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Arbeitspapiere zur Internationalen Politik  
und Außenpolitik

John Emeka Akude

Historical Imperatives for the Emergence of  
Development and Democracy:  
A Perspective for the Analysis of Poor  
Governance Quality and State Collapse in  
Africa



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## **ABSTRACT**

Bad governance has often been identified as the explanans for the weakness and subsequent collapse of the African state. Derivatively, African rulers have been advised and admonished to govern their societies well. But these analyses, advices and admonitions have been undertaken with little recourse to material conditions that have influenced the emergence of good governance and economic development in modern societies with a view to addressing the issue of whether these conditions are available in Africa. The following analysis tries to identify these conditions which are political-economic in nature and posits that they are lacking in Africa. Employing the method of process tracing in a narrative manner, it draws attention to the historical development of the lack of such conditions within the structures instituted by colonialism and maintained through neo-colonial policies. The paper concludes by advising the donor community and international agencies that without the creation of those or similar imperatives, all efforts at socio-economic development and state capacity building may come to nought.

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# INHALT

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Definition of Terms.....	2
1.1.1	State Collapse.....	2
1.1.2	Historical Conditions.....	3
1.1.3	Political Economy.....	4
1.2	Current State of the Research.....	6
1.3	Statement of the Problem.....	8
1.4	Hypothesis.....	9
2	Historical Conditions for Poor governance and State Collapse.....	11
2.1	Historical Lessons.....	12
2.2	The Argument: the Deviation in the African Situation.....	14
3	Pre-colonial African Political Economy.....	18
3.1	Economic Production and Political Systems.....	19
3.2	Good Governance in Traditional Africa.....	20
3.3	The influence of Foreign Trade and Islam.....	20
4	The Colonial State.....	22
4.1	Economic Disarticulation and State Absolutism.....	23
4.2	Colonialism and the Creation of an Indigenous Bourgeoisie.....	26
5	The neo-colonial state.....	27
5.1	The fallacy of development concept.....	28
5.2	Background to Corruption.....	31
5.3	Suppression of Opposition and Military Dictatorship.....	34
5.4	Neo-colonialism and Economic Development Policies.....	36
5.4.1	Marketing Boards.....	36
5.4.2	Food Import, Capital flight and Accretion of Debts.....	38
5.4.3	Monocultural Economies and Development Aid.....	41
5.4.4	Import Substitution Policy.....	42
5.4.5	Indigenisation Policy.....	43
5.5	International Politics of Poor Governance in Africa.....	45
5.5.1	Cold War and Neglect of Good Governance in Africa.....	46
5.5.2	Revolutionary Pressures and African rulers' Reaction.....	47
5.6	The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), State Collapse and the Demand for "Good Governance".....	48
5.6.1	Effects of SAP and of the End of the Cold War.....	49
5.6.2	The Demand for Political Reforms.....	50
5.6.3	Internal Reform Pressures and Reversal in Western Reform Demands.....	52
6	Conclusion.....	57
7	Bibliography.....	59

# **Historical Imperatives for the Emergence of Development and Democracy: A Perspective for the Analysis of Poor Governance Quality and State Collapse in Africa<sup>1</sup>**

## **1 Introduction**

Investigations into the causes of state weakness and collapse in Africa have intensively occupied political scientists for a long time. Their findings have been sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory, highlighting such factors as the existence of several nations in one state, lack of civic culture, inequitable allocation of resources, unemployment, corruption, size and topography of the state, states insecurity dilemma, pre-colonial statehood, state security predicament, state-society standoff, state's weakness in penetrating society, availability of mineral resources, availability of small weapons, end of the Cold War, etc. It is outside the purview of this working paper to delve into these discussions. However, the basic assumption of this paper is that the low development of productive forces in Africa

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<sup>1</sup> The Author wishes to express his gratitude to several colleagues that helped in one way or the other in the realisation of this work: Prof. Dr. Thomas Jäger, Gabi Hesselbein, Andrea Szukala, Anna Daun, Katharina Holzfuss, Henrike Viehrig, Sabine Janatschek, Klaus Kuhnekath, Uli Glassmann, Alexander Höse, Kai Oppermann and Rasmus Beckmann.

which could not be improved by the peripheral integration of Africa in the international economy and the pursuit of unsuitable economic policies which failed to transform the economic structures of African states after independence is fundamental in the precipitation of state collapse in Africa.

## **1.1 Definition of Terms**

### **1.1.1 State Collapse**

“The modern state ... must be conceived as of as a human community that successfully claims for itself the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical violence within a given territory with determined boundaries – the notion of territory being one of its characteristic features” (Weber; Draghici 1989: 2). Measured against the Weberian ideal, state collapse is the most advanced, often terminal stage of state failure which in itself is an advanced stage of state weakness. Weak states have substantial problems in the provision of security for life and property within their territories, in the provision of welfare facilities for their citizens as well as in the institution of the rule of law, especially in the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. All these culminate in a crisis of legitimacy for the states. The gravitation from a state of weakness towards one of failure and collapse reflects the degree of the inability of the state to fulfil the above mentioned functions, a state of affairs that is symptomatic of institutional debility. Consequently, states could therefore be classified as weak, failing, failed or collapsed. When a state collapses, the government of the day practically ceases to function; private agents of violence move in to occupy the vacuum created by the absence of state governance. Disorder and often internal war accompany this phenomenon as private agents of violence struggle among themselves or with the remnants of the state’s army to control the state’s territory or a part thereof.

My conception of this phenomenon therefore assumes a continuum of state weakness that progresses through failing, failed and finally reaches the stage of collapse if unchecked. Accordingly, “nation-states fail when they are consumed by

internal violence and cease delivering positive political goods to their inhabitants. Their governments loose credibility, and the continuing nature of the nation-state itself becomes questionable and illegitimate in the minds and hearts of its citizens” (Rotberg 2004: 1). On the other hand, collapse depicts “a situation where the structure, authority (legitimate power), law and political order have fallen apart and must be reconstituted in some form, old or new. It is not necessarily anarchy (...) It is the collapse of old orders, notably the state, that brings about the retreat to ethnic nationalism as the residual, viable identity. Indeed, ...when the state collapses, order and power (but not necessarily legitimacy) fall down to local groups or are up for grabs.(...) For a period, the state itself, as a legitimate, functioning order is gone” (Zartman 1995: 1). What we deduce from these definitions is that the most critical characteristic of a collapsed state is the loss of monopoly over the instruments of violence and of the political space. Because order and power are up for grabs, internal wars (over the control of political order for purposes of capital accumulation) are regular concomitants of state collapse. Conceptually, civil wars serve as confirmations of the incidences of collapse beyond reasonable doubts.

### **1.1.2 Historical Conditions**

By historical conditions I refer to conditions that are always recurrent in the history of development of strong modern states<sup>2</sup>. These conditions appear as imperatives that states must meet in order to guarantee their existence. I do not assume that states deliberately wish to govern their citizens well, but rather, that they implement those policies they have to in order to survive. In the pursuit of survival strategies, states strengthen their administrative structures and implement policies that favour societies, especially resource bearing groups on which the states depend for the extraction of badly needed revenues. Necessarily therefore, these conditions are political-economic in nature which means that the method of this study has to

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<sup>2</sup> By modern state, I refer to the modern European states and all other states, that are modelled after the modern European; especially those instituted in the process of colonialism.

emphasise the interplay of political and economic factors in the emergence of strong statehood and even socio-economic development.

### **1.1.3 Political Economy**

Political economy is a method of social scientific inquiry that “gives primacy to material conditions, especially economic factors, in the explanation of social life” (Ake 1981: 1). It considers the economic needs of man as most fundamental and its pursuit as most determinant in shaping his behaviour. Stressing this importance further, Ake maintains that “it is true that man does not live by bread alone. But it is a more fundamental truth that man cannot live without bread” (ibid). Understanding the actions of man should therefore start with a study of his system of pursuing bread. This is equally applicable to the study of societies. Once the economic system of a society is grasped, it becomes easier to understand its political, legal and ideological systems. The reason for this is that “the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general” (Marx and Engels 1969: 503). A society’s material production process brings its members into production relations and class positions depending on the factors they contribute to the production process. In a capitalist system (“the modern world economy is a capitalist world economy” (Wallerstein 1980: 2), those who contribute capital normally occupy the upper positions and always seek to maintain the status quo. Those who contribute labour normally occupy the lower ranks and may seek to alter the status quo. However, this is only true of a relatively early phase of capitalism.

