruction of an incumbent government by insurgents coming from the periphery or neighbouring states injected a radically different security dynamic into ruler displacement. The military coups of the post-colonial state era merely altered the personnel at the summit; the security apparatus of the state remained intact. Overthrow from the periphery not only sends rulers into flight, but brings dissolution of the existing army. Former soldiers flee into the countryside or neighbouring states, often with their weapons. These can be sold, concealed for future use, or used as armament for emergent rebel militias. Such government overthrow by peripheral insurgents occurred eight times in the 1990s: Chad (1990), Liberia (1990), Ethiopia (1991), Somalia (1991), Rwanda (1994), Sierra Leone and both Congos (1997). Arms not disappearing with dissolving armies remain in unguarded armouries which can be emptied by local marauders; the fall of Amin provided such an opportunity to Karimojong cattle raiders to acquire a radically escalated level of armament, with devastating consequences for the level of violence in northeastern Uganda.[65]

The pool of weaponry entering the black market was huge; one may recollect that the Somalian and Ethiopian armies which dissolved in 1991 were among the largest and best equipped in Africa. In the wake of the collapse of state socialism, a number of bankrupt regimes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union had huge weapons stocks for sale. Western arms merchants were also eager suppliers of warlords who had means of payment.

Disintegrated armies were also a source of recruits with some military training and knowledge; indeed, many former soldiers had no other marketable skill. Not only were rank and file soldiers available, but also erstwhile

64. For a parallel argument insisting on the novelty of factors producing internal warfare in the 1990s, though with a somewhat different list, see Jean-Claude Willame, *Banyarwanda et Banyamulenge: Violences ethniques et gestion de l'identitaire au Kivu* (Institut Africain-CEDAF, Cahiers Africains 25, Brussels, 1997).

65. For detail on escalated violence and its social consequences in the Karamoja region, see Sandra J. Gray, 'A memory of loss: ecological politics, local history, and the evolution of Karimojong violence', *Human Organization* **59** (2000), pp. 401–18; Mustafa Mirzeler and Crawford Young, 'Pastoral politics in the northeast periphery in Uganda: AK-47 as change agent', *Journal of Modern African Studies* **38** (2000), pp. 407–30. The Kuria in northwest Tanzania, also a society in which cattle raiding is a social tradition, likewise acquired a windfall of automatic weapons in the 1979 Uganda invasion, profiting from their large numbers in the Tanzanian army. This too has contributed to a more violent and, in the Kuria case, commercialized cattle raiding; see Michael L. Fleisher, '"War is good for thieving!": The symbiosis of crime and warfare among the Kuria of Tanzania', *Africa* **72** (2002), pp. 130–49.

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officers with advanced training at overseas military academies, or veterans of guerrilla warfare elsewhere. Thus organizers of insurgent forces could tap sophisticated military knowledge. A case in point were the 'Afghans', former jihad fighters who played a significant role in the Algerian civil war of the 1990s, and in the Tuareg uprising in northern Mali early in the last decade.[66] Stephen Ellis shows the critical role of insurgent leaders trained in Libya in the dissident militia in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s.[67]

During the 1990s, important changes occurred in financing civil conflict. In Angola, the *União Nacional para la Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) provisioned its insurgency mostly with South African and American assistance until the end of the 1980s. With these sources no longer available by 1990, Jonas Savimbi developed a revenue source in the diamond trade, worth several hundreds of millions of dollars at its peak. Charles Taylor in Liberia funded his warfare with timber, rubber intercepted from the Firestone plantations, and Sierra Leonean diamonds, also the financial life blood for the Sierra Leone Revolutionary United Front (RUF). In Congo-Kinshasa, the financial fuel for the civil war came from pillage of gold, diamonds, coffee, timber and columbite-tantalite (coltan) in the eastern reaches of the country, both by domestic insurgents and neighbouring armies. This kind of violent entrepreneurship, and the warlord politics it produced, bred militias whose primary motivation was control of valuable resources; civil populations as potential supporters were of little interest.[68] Groups such as the RUF, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, and the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD) factions had remarkably little real backing in the regions where they operated.

Another disconcerting innovation was the systematic utilization of child soldiers, especially prevalent in both Congos, Uganda, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The practice as a deliberate strategy was pioneered by the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO) in the mid-1980s, when faced with difficulties in obtaining adult recruits.[69] Adolescent boys could easily carry light automatic weapons; drugged, terrorized, promised supernatural protection, the child soldier could be a fearless warrior. Children were often

66. A Malian officer writes that the Malian government, which had crushed a Tuareg revolt with considerable brutality in the early 1960s, concluded that the inner cadre of 'Afghan' veterans made a military solution impossible in the 1990s; negotiations were the only avenue. See Lt. Col. Kalifa Keita, *Conflict and Conflict Resolution in the Sahel: The Tuareg insurgency in Mali* (occasional publication, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 1998).
67. Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war* (New York University Press, New York, 1999), pp. 110–12.
68. For the argument on the singular logic of such rulers and insurgent bosses, see Reno, *Warlord Politics*.
69. For detail, see Margaret Hall and Tom Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique since independence* (Ohio University Press, Athens, OH, 1997).