The advent of Fordism in the Western World (which was facilitated by the relocation of the unbridled capitalist exploitation to the post-colonial societies) coupled with capitalist concessions in the fight against Communism has contributed to weakening the workers consciousness of the contradictions inherent in the relationship between the capitalist and the worker. The expansion and internationalisation of capital spread this form of social stratification (albeit with deviations) to hitherto unaffected societies, and produced states which could be



respectively seeded: centre and periphery states depending on their positions in the internationalised division of labour engendered by imperialism. State power, international trade, investments and development aid serve as instruments for the maintenance of this system, leading to a convergence of interests among the upper classes of the centre and periphery states; and those of the lower classes as well. However, this convergence of interests is not always consciously and deliberately arranged and often embodies contradictions. As an area of academic endeavour, political economy explores the interrelationship between economic and political organisations, institutions, policies and outcomes. In the ensuing analysis of state collapse in Africa, I will try to show that lack of (basically economic) imperatives to good governance considerably exacerbated state weakness by deepening underdevelopment. This process precipitated the collapse of some African states.

This method stresses not only the primacy of material conditions but the dynamic nature of social reality as well. Social reality is not static but consists of contradictions which is diffused throughout every part of social life and provide it with movement and dynamism. Every contradiction consists of a thesis and an anti-thesis which must be resolved before society could make progress. Progress is made when they (thesis and anti-thesis) clash and produce a synthesis, which in itself embodies contradictions that must be resolved. This is a persistent historical process which major contradiction is economic. "The method encourages us to think of the world in terms of continuity and relatedness and with a keen awareness that this continuity is essentially very complex and also problematic" (Ake 1980: 3). History thus, becomes a very important aspect of this method; not history per se, but the history of material production which is the basis of all social dialectics. This should not be misconstrued to indicate a derogation of the importance of the superstructure in shaping social reality, but just to adumbrate that the fountain of the dynamic is economic. With particular reference to the analysis of postcolonial African states, more emphasis should be placed on the political because as scholars have pointed out, African socio-economic formations demonstrate the domination of the political

(Cornwell 1999, Leftwich 2000). Another distinctive feature of the type of political economy is the inter-relatedness of different aspects of society. The base is intertwined with the superstructure. Although the base provides the decisive element in this relationship, it is at the level of the superstructure that man becomes aware of the contradictions and tries to resolve them.

## **1.2 Current State of the Research**

One deduction that could be made from the multifarious studies of the causes of state collapse in Africa is that bad governance (sometimes referred to as bad performance) is fundamental in explaining this phenomenon (World Bank 1989, Brown 1993, Kaplan 1994, Zartman 1995, Clapham 2000, Tetzlaff 2000, Rotberg 2004, Krasner 2004, Grant and Taylor 2004, SEF 2005 etc). This paper shares this view, but wishes however, to offer a critical analysis of the pre-conditions, development and trajectory of the phenomenon of bad governance. This is necessary because the lack of such an analysis has led to a situation whereby the local and international agents and beneficiaries of bad governance are being entrusted with the duty of promoting good governance. Furthermore, such an analysis is necessary if we are to overcome the frustrations of expecting the good governance that may never come under prevailing circumstances.

Despite the controversy surrounding the definition of good governance,<sup>3</sup> it is contemplated here, leaning on the World Bank, as the “manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development” (World Bank 1992: 3). This encompasses three distinguishable elements viz; the form of political regime (parliamentary or presidential, military or civilian and authoritarian or democratic), the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development and finally, the capacity of governments to design, formulate and

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3 For example, that it is too normative and cannot be operationalised (Adejumobi and Bujra 2002); or that it is an expression of Western dominance which reproduces undemocratic global order (Abrahamsen 2000).

implement policies and discharge functions. After reviewing the contrasting socio-cultural basis of political rules and institutions among different societies, the bank accepted that the superimposition of western political norms on the African states may have contributed to hampering the functioning of the modern African states. Furthermore, she identified the following symptoms of poor governance:

- Failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private, hence a tendency to divert public resources for private gain
- Failure to establish a predictable framework of law and government behaviour conducive to development or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws
- Excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirements, and so forth, which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking
- Priorities inconsistent with development, resulting in a misallocation of resources
- Excessively narrowly based or non-transparent decision making (ibid: 9).

The perseverance of these symptoms “creates an environment that is hostile to development” (ibid). Other symptoms of poor governance include corruption, lack of public accountability, capture of public service by the bourgeoisie, nepotism, ineffective bureaucracy, high concentration of political power and colonial inheritance; maintaining that these problems are particularly damaging to the “corrective intervention” role of government (p. 10). Consequently, the authority of the governments over their peoples progressively erodes: the ruled increasingly disobey the rulers who, in turn, feeling insecure, resort to coercion.<sup>4</sup> There are glaring semblances between these symptoms and those of state failure on one hand, and relationship between these symptoms, lack of democracy and perseverance of underdevelopment, on the other. The lesson from the World Bank (perhaps inadvertent), is that poor governance exacerbated underdevelopment and thereby

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<sup>4</sup> The context under which this action-reaction spiral leads to state failure is elaborately discussed in Holsti, Kalevi (1995), *War, the State and the State of War*, Cambridge Univ. Press; and Job, Brian L. (ed.) (1992), *The Insecurity Dilemma: national security of the Third World States*, Lynne Rienner, London and Boulder, Colorado.

led to state collapse. A reverse argument then is that good governance correlates positively with development and strengthens the state. Deductively, arguments about the possibility of simultaneously pursuing development and democracy become superfluous. The bank indicated the necessity for the citizens to demand good governance but realises that lack of enhanced literacy, education and employment militates against the capability for such a demand. In order to bring about good governance, the bank advises the governments to be responsive to those demands (p.11). However, critical to my analysis here is the fact that the bank equates good governance with development and democracy. And this is correctly so, at least, in the current epoch. Admittedly, designing the appropriate development plans and pursuing them sincerely and wholeheartedly is no guarantee for success, but it is a *sine qua non* for successful development. This is why the analysis of the bank has to be taken seriously.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

What the bank fails to show is whether good governance and democracy have ever been instituted by governments heeding either the advice of external institutions, or just being benevolent. The lessons of history tell us otherwise; namely, that economic and political imperatives have been decisive factors in this process. The purpose of our scientific inquiry therefore, is to find out why and how power could be exercised in such a way that deepens underdevelopment by blocking the emergence of indigenous resource bearing groups, precludes democratic participation, attenuates the legitimacy of the regime and progressively that of the state and possibly leads to its collapse. Put otherwise, what are the material conditions that influenced the emergence and preponderance of bad governance that led to the collapse of African states? To answer this question, I take a critical look at the history of the modern state and the emergence of modern democracy with a view to finding out what material conditions influenced them. I therefore rephrase the question to reflect a higher level of abstraction thus: what are the

material preconditions for the emergence of strong statehood and democracy? Are these conditions given in Africa?

## 1.4 Hypothesis

The use of state power for capital accumulation which was occasioned by the domination of African economies through foreign firms diverted attention of state leaders from good governance and led to the making of economic policies that are urban (as against rural) and foreign oriented and therefore inappropriate for Africa's economic development. These policies blocked the development of indigenous capitalism and simultaneously that of the imperatives of good governance, sidelined the needs of the masses, promoted divisive against integrative politics and seriously undermined the institution of the state. The basis of state in the society therefore remained very ephemeral and was maintained by coercion, foreign support and the exploitation of super power politics by African rulers. The end of the Cold War and the demise of such politics led to the withdrawal of the super power support, exposing the weakness of the states which was exploited by the relegated members of the bourgeoisie to attack the states. The states, being too weak to defend themselves, collapsed.

Political economy analyses are partly premised on the complex nature of social reality which often becomes more complicated if the historical development of the phenomenon is taken into consideration. This makes the process of isolating variables and determining their interrelationships very difficult especially in cases of multiple causal trajectories<sup>5</sup>. It should appear (up till now) that bad governance is the independent variable which explains the dependent variable of state collapse. But reality is neither that clear nor is it that simple; and theoretical explanations should be as close to reality as methodologically possible. The process leading up to state collapse in Africa is a very long one and since the basis for bad governance was

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<sup>5</sup> This has been described as "equifinality". See George, Alexander L./Bennett, Andrew (2005), *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 10.

laid in the process of establishing the state, it could not possibly be the final and independent variable. Rather, and logically too, the lack of the preconditions for the emergence of good governance (which is precluded by the nature of the state) becomes the independent variable. Experiences of history make such a variable necessary: states have been known to “govern well” if the material conditions make bad governance unfavourable. One could therefore posit the following hypothesis: the institution of democracy and good governance has been undertaken by governments under conditions of compulsion; if there is no compulsion, there will be no good governance. Compulsion could be broken down into four components which may not be sufficient but are absolutely necessary:

- The necessity of the state to sustain itself through taxation
- The exigency of the state to maintain internal stability in order to ward off external aggressors
- The ability of the state to derive revenue from elastic bases
- The separation of economic from political power.

In all these points, one sees the interplay of political and economic factors necessary for state’s independent survival. It was not imperative for African rulers to encourage indigenous capitalism because the international state system into which they emerged bankrolled their administrations through development aid, international trade on articles controlled by the state and foreign investment in extraction industry and thereby obliterating the importance of internal sources of revenue. Excessive focus on the economic gains that accrued from relations to exogenous forces (with special reference to raw material extraction) has devastating consequences for the emergence of the most important imperative of good governance in a modern economy: the derivation of revenue from elastic bases. Elastic bases could be positively motivated through the provision of infrastructure, security, investment in qualitative education, economic policies that favour the accumulation of capital by indigenous forces, transparency in government’s management of state revenues which facilitates the confidence of society’s resource

bearing groups in government, forward and backward linkages of production sectors, etc.

The concentration on drawing revenues from natural resources which are inelastic does not promote the development of the imperatives of good governance. In fact, it could have the opposite effect whereby the state cordons off the area rich in mineral deposits, even secures it with state security apparatus and uses the extracted resources to enrich top officials while simultaneously neglecting the whole society (Reno 2000). The point here is that the quality of governance does not have any impact on the amount of extractable revenues. And because the rulers and their cronies control these natural resources which constitute the lion shares of overall state revenues, there is no separation between the wielders of economic and political power. The African postcolonial state system plays a role in this too. It is a state system that is characterised by cooperation and not confrontation (Herbst 2000). African leaders accepted the colonial boundaries and enshrined the inviolability of the boundaries in the first Charter of the Organization of African Unity. Thus, there was no need to spread effective administrative structures all over their territories in order to ward off external aggression. The appearance of states remains restricted to cities, often only in capital cities and disappears as one travels inland.

## **2 Historical Conditions for Poor governance and State Collapse**

The fountain of bad governance in modern African states is the lack of imperatives for good governance and democracy which could be traced back to the foreign domination of African economies. Economic bases have always been critical in the establishment of durable states. This is the deduction from the history of the development and maturity of modern states mainly in Europe, but also in Asia and the United States of America.

## **2.1 Historical Lessons**

Recalling the historical development of European states, Charles Tilly notes that war and its preparation played a significant role in the emergence of robust administrative and durable state structures. Preparation for war and deployment of coercive means in war saddled warriors with two dilemmas which could best be resolved by regular administration of lands, goods and people in order to maintain the subjugation of conquered people, on the one hand, and the erection of an infrastructure of taxation, supply and administration in order to ensure continuity, on the other (Tilly 1992: 20). War involved warriors in extraction, a situation for which they have to provide internal peace and stability.

Instability invites external invasion and states that could not successfully resist such invasions simply perish (Jackson 1990). So, the necessity of survival compelled modern European states to maintain internal stability through responsive governance. This imperative of state survival was equally significant for the emergence of democracy in modern Europe. In this case also, the role of the economy was critical. Monarchs were first compelled to share power with parliaments because they needed to derive revenue from bases that are elastic, i.e. revenue bases that grow if positively motivated and vice versa. Accordingly, “the more elastic the revenue base, the greater the degree to which the sovereign had to give control over public policy to those whose money he sought to appropriate for public purposes” (Bates 1999: 85). It has been noted in this context that parliaments first appeared in England as the Monarch was compelled to bargain with citizens because he sought to tax “movable property” (Mitchell 1951: 6). Devolution of power to relatively subordinate groups in society (democratic process) contributes enormously to state strength for the simple fact that the monarch (or governments of sovereign states in today’s parlance) does not necessarily have to invoke coercive methods in the use of state power due to the support the government enjoys among critical groups in society. The level of integration between governments and societies in such situations are relatively much higher.



Another factor that influenced the emergence of democracy in the Western world was the separation of political power from private wealth. In Western Europe for example, the democratic revolutions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century divested the monarchies of their political power while leaving them with considerable economic power. The experience of the USA in this regard was also similar. Bates notes that the Anglo-Americans were previously in control of economic and political power but as time went on, the wealthy moved from the White House to the boardroom, leaving political power to the leaders of the immigrant communities (1999: 84). The separation of political and economic power is necessary because it elicits a symbiotic relationship between these two most powerful groups in society that make for good governance: the wielders of political power depend on the wielders of economic power in order to finance war and public administration while the wielders of economic power depend on the wielders of political power for peace and stability and functioning infrastructure. Critical in this relationship is that these groups are endogenous. There are no external sources that prop up the state governments when they are incapable of sourcing their revenue bases internally.

The import of the above analytical scheme is that a state system that is based on self-preservation and self sustenance is necessarily a favourable precondition for state strength which is primarily predicated on economic well-being (development) and secondarily, on democracy and good governance. The European and American experiences are equally analogous to the Asian situation. The economic successes of the East Asian Tigers could not be adequately explained outside the purview of the strength and imperial ambitions of China and Japan which considerably shape the East Asian state system. Being situated between two regional super powers with imperial ambitions, the message for these states is clear: they have to get strong or risk losing their sovereignty; and state strength being predicated on economic power means that these states must strengthen themselves economically in order to maintain their sovereignty. The sovereignty of Taiwan and Hong Kong remains a thorny issue in international affairs. And just about sixty years ago, Korea was a

Japanese colony. This analytical scheme could also be employed to explain the seriousness and the partial success in development efforts in India. The tension between India and Pakistan on the one side, and India and China on the other, makes it mandatory for the ruling classes in these states to seriously pursue economic development on which political strength and therefore security could be based. That India has been relatively more successful than in Pakistan in this endeavour had to do with other factors that are irrelevant in this discussion.

## **2.2 The Argument: the Deviation in the African Situation<sup>6</sup>**

In Africa, the situation was markedly different. The commanding heights of the economies of modern African states were established by European colonisers and are still under their control with the consequence that the bourgeois elements that took over political power during independence lacked economic base. This economic condition induces this African bourgeoisie to exploit state power in the accumulation of capital in order to substantiate their meagre economic bases.<sup>7</sup> One of the major consequences of this was that the struggle for and the maintenance of political power became dominant in the political affairs of most African states, thereby totally undermining the goals and intentions of good governance. In this regard, one scholar notes, “the struggle for power was so absolute that everything else, including development, was marginalised” (Ake 1996: 7).

The attentions of the politicians were so much concentrated on the acquisition of power for purposes of personal enrichment that very few political actions were undertaken to develop and diversify the economy and thereby create the opportunity for the emergence of an indigenous productive group that could

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6 By deviation, I don't mean to suggest that African must have followed the direction of Europe or Asia, just to show that it presents a different pattern.

7 My preference of the term 'bourgeoisie' for the leading political stratum in Africa is based on the clarifications delivered by Ekeh. It connotes the newness of a privileged class which may wield much power, but have little authority, which may have a lot of economic influence but enjoy little political acceptance. It is not a middle class because it lacks value linkages with other layers of society and does not occupy a middle position because there is no class above it. It is equally not an elite because it lacks autonomy in the formation of its values in its decision making process. It is not independent of external forces. See Ekeh, P.P. (1975), p. 93-94.

compel the government to govern well; thus strengthening the state by binding the citizens (who stand to gain as a result of responsive governance) to the nation state project. Rather, ethnicity and clientilism were used to secure the loyalty of a relatively minute part of the population to individual politicians at the expense of the state project. The state was foreign imposed, kept alive by foreign powers and international institutions (through foreign trade, foreign investments and development aid) and received its authority through foreign recognition. African leaders became willing marionettes of the international political and economic elites (from the West and the East) and were content with the private economic gains and political recognition that flowed from such relationships at the expense of Africa's economic and political development.