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recruited by abduction; other youngsters, in a social environment of hopelessness, joined voluntarily.[70]

The spread of civil conflict in Africa in the 1990s stood as metaphor for a weakened state; internal wars persisted over extended time even in the absence of popular backing for the insurgents. More than a quarter of African states experienced armed internal conflict during the decade, and another quarter faced prolonged political crises and turbulence.[71] Two large zones of interpenetrated conflicts appeared, one stretching southeastwards from the Horn to the two Congos and Angola, and the other extending from Senegal to Ivory Coast, but with a destabilizing impact that spread into neighbouring states, thus affecting much of the continent. The intrepid enumerator of civil conflicts, Ted Gurr, found Africa the exception to his arresting finding that internal warfare diminished in the 1990s in the world at large, contrary to popular perceptions.[72] Even in the countries where overt civil strife did not appear, the contraction of state effectiveness rendered far more visible the crucial importance of the local in shaping outcomes. Catherine Boone in a masterful new work documents the ways in which varying regional politicial 'topographies' in Senegal, Ivory Coast and Ghana sharply constrained central policy choices even when the post-colonial polity retained a higher order of capacity.[73] In most countries, deeply entrenched patterns of 'Big Man' politics permeated relationships from top to bottom of the institutional hierarchy and informal realm, a pattern Jan Vansina shows to be a millennial tradition in the equatorial polity.[74] 'Colonialism,' argues Paul Nugent, 'battened on to indigenous belief systems almost as much as on to chieftaincy structures, thereby reinforcing and disseminating elements of pre-existing ideologies.'[75] Patrimonial practice, already evident early in the post-colonial polity, multiplied in the face of state contraction and permeated the swelling informal domains as well as state politics.[76] Tributary to the disciplining mechanisms of the international political economy, the African state found its authority diluted by ramifying mechanisms of what Achille Mbembe calls 'private indirect government'.[77]

70. See the testimonials of former Sierra Leone child soldiers in Krijn Peters and Paul Richards, 'Youths in Sierra Leone: "Why we fight"', *Africa* **68** (1998), pp. 183–210. See also Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga, 'The spread of political violence in Congo-Brazzaville', *African Affairs* **98**, 390 (1999), pp. 37–54.
71. Catharine Newbury, 'States at war: confronting conflict in Africa', *African Studies Review* **45** (2002), pp. 1–20.
72. Ted Robert Gurr, 'Ethnic warfare on the wane', *Foreign Affairs* **79**, 3 (2000), pp. 52–64.
73. Catherine Boone, *African Topographies* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2003).
74. Jan Vansina, *Paths through the Rainforests: Toward a history of political tradition in equatorial Africa* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI, 1990).
75. Nugent, *Big Men*, p. 18.
76. Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Elites et réprésentation politique: la culture de l'échange au Nigéria* (Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, Passac, 2002).
77. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, pp. 64–101.

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*Counter currents*

Whither, then, the state which follows a discredited post-colonial regime? The wave of internal wars signalled one type of outcome, but other less negative itineraries were possible. In Uganda, under Yoweri Museveni from 1986 on, the possibilities of rehabilitation of a failed state were demonstrated in the 1990s (though coming into renewed question by 2002).[78] Ghana, after reaching a nadir in 1983, showed a comparable possibility of state restoration, carrying out two clean national elections in 1996 and 2001, the latter resulting in an opposition triumph, and bringing a comatose economy back to life, if not robust health. A comparable process of related state recovery is visible in Mozambique, though dependent on extraordinary levels of international support; since the civil war ended in 1992, over 50 percent of government expenditures through the 1990s came from external assistance, and the country benefited from over $4 billion foreign public debt cancellation.[79] Fragile peace accords in some of the most conflicted countries early in the new millennium (Angola, Sierra Leone, Congo-Kinshasa, Burundi, Sudan) held out some hope of halting the spread of civil disorder.

The value of stability and exemplary leadership is illustrated by Tanzania. Although the Nyerere vision of the populist socialist polity failed by any measure in the policy realm, the moral rectitude of the *Mwalimu* preserved his image as a charismatic leader dedicated to the common weal. Though *ujamaa* socialism did not deliver on its promises, neither did it serve as mere cynical cover for a predatory state elite.