While the majority of the masses became increasingly alienated from the state project as a result of deepening economic hardship but could not fight for their rights due to wide-spread illiteracy, the bourgeoisie exploited the situation to further enrich themselves and simultaneously placated and deceived the masses with clientilism and politicised ethnicity. The inability of the governments to diversify the economy coupled with the neglect of the needs of the masses enabled a concept of economic development that sought to improve the cities through the provision of social infrastructure and amenities at the expense of the rural areas where the majority of the citizens resides. Thus, the divorce between the rural and urban economies was deepened. This unproductive policy precipitated a series of economic and political contradictions which culminated in the failure and collapse of several African states.

Because the attentions of the political leaders were overwhelmingly concentrated on the acquisition of power for primitive accumulation, the designing of development plans was abandoned to foreign actors. These plans were inappropriate to restructuring the economic bases of most African states and possibly engender the imperatives of good governance. The initial phase of the introduction of the policy of import substitution was greeted with a statistical

record of nominal economic growth in a few countries, but growth is not always coterminous with development. This policy was even counter development because the high foreign inputs in production led to price increase and even inflation. "Development means a capacity for self-sustaining growth. It means that the economy must register advances which in turn will promote further progress" (Rodney 1982: 105).

Import substitution was conceived to save foreign exchange which was being expended in the importation of finished goods and thereby achieve a balance of payment surplus. Considered from this perspective, it was more geared towards book-keeping than development. Its further inadequacy for development lies in the fact that it was directed towards substituting the imported goods which were mainly demanded in the cities. The divorce between the economic enclaves (cities) and the rural areas continued and the attachment of African economies to those of colonial metropolises was deepened. This attachment which was instituted during the pre-colonial trade with Europe marked the beginning of underdevelopment in Africa. Since development indicates improvement in the ways of doing things (especially the system of material production for the satisfaction of the immediate needs of the society), technology becomes an essential part of it. Development must therefore embody improvement in technology.

It has been noted that in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, European technology was not necessarily superior to that of other parts of the world (ibid: 103). European advantage was restricted to shipping and gun manufacturing. This is borne out by the fact that the European articles of trade in Africa at this time (with special reference to clothing materials) consisted mainly of goods that were produced either in Asia or in other parts of Africa. "Yet, by the time Africa entered the colonial era, it was concentrating almost entirely on the export of raw materials to Europe and the import of manufactured cotton cloth. This remarkable reversal is tied to technological advance in Europe and to the stagnation of technology in Africa owing to the very trade with Europe" (103-104). Import substitution was therefore

counter-productive to the extent that it did not contribute to improving the system of material production in Africa generally; and to the extent that it deepened the import of superior goods into Africa (be it technological) and equally enhanced the divorce between the rural and urban economies (to the detriment of the rural areas), tying Africa further to the metropolises.

For development efforts to succeed in Africa, the majority of her population would be fully integrated in the process of production in which mainly local instruments of production are applied in the production of locally needed goods. This process would lead to the emergence of a local market that could absorb the goods produced and would also release the energy of the people for innovative production, leading to diversification of the economic base. Foreign technology and foreign trade could play roles here, but they don't necessarily have to be dominant roles and must be purposefully applied. Through such a strategy, a technology that is centred on the abilities of the masses with a propensity for improving these abilities - endogenous technology – could evolve. This process would denationalise the motor of development, replacing it with the creative energies of the people (private sector), a process which would, in turn, favour the emergence of a local productive group which earns its subsistence outside the purview of state power. In this way, the imperatives to good governance and democracy would be created because it would be in the interest of this productive group (on whose tax the state depends for its subsistence) to push the government in this direction. And because of the dependence of the government on the revenues from this indigenous resource bearing group, it would have had no alternative than to acquiesce by entering into a bargain with this group or their political representatives.

Denationalising the impetus to development which would have included the relinquishing of control over raw materials to the private sector would contribute to an impetus for good governance because the government would have been wholly dependent on tax from such sources. Critical to this idea of good governance is the fashioning out of economic policy frameworks that contribute to forward and

backward linkages in the economy, thus, leading to an overall improvement in the way of doing things (development). The abandonment of this path to development and the implementation of a policy approach that left the extraction of raw materials in the hands of the state and transferred the responsibility for development planning and sources of regime authority to foreign forces triggered off a process of state failure that culminated in state collapse as these foreign forces no longer felt the imperatives of sustaining the system and had to considerably reduce their support. To appreciate the changes brought about by colonialism and the impact they made on the emergence of bad governance, we take a look at pre-colonial Africa.

### **3 Pre-colonial African Political Economy**

It is normal in studies of this nature to present a detailed discussion of the relationship between the base and the superstructure of African societies. Once again, such an endeavour is unwieldy for the scope of this paper. However, attempts will be made here to show that there existed elements of imperatives of good governance often reflecting the extent to which the societies have discovered the laws of science, or not. Be that as it may, it suffices to say that in traditional Africa as elsewhere, political structures have come to rest on economic system and “things such as agricultural practices, industry, trade, money and political structures were inseparable – each interacting with the other” (Rodney op. cit. 43).

The pre-imperial African economic base (up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century) was primarily agrarian, pursued with simple implements and supported by hunting activities and the levels of development among several societies were necessarily uneven. Some socio-economic formations represented a hunting band while some others were symptomatic of primitive communalism and yet, some others were feudal. And there existed some eclectic forms between them. The instruments of production were highly underdeveloped. Hence, production was low and basically

geared towards the guarantee of subsistence as against commoditisation. Barter was the exchange system when the volume of trade was low, but as trade volume increased, other forms of exchange were introduced (ibid), although it has to be stressed that exchange was not the dominant purpose of production. Nevertheless, "Africa was a continent of innumerable trade routes" as the societies come to satisfy a few of their needs through trade (ibid.). In limited cases, gold, iron, copper, textile products and cowries constituted means of exchange. As early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century, there were instances of iron-mongering which concentrated mainly on the production of simple farming and hunting implements, for example, among the Ibos of Nigeria.

### **3.1 Economic Production and Political Systems**

Low level of production instruments initially precluded the production of surplus in most of Africa. Hence, some of the societies were acephalous because there were hardly class distinctions as almost everybody was involved in the same economic activities. As such, no class could rise above the others to claim political dominance until the increase in production has led to division of labour. Even after this process, some societies retained the segmentary system because it made for political stability. The Ibos of Nigeria and the Kikuyus of Kenya count among the most prominent examples in this case. This increase in pre-imperialist production was favoured by the introduction of iron to production process which, in turn, led to increase in social stratification and the emergence and consolidation of states. "The introduction of iron...gave economic and military strength to those who could make and acquire it. (...). Iron workers were particularly favoured in some African states in which they became the ruling groups or were very close to the top hierarchy" (ibid: 44). In some societies, the hunter class provided the initial ruling classes partly because of their mastery of the use of instruments of violence which made them leaders in warfare, and partly because of the magic powers they were believed to possess. In a few others, agrarian surplus favoured by vintage climatic conditions

influenced the emergence of the earliest ruling classes, for example, the Mandinga and the Hausas in West Africa. Thus, “social stratification went hand in hand with the rise of the state” (ibid: 46).

### **3.2 Good Governance in Traditional Africa**

In the context of these developments, political institutions were imbued with systems of control that guarded against the abuse of political power and thus, guaranteed good governance. For instance, the *Asanteman* Council of the old Asante State in modern day Ghana checked and balanced the *Asantehene* (King) to avoid the abuse of power, with powers to force him to abdicate his throne on proven cases of abuse of office. In the old Yoruba kingdom of modern day Nigeria, this duty was fulfilled by the *Oyomesi* which was empowered to force the Monarch – the *Ooni of Ife* - to commit suicide if he misuses his powers. In the segmentary political systems, political decision making was mainly ad hoc, decentralised; and every able-bodied male adult took part in it. Thus, in Africa, village democracy and control over executive power ensured a modicum of good governance which varied among several societies.

### **3.3 The influence of Foreign Trade and Islam**

Later on, as international trade penetrated Africa, firstly through Asia (notably China and the Arab countries); the people that had the opportunity of monopolising the trans-Saharan and coastal trade routes formed the nucleus of the emergent ruling classes. The reason for this is not unconnected with the low level of productive instruments in Africa which made foreign goods superior to and more expensive than African goods and thus became status symbols. Struggles for the control of these trade routes led to wars, the prosecution of which demanded a mobilisation of the societies. Thus, the establishment of stately structures was undertaken to enable this prosecution. Some of these states expanded through trade and conquest to become imperial states dominating other state-like formations that



maintained a modicum of their political independence. The dominated (vassal) states sustained their political existence through paying taxes and tributes to the imperial states. The old Ghana Empire that flourished between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries was the earliest of such states in West Africa. It was later to be replaced by Mali Empire that reached its apogee between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and Songhai Empire which reached its glorious peak between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Rodney notes that these states have so often been called trading states that it is almost forgotten that the principal activity of the population was agriculture (Rodney op. cit: 56). The point is that trade, being the main occupation of the ruling class, gave the states their identities. Here again, one notices a strong cooperation between state leaders and resource-bearing groups.

Islamic religion was one of the vehicles of conquest and determined the nature of state and system of administration. In such states therefore, leadership position in the Islamic religion qualified one for membership of the ruling class. Othman Dan Fodio and the Jihads that led to the establishment of the Hausa-Fulani states in Northern-Nigeria and parts of the Yoruba Kingdom in the 18<sup>th</sup> century readily come to mind. This was the process of development of feudal relations in Africa. In all feudal societies, religion has been tied with politics (Rodney 1982). In all traditional African societies, religion played a stabilising role; it sought to weaken social antagonisms using the fear of the beyond as an instrument and thereby guaranteeing responsible governance. I have, thus far, been attempting to show that Africa was making endogenous developmental progress and that good governance was an issue till imperialism came and put a cog in the wheel of African socio-economic advancement by forcibly tying African economies to those of the European metropolises.

## 4 The Colonial State

The basis for the lack of the imperative of good governance as well as the non-identification of Africans with the state in Africa was laid by colonialism. The modern African state was instituted by European conquerors in the course of imperialism and colonialism. This was necessary in order to transform African economies in a way to suit the aims of Imperialism which mainly had to do with the resolution of the capitalist contradictions of raw material scarcity, over-production and under-consumption in Europe (Ake 1980). So, European firms needed new sources of raw materials and new markets. Although there is an academic controversy surrounding the concept of imperialism, it has more to do with its definition and aims but not its effects on the dominated societies. For example, it has been seen as signifying both a nationalist ideology devoted to extending the domination of a particular nation's state, and also as a policy determined by ceaseless rivalry among the leading nations of the international system of states (Friedjung 1919-22); and it was equally a necessity for every world power or those aspiring to it (Max Weber 1894); just as it represents a resurgence of the atavistic tendency in man (Schumpeter 1918).

John Hobson was the first to give imperialism a concise economic explanation, maintaining that it was a product of the nature of capitalism practised by Britain (which he saw as reflecting the plutocratic nature of British society) because it denies the lower classes their rightful share of the national product; thus leading to oversaving and underconsumption, maintaining that it is not immanent to capitalism as the British government at the time tried to convince its citizens. Lenin's theory of imperialism reflects that of Hobson in that it saw a relationship between capitalist expansion, oversaving and imperialism. For him, it was the highest stage of capitalism which was marked by the concentration of capital and production in a few hands and thereby creating monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life, the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, the export

of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities, the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves and finally the territorial division of the world among biggest capitalist powers (Lenin 1964: 266). Still getting closer to my position, Rodney (1982) sees modern imperialism as “a phase of capitalist development in which Western European capitalist countries, the U.S.A., and Japan established political, economic, military and cultural hegemony over other parts of the world which were initially at a lower level and therefore could not resist domination” (p. 12). Despite this slight controversy, the fact that it is an off-shoot of capitalism and that it dominates other lands and peoples is beyond controversy. In this regard, Mamdani argues that the overwhelming motivation for European imperialism in Africa was economic (1996: 37). This domination has a lot of effects on the dominated and that is the hub of the discussion here.

#### **4.1 Economic Disarticulation and State Absolutism**

It is beyond controversy that there were the contradictions of over-production, under-consumption, over-saving and scarcity of raw materials in the leading capitalist nations of Europe at the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which were closely followed by an alteration of the modalities of European relations with Africa: European firms sought to politically dominate African societies.<sup>8</sup> For these purposes, the nature and direction of African economies was radically and fundamentally altered. In order to solve the afore-mentioned contradictions of overproduction and scarcity of raw materials which arose within the development and advancement of capitalism in Europe, an enclave economy was created (Ake 1980: 44, with specific reference to Nigeria; Onimode 1981: 82). This enclave economy was separated from the local economies and attached to the metropolitan

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<sup>8</sup> There is only a slight difference between imperialism and colonialism. They both had to do with economic and political domination. The difference lies in the fact that where the firms were the dominators under imperialism, under colonialism it was the state itself. The closeness of the phenomena led Claude Ake to speak of “colonising imperialism”, (Ake 1980: 20).

economies of the imperial European nations, supplying Europe with badly needed raw materials and market. A series of political and economic policies became necessary in order to initiate this enclave economy: agricultural production and nutritional habits of the societies were transformed; modern system of transportation was introduced. Added to the above are colonial legislations deliberately aimed at killing burgeoning African manufacturing activities, thus leaving the economic turf for European monopoly (Rodney 1982, Ake 1980, Nnoli, 1981). This led to the lack of a critical mass of African entrepreneurs, a state of affairs that had consequences for the lack of the imperatives of good governance.

The production of agricultural goods that were needed by European firms and the consumption of finished goods produced in Europe were promoted. Railways, wharfs and roads were constructed in order to facilitate the export of raw materials and the import of industrial goods. The colonial state thus decided what was produced and for what purposes. Forced labour, taxation and imprisonment were introduced and the economy monetised.<sup>9</sup> Africans were thus forced to abandon their villages (the bases of their existence) either to discharge the labour imposed on them or to seek jobs in the European enclaves in order to be able to pay taxes, mandatory for all adult male (acceptable only in European currencies), the failure of which is punishable with hard labour and imprisonment. A security apparatus (army and police) was established to control the societies in a very brutal manner.<sup>10</sup> The colonial system of social control was therefore based on coercion as against social acceptance. Notes Claude Ake, "two features of state power, its absolutism and its arbitrariness, framed colonial politics" (1996: 5). In support of the above assertion, it has been remarked that "domination – pervasive, systematic, comprehensive characterised all aspects of the 'colonial situation'" (Young and Turner 1985: 24); and that "indeed, the central feature of colonial rule was violence" (Herbst 2000: 90).

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9 Monetisation of the economy refers to the pervasiveness of money as the sole means of exchange.

10 Flogging in the public for political misdemeanour or lack of understanding for new rules and regulations was normal. It was meant to punish and to dehumanise.

With these structures in place, the establishment of the colonial state was completed. It was a state which activities were dedicated to the goals of colonial capital in which the needs, political right and interests of the local population played little role. Problem solving or good governance was not part of the intentions of the state. The increasingly absolute character of the state coupled with its alien imposition contributed to alienating the majority of Africans from the state project. They averted the state and tried to reduce their contacts with it to the barest minimum: thus strengthening the phenomenon of *“exit from the state”*; a phenomenon which Jeffrey Herbst maintains, existed since precolonial times (ibid).

The colonial state not only blocked the possibilities of an indigenous capitalism in Africa, it also made legislations and implemented policies that discouraged the citizens from it. Urban cities, by far the only places where the state was visible, developed in and around the economic enclaves in the course of migrations occasioned by forced labour and taxations. This process led to the destabilisation of the family structures in so far as it forced able bodied young men to leave their families and seek jobs in the cities and so deepened the non-identification of the masses with the state. Because the colonial powers were less concerned with the welfare of the people, they willingly tolerated the emergence of artificial scarcity in the areas of provision of meaningful jobs, public goods and infrastructural amenities in these cities<sup>11</sup>, a situation that favoured the emergence of ethnic associations which had to take care of the new arrivals from their ethnic homelands (Nnoli 1978).<sup>12</sup> Ethnic affiliations became the bases of the competitions for integration in the new colonial economy and determined the chances of an unemployed or a new arrival to find employment or to gain ground in the new cities. Ethnic affiliations therefore gained more political significance, a prelude to its politicisation. In this nascent colonial economy, Africans were displaced as

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11 Europeans were not affected by these developments because they lived in European Reserved Areas which were furnished with the best of infrastructures.

12 The colonial policy of artificial border demarcations led to inclusion of several ethnic groups in one state and the division of one ethnic group into two or more states. This policy laid the basis for the politicisation of ethnicity.

Europeans controlled all sectors. All these contributed to creating the lack of imperatives for good governance by blocking the emergence of an indigenous private sector; and induced the masses of African societies to develop an attitude to the modern African state that could as best be described as askant.