Tunisia is another illustration of the value of stability and competent governance. Though the large democracy deficit is a source of intellectual unrest, by most performance indicators Tunisia fares well. On social infrastructure (education, health), it performs respectably. Radical reforms of the status of women initiated by Habib Bourguiba soon after independence have taken root.

Other positive instances can be cited. Botswana remains a model of democratic rectitude and developmental performance.[80] Despite their poverty and limited economic prospects, Benin and Mali have persevered with political and economic liberalization.

78. For an example of critical perspectives from Ugandan intellectuals, see Justus Mugaju and J. Oloka-Onyango (eds), *No-Party Democracy in Uganda: Myths and realities* (Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 2000).

79. Carrie Manning, *The Politics of Peace in Mozambique: Post-conflict democratization, 1992–2000* (Praeger, Westport, CT, 2002).

80. On the largely positive performance of Botswana as a developmental state, see also Abdi Ismail Samatar, *An African Miracle: State and class leadership and colonial legacy in Botswana* (Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 1999); J. Stephen Morrison, 'Divergence from state failure in Africa? The relative success of Botswana's cattle sector' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987).

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Key African leaders sustain the campaign for renaissance. A normative vision of a rehabilitated state is traced by the promoters of NEPAD: a transparent, accountable, democratic government committed to economic reform. Such virtuous governance would be guaranteed by Africa itself, which pledges an African Union monitoring mechanism to ensure conformity with these principles. Indeed, the OAU had taken a serious step in this direction in 1998, by deciding to deny participation rights to any ruler who seized power by force. One can only admire this normative vision, and hope that the international community will provide the backing that it deserves.

The empirical state, however, is likely to fall well short of the praiseworthy standards of the African renaissance version. Here I may cite my conclusions in a recently published comparative study of state crisis in Africa and the former Soviet Union:

> Perhaps the most salient overall conclusion . . . is the protracted nature of the process of political and economic adaptation in course in both regions. . . . To be sure, there has been an indisputable departure from the old order, which in its entirety remains discredited. Whatever the disillusions of the present, no mere restoration of the *ancien régime* in either region is conceivable. Such outcomes are precluded both by the impossibility of securing domestic acceptance and by the incompatibility of these prior regimes with the evolving international normative order.
>
> However, there no longer appears to be a clearly defined end point in the processes of adaptation in course. Although the tug of liberal democracy and market economy is strong, as a referential emblem of 'normality' and as a global cachet of respectability, given the enormous problems of stateness that afflict these regions there is no longer a certainty that these represent the eventual destinations. Rather, the interaction between the pressures of globalization, the contradictory processes of state-rebuilding, and activated social forces may well be producing some new equilibrium — one that is influenced by norms of constitutionalism and capitalism but falls far short of the theorized end-point.[81]

*Beyond the post-colonial state?*

Whatever the divergent forms taken by African states, most have long ceased to resemble the colonial state. The time elapsed since African independence now begins to approximate the time period during which African subjects experienced a consolidated colonial regime. New historical experience reshapes social memory and begins to obscure the colonial past. A rapidly diminishing number of Africans have any direct recollection of the colonial era. J. F. Ade Ajayi frequently reminded us that the colonial period itself was but a moment in the larger sweep of African history.[82] The same

81. Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young, 'The effective state in postcolonial Africa and post-Soviet Eurasia: hopeless chimera or possible dream?' in Beissinger and Young (eds), *Beyond State Crisis*, pp. 466–7.
82. Cooper, *Africa since 1940*, p. 15.

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remark begins to apply to the post-colonial. Deeper continuities with pre-colonial social and political patterns, and novel experiences of coping with the realities of state decline in recent decades, combine to close a set of parentheses around the post-colonial as a defining condition. Indeed, Abdi and Ahmed Samatar situate this point at a normative level:

> Critical thinkers have certainly *written off* the African state in its *post-colonial form*. . . . However, . . . . their analytical animus is focused on the incapacity of the state in history *rather than the state per se*. In other words, African development has stalled because the state is of the wrong kind and, therefore, a re-thinking of its form seems to be of utmost necessity.[83]

Certainly, survivals of the colonial legacy are still apparent, especially in countries such as Cameroon, Kenya or Gabon with a large measure of continuity; there is no full erasure of the colonial and post-colonial experiences. However, these are progressively overwritten by new defining events, political practices and agendas. The tides of globalization wash over the continent, depositing sedimentary layers of social exposure and economic impact. The rise of significant diaspora populations from many countries produces novel forms of international linkage. As these many processes work their way into institutional forms, political patterns, and social memory, the explanatory power of the post-colonial label erodes. In short, the post-colonial moment appears to have passed.

83. Abdi Ismail Samatar and Ahmed I. Samatar (eds), *The African State: Reconsiderations* (Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 2002).

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