## **4.2 Colonialism and the Creation of an Indigenous Bourgeoisie**

At this time of its creation, the colonial state lacked manpower, especially in administration and education. Schools and later institutions of higher learning were established to ameliorate this problem. However, these educational opportunities were sparsely distributed and relatively very expensive. Thus, not many in the society could avail themselves of it. Availability of western education led to the emergence of an educated bourgeois class which imbibed and internalised colonial ideologies of domination (Ekeh 1975). Also, basic changes in the economy led to further occupational stratification especially in trade and in the service industry. The origin and advancement of these groups in the colonial system made their interests in the maintenance of the system almost inevitable. At this stage, the peripheral integration of African states to international capital has been completed with all sectors of the economy facilitating in one way or the other, the provision of European firms with raw materials and market for their finished goods. Thus, the orientation of the economy is outward, not inward. Thus far, the resolution of the contradiction in the field of education created an educated bourgeoisie that shared colonial interests. The preservation of these interests meant further blockade of the formation of a national capitalist class.

Driven by the aspirations of taking over the privileged positions of the Europeans, this new bourgeoisie became the avant-garde of the decolonisation struggles. The concept of nationalism was copied from Europe without reflections and became the basis of mobilisation of people against colonialism. At the same time, this concept merely played an ideological role of justifying the struggle

because, beyond this façade hid the actual denominator of political mobilisation: ethnicity. Be that as it may, struggle for independence was not decisive in the granting of political independence. Rather, developments in the international political system at the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with special reference to changes in the doctrine of state sovereignty made the maintenance of the colonies impossible for the colonial powers and forced them to relinquish political dominance over these states (Jackson 1990). Political power was given up while economic dominance was preserved. The transfer of power to the new bourgeoisie made this possible. A mutuality of interests between the new bourgeois group and the departing European occupiers in the preservation of the colonial system enabled this smooth hand over.<sup>13</sup> In order to further reinforce this common interest, some members of the new bourgeoisie were granted shares in European companies at the eve of independence. The basis of neo-colonialism was thus laid and the chances of the formation of endogenous capitalism further blocked. With that, the possibility of post colonial good governance drifted further away.

## 5 The neo-colonial state

Pre-imperialist unequal trade between Africa and Europe started the trend of underdevelopment in Africa. Imperialism sped it up by tying African economies to those of Europe, and colonialism consolidated this trend. But Africa was only marginally attached to European economy for a purpose: to provide western firms with raw materials and to a lesser degree, with market. The economy was channelled outwards with its commanding heights being dominated by foreign firms, leaving the local bourgeoisie with little or no access to capital. Colonialism introduced elements of capitalism to Africa and not capitalism proper. Indeed, it

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13 The major reason for upholding the colonial borders on the principles of *Uti Possidetis* after independence was that the new bourgeois in power was afraid of losing their privileged positions if the borders should be demarcated anew.

deliberately blocked the development of capitalism in Africa in order to prevent Africans ever becoming competitors to Europe. "In British East Africa", for example, "credit to Africans was specifically discouraged by the Credit to Natives (Restriction) Ordinance of 1931" (Rodney 1982: 210). In Nigeria and Ghana, the British banned the further production of local gin (hard liquor) thereby leaving the market to the monopoly of imported Scotch whisky. This state of economic affairs precluded the building up of endogenous capitalism and by extension, the genesis of the imperatives of good governance. Under such conditions, endogenous development became almost impossible, but has to be pursued for a couple of reasons.

The new political class has raised the hopes of the masses during the struggle for independence to the effect that all that was needed to achieve economic development and the enjoyment of a better life was political independence. So the achievement of independence was a kind of compulsion on them to pursue the goals of socioeconomic development. But this they could not do even if they wished. Their survival as state leaders depended not on the pursuit of this all important project but on factors extraneous to the yearnings and aspirations of the societies they ruled. Additionally, the bourgeoisie needed an ideology around which they could firstly, justify their grip on power, and secondly, mobilise the masses after independence. As a result of these imperatives, economic development received a position of priority in the objectives of state administration.

## **5.1 The fallacy of development concept**

Development was considered to be wholly economic and was understood to embody an emulation of the western path to development. W.W. Rostow's *Stages of Growth* in which every society has to traverse five stages of growth on its way to development provided the intellectual backbone of such ideas. Africans were at the lowest "traditional" stage and in order to get to the "take-off" phase, it needs to rapidly develop a political, social and institutional framework which is a *conditio*



*sine qua non* for progressive growth (Rostow 1960: 57). This conception assumed an international division of labour whereby African countries had the assignment of providing the system with raw materials and the West that of capital and technology. An important implication of this conception was that if African countries were to ever need technology, they just had to transfer it from the West. International trade (necessarily with the West) was advocated as the surest way to access capital. For obvious reasons that had to do with the protection of Western interests, especially the strategic imperatives of the Cold War, the West supported this conception of development (mostly) with development aid. For this purposes, the maintenance of the marginal position of African countries in the international political economy was recommended as means of attracting foreign capital and technology. Later events have proven that this argument was wrong and that development was conflated with modernisation; and economic development with growth.

Only a conception of development that seeks to lay a solid economic base by exploiting the immediate biological and physical environment to satisfy the most immediate needs of the society could have set Africa on the path to development. This idea of development that seeks to eliminate poverty, unemployment and inequality by promoting education on a very wide scale (Seers 1969) would have led to the formation of a local market and also to an improvement in the relatively weak level of development of instruments of production, a precondition for the emergence of endogenous technology. In this manner, there would have been an overall improvement in the way of doing things, with special reference to material production as inventions in one area of production will diffuse to other areas, giving development a social character. The duty of the state would have been reduced to providing functioning infrastructure for economic diversification which receives an impetus from the improvement in technology; not the control over lucrative raw materials. Leaving the control over raw materials in the hands of their natural owners, providing conditions for lucrative extraction and depending mainly on

revenues drawn through taxation would have had the consequence of strengthening the bureaucracy, diversifying the economy and reducing pressure on politics as the only viable means of Capital accumulation.

This weary but more promising process could have led to the emergence of a broad middle class of producers and entrepreneurs which could have marked the emergence of endogenous capitalism. Endogenous capitalists would have pressurised the state to provide and maintain functioning infrastructure on which they depend for their productive and distributive activities; and through the fulfilment of this demand, the institutionalisation of the state would have been strengthened and the process of decay contained. Not only that this path was abandoned, development policies recommended by foreign forces were pursued with the consequence that the marginalisation of Africa in international trade and with it, underdevelopment was deepened. Although it is true that one always knows it better with hindsight, African and non- African economic and political scientists did criticise the outward direction of African economies and how it contributed to the deepening of underdevelopment. But because such analyses almost always recommended de-linking Africa from western economies (Rodney 1982, Ake 1980, Nnoli 1981), they were berated as socialist apologetics and the insights in their analyses lost at the battle grounds of the Cold War.

Furthermore, because of the complementarities of interests that existed between the new political class and the departing European overlords, no attempts were made after independence to alter this economically debilitating position of Africa in the international economic system. "With a few exceptions, the gaining of independence was not a matter of the nationalists' marshalling forces to defeat colonial regimes. More often than not, it was a matter of the colonizers' accepting the inevitable and orchestrating a handover of government to their chosen African successors, successors who could be trusted to share their values and be attentive to their interests" (Ake 1996: 3). In an overwhelming majority of African countries, the new bourgeoisie, although separated by membership of different political parties,

were ideological bedfellows that understood the goals of decolonisation as the replacement of the European masters with themselves at all costs. This lack of ideological difference in the fight against colonialism was compensated with the politicisation of ethnic belongingness. In this form, political parties with ethnic bases emerged, a system that was favoured by the vertical (patron/client) system of political representation. In general terms, the bourgeoisie formed the patron group and the masses the clients. It was common in this practice for politicians to recruit their clients mainly from their ethnic groups. This politicisation of ethnicity became a stumbling block to the emergence of a national self consciousness. Political contentions received ethnic colorations and politicians mutated to representatives of ethnic interests. It became almost impossible for majority of the populace to judge politics and policies based on their intrinsic qualities, rather the ethnic origins of the advocates or critics became the major determinant of political judgements.

## **5.2 Background to Corruption**

The bourgeoisie suffered from a serious lack of capital due to the domination of African economies by foreign (often Western) firms and the marginalisation of African entrepreneurship through discriminatory economic policies. A way out of this problem was the use of the only means at their disposal – political power – for purposes of capital accumulation. Invariably, they felt obliged “to explore the one leverage they had: control of state power to strengthen their material base” (Ake 1996: 6). Max Weber makes the point that politicians (as distinct from noblemen) in young democracies are wont to using political posts for private accumulation. In England, as notables lost control over party operations as a result of the democratisation of party leadership around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of people whose primary interest in politics was mainly material increased. The newly emergent “party functionaries and entrepreneurs naturally expect to derive personal rewards from the victory scored by their leader: positions or advantages” (Weber; Draghici 1989: 33). This phenomenon took a more pronounced

and advanced form in the U.S.A. where it led to the “spoils system”; a system that “led in the long run to great difficulties, a corruption and a matchless waste that only a country with unlimited economic opportunities could tolerate” (ibid: 39-40).

The point is that under similar circumstance to the one being described by Weber (and the African situation is similar), the devolution of political power to non-aristocratic elements is often an impetus for personal aggrandisement, using political power as an instrument. This impetus was strengthened (in Africa) by the new bourgeoisie’s self-conception of independence which stressed the taking over of privileged positions that were hitherto occupied by the Europeans. This self-conception had neither room for good governance nor for diversifying the economic base. State power thus became the most assured, shortest and simplest way to capital accumulation. Thence, corruption became preponderant in the politics and administration of majority of African countries. Political posts were distributed to the clients of political patrons for purposes of capital accumulation irrespective of their qualifications. In reciprocity, these clients had to campaign for the good reputation of the power wielder, principally among their primordial publics. This practice led to the inefficient and irrational explosion of the political posts and bureaucracy (with principally unqualified hands) and the concomitant explosion in funds needed to service the bureaucracy. In this way, African states became neo-patrimonial / prebendal states.<sup>14</sup> In a lot of African countries, this system led to a continual disappearance of the separation between national and personal affairs as politics increasingly became informalised and the establishment of personal power took precedence over the institutionalisation of the state. At this stage (1960s till middle of the 1970s), the process of state failure was triggered off.

“The need for more secure material base drove the indigenous elite to increase the statism of the economy” (Ake 1996: 6). The state became itself a capitalist by bringing a very wide range of profitable economic activities under its

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14 For clarification of these terminologies, see Bratton, Michael/Van de Walle, Nicholas (1994), “Neopatrimonial regimes and political transition in Africa” in *World Politics*, Vol. 46, Nr. 4, (July 1994), pp. 453-489; and Joseph, Richard A. (1987), *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: the rise and fall of the second Republic*, Cambridge University Press.

control. But these were not managed with a sense of capitalist rationalism, rather, it was meant to increase the leverage of the state in doling out largesse to its chosen clientele. Corruption, “the misuse of power for personal gain” (World Bank 1992: 16) considerably increased the premium on political power and made political struggles a matter of life and death. The attentions of politicians were absolutely focused on the struggle for power and the uses to which it could be put (capital accumulation and victimisation of the opposition for example) that there was no room for articulating the practice of good governance. Rather, the fight for and the maintenance of state power at all costs became pervasive and produced an atmosphere that was detrimental to the purposes of good governance. “The struggle for political power was so absorbing that everything else, including development, was marginalised” (Ake 1996: 7).

Because of the highly statist nature of the polity, out of power bourgeois rarely had the option of channelling their ambition into private entrepreneurial activities because economic success was primarily a matter of state patronage. Continues Ake, “to become wealthy without the patronage of the state was likely to invite the unpleasant attention of those in control of state power. Political power was everything; it was not only the access to wealth but also the means to security and the only guarantor of general well-being. For anyone outside the hegemonic faction of the bourgeoisie, it was generally futile to harbour any illusions of becoming wealthy by entrepreneurial activity or to even take personal safety for granted. For anyone who was part of the ruling faction, entrepreneurial activity was unnecessary, for one could appropriate surplus with less risk and less trouble by means of state power” (ibid. 7). Under such a situation, it is no wonder that an entrepreneurial middle class that could have effectively demanded good governance did not emanate. Rather, all ambitious and creative energy was dissipated in the maintenance of or the fight for acquisition of state power. Two scholars present a most apposite conclusion on this issue: “What the church was for ambitious men in medieval Europe or the business corporation in nineteenth and

twentieth century America, the state is today for ambitious Africans with skill and fortune. The political system in African states is more like a game or market than planning organisation...State power in African States has been the major arena of privilege...accessible to ambitious men of humble origin" (Jackson and Rosberg 1982: 14). This is the farthest-reaching implication of the domination of African economies by foreigners with regards to precluding the origination of the imperatives of good governance.

### **5.3 Suppression of Opposition and Military Dictatorship**

Exercising political power for the purposes of capital accumulation with impunity over several years, nay decades, gave birth to a mentality that seeks to accept personal enrichment as the goal of acquiring state power. Corruption was thus, quasi legitimated and correspondingly spread to several nooks and corners of public life that was hitherto unaffected. This induced ambitious people to strive for political power with all means, including violence. Violence and coercion therefore became increasingly "legitimised" as a means of acquiring or maintaining state power. Calculations showed in 1991 that 485 postcolonial African rulers were threatened with about 60% chance of being killed, imprisoned or exiled as consequence of holding office (Wiseman 1993: 657-660). In the struggle, good governance and development efforts were relegated to the background, including the interests of the teeming populations of Africa. Ethnicity, clientilism and widespread electoral manipulations saw to it, that the masses couldn't play a role in determining political issues or influencing them in a way that protects and projects their interests. There was no respect for human rights and democratic principles in governance as well as in politics. Oppositional bourgeois forces enjoyed no tolerance from the bourgeoisie in power, they were rather suppressed with physical assault and incarceration and their leading members were oftentimes eliminated through murder.

In a couple of countries, the suppression of opposition was institutionalised through the establishment of one-party systems. Certain African leaders tried to justify this system with the arguments of “African socialism” or “the non-reconciliation of African political culture with opposition” as this statement from Tanzania’s first independent president Julius Nyerere shows: “The new nations of the African continent are emerging today as the result of their struggle for independence. This struggle for freedom from foreign domination is a patriotic one which necessarily leaves no room for difference” (Herbst 2000: 97). Efforts were made to spread these ideas in the whole of black Africa and therefore reinforced the impetus to bad governance. Unbridled corruption coupled with victimisation of the opposition made the rulers incur the wrath of the masses and the animosity of the opposition and induced them to develop a sit-tight mentality in power: out of fear of the envisaged retaliation of the opposition to which they will be helplessly exposed without control of state power, they continue to stay in power even in the midst of glaring evidence of loss of legitimacy. Under such conditions, the attempts to remove them through military coups or even civil wars become inevitable. Charles Taylor of Liberia, once rebel leader, warlord and now ex-President expressed himself thus “once you are in, because of the chaos created from outside, you become undemocratic in the preservation of power. It is almost like the survival of the fittest” (West Africa: 2000: 11). Politics in Africa became cumulatively violent. “Political competition now assumed the character of warfare and paved the way for the ascendancy of the specialists of violence, the military” (Ake 1996: 6). The military did not prove to be better in the management of national affairs and in the ensuing course; many African countries were successively embroiled in civil wars.

Corruption and bad governance aggravated under the military. Military domination of politics meant that the politicisation of the military had to be intensified. As a corollary, the cherished image of the military as a national organisation based on discipline, stratified structure and formal rules was severely undermined. Continuous military domination of politics and the politicisation of the

military enervated the professionalism, esprit des corps and discipline of the armed forces and thus weakened it considerably. Weakening the capabilities and morale of the military translated into weakening the state because, in the absence of social integration, the military was the last bastion of state preservation. The military increasingly imbibed the goals of a political party with military coups performing the role of elections. Politicisation and weakening of the military had two direct consequences for the collapse of the African state: the rulers continuously lost confidence in the several sections of the military and tried to create private armies (national guards) to protect them against frequent demonstrations and thereby further dividing and neglecting the military; and secondly, security was privatised as the military proved too weak to defend the state against the rebels that attacked several African states in the 1990s.

## **5.4 Neo-colonialism and Economic Development Policies**

The members of the new political class were not involved in the production of goods. They consisted mainly of professionals in the service industry like lawyers, doctors, teachers, bureaucrats, journalists, political scientists, labour leaders etc. and coupled with their constraints on capital (a consequence of colonial policies); they proceeded to appropriate the products of the most productive class in the society – the peasants – and exploited them through the instrumentality of marketing boards.

### **5.4.1 Marketing Boards**

The marketing board system which originated in colonial Ghana in 1937 and later on spread to a host of other African states was one of exploitation. Because of the overwhelming interest of the post-colonial bourgeoisie in accumulation, this system was retained and even intensified. Instead of easing off the difficulties of agricultural production partly through the provision of functional infrastructure in the rural areas and promoting an industrialisation that stressed the processing of agricultural products, the bourgeoisie was more interested in the accumulation of capital with the result that agricultural production became uninteresting for the



peasants. Distribution of social amenities was thus skewed to the advantage of the cities as Robert Bates noted that African politicians traditionally equated their political survival with appeasing their urban populations via subsidies even if the much larger, and poorer, rural population had to be taxed (Bates 1981: 33). As long as the political class could accumulate capital, they were even content to abandon the designing of economic policies and development plans to foreign forces. These policies and plans (which emphasised the state as the engine of development including promotion of cash as against food crops) did not adequately take cognisance of the structure of African societies and could only contribute to deepening underdevelopment through furthering the disarticulation of African economies. The populace became increasingly estranged from the state project.

The marketing boards bought off the products of the peasants at very cheap prices and sold them at higher prices in the international market. The revenues from such transactions formed the initial objects of corruption as a great part of them were embezzled at several political and administrative rungs. Over several years, this practice of using state power for capital accumulation worsened the failing capabilities of the state at providing political goods and gradually ushered in the phase of failure. "Corruption undermines every aspect of policy implementation, so much so that political power cannot be exercised for purposes of development or improving the quality of life" (Jackson and Rosberg 1982: 18). The state increasingly lacked the fund for the provision of public goods and many peasants lost interest in the further pursuit of their unprofitable profession and migrated to the cities. There, they swelled the number of the unemployed and even unemployables. Many other peasants reacted with smuggling their products out of the countries further reducing the revenues at the disposal of the state.

The governments of several African states tried to promote agriculture but became discouraged by the fall in the prices of agricultural products in the international markets in the 1970s which seriously reduced their revenue earnings. Explosion in the price of oil at this time also contributed to worsening the liquidity

problems of African states. In some other countries (Nigeria, Zaire), the discovery of mineral resources in commercial quantities contributed to diverting the attention of the ruling classes from agricultural promotion to collection of rents and royalties with which they enriched themselves. Countries without mineral resources became increasingly dependent on foreign development aid which also aided personal aggrandisement and strengthened the tendency to neglect agriculture. As a consequence of this policy, many African countries experienced the problem of food scarcity for the first time in the modern era.

#### **5.4.2 Food Import, Capital flight and Accretion of Debts**

The preferred solution to this problem in many African countries was the importation of food stuffs mostly from the West. Through the state's control of this importation and distribution of food stuffs, its economic dirigisme which the colonialists initiated was reinforced and further avenues for capital accumulation opened. This is a further justification of the claim being made in this piece to the effect that personal aggrandisement, neither national development nor good governance, was and remains the paramount purpose of major political actors in Africa. The funds garnered through such processes regularly get transferred into secret accounts in Western banks. A relatively recent study of about 30 sub-Saharan countries states that those countries' ruling bourgeoisie had private overseas assets equivalent to 145 percent of the public debts that their countries owed, and about 80 cents on every dollar borrowed flowed back to the West as capital flight" (World Bank 2004: 25). This fact, coupled with the repatriation of a very large part of the profits made by the foreign firms that dominate African economies and the aggravating trade deficit led to a continuous flight of capital from Africa. This had abysmal consequences with regards to enhancing the imperatives of good governance on the one hand, and in terms of the state's capability for further investment and for provision of public goods, on the other. Life was getting more miserable for the common citizens and state capability was cascading.

African states tried to ameliorate this problem by raising credits, mostly from Western banks and international financial institutions. In addition, the importation of food stuffs in the midst of receding national revenues necessitated the raising of further credits. The banks granted these credits freely, ostensibly believing that African economies will bounce back someday. If they really did hope so, their hopes were thoroughly dashed because they failed to critically consider some very crucial facts of African political life. Neo-patrimonial politics is averse to good and serious management. This system with its attendant consequences (politicisation of ethnicity, suppression of opposition, sit-tight mentality, military coups, civil wars etc.) precluded the focusing of attention on the pursuit of socioeconomic development and state building and with that, the chances of the credits ever getting repaid. So the uncritical readiness of the banks to grant the credits merely played into the hands of African leaders who pounced on these credits and either stashed parts of them in foreign banks or used parts of them to oil their clientelistic relations.

Neo-patrimonial politics led African leaders to intervene in the economy even at the detriment of long-term economic development. Values of African currencies were not determined by their purchasing power in international trade, rather governments merely decided the value of their currencies. Throughout this time (the 1970s till middle of the 1980s), many African leaders hardly admitted to their citizens that their economies were gradually collapsing. They chose to further ride in the euphoria of independence that was to herald the good life. As a result of all these, an irrational and intense borrowing of funds continued. Within a short period, the debt of African countries accumulated and more credit was needed in order to service the debts. This went on till the international banks and financial institutions refused to grant further credits and instead, demanded a voice in the making of African financial policies and the implementation development plans. As the debts grew higher, this voice became increasingly deterministic.

**Table 1** Long term official, multilateral and private debt of Africa, 1970-1990  
(Millions of dollars)

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990
<b>Official long term debt</b>	<b>6967</b>	<b>17446</b>	<b>47349</b>	<b>90070</b>	<b>158082</b>
Multilateral debt stocks	1010	3176	11664	23937	50608
<b>Private public guaranteed debt</b>	<b>2490</b>	<b>10014</b>	<b>37806</b>	<b>50623</b>	<b>70877</b>

Source: UNCTAD secretariat computations based on World Bank, Global Development Finance, online data (14.09.2005).

Table 1 shows a progressive increment in the debt being owed by African countries to the international financial system up to the time that states crumbled (1990). It has been argued that this debt system represents a squeeze on the poor nations. "Between 1970 and 2002, Africa received some \$540 billion in loans; but despite paying back close to \$550 billion in principal and interest, it still had a debt stock of \$295 billion as at the end of 2002. And the figures are even more disconcerting for sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), which received \$294 billion in disbursements, paid out \$268 billion in debt service and yet remained straddled with a debt stock of some \$210 billion " (UNCTAD 2004: 1).

As a result, African states increasingly lost their credit worthiness in the international financial system. In several African countries where revenues still flowed from mineral resources (Nigeria, Zaire, Sierra Leone, etc.) or from a few lucrative cash crops (Ivory Coast), they were either squandered in unproductive prestigious projects, in the superfluous concentration of infrastructures in the cities or simply embezzled and hidden in foreign banks. Whatever the case, the results were the same: entrenchment of underdevelopment and precluding the emergence of the imperatives of good governance. The bourgeoisie is resident in the cities and preferred therefore to beautify the relatively unproductive and less populated cities at the expense of the productive rural areas in which majority of Africans live. The provision of the rural areas with modern infrastructure would have relieved the inhabitants of the hardships of life and would have equally increased their

productivity. This would have solved the problem of food scarcity, overpopulation of the cities and its attendant unemployment and the dependence of the economy on revenues from mineral resources and primary products; and could therefore have contributed to the emergence of an indigenous entrepreneurial class that would have pushed the power bourgeois to improve on the quality of governance. Rather, the economies remained monocultural and the phenomenon of rentier state was entrenched.

### **5.4.3 Monocultural Economies and Development Aid**

The economies of majority of African states were and are still monocultural: dependent on revenues from a single mineral resource or from a single agricultural product for states that have no mineral resources demanded by international capital. For such countries, the fall in the prices of agricultural products in the international market in the 1970s had devastating consequences as they experienced serious balance of payment deficits. Consequently, they had to incrementally depend on development aid for survival. The pervasiveness of economic problems coupled with the lack of democratic practices plunged a lot of African leaders into problems of legitimacy. The good life promised during decolonisation struggles could not be realised after more than 15 years of political independence. African leaders reacted with a double pronged strategy. On the one hand, they tried to service their clientilistic relations (the basis of their legitimacy) with the proceeds from development aid and on the other hand, they increased the repression of oppositional forces that were actually increasing at the time. This strategy led to further attenuation of legitimacy.

Development aid was (and is still) not helpful in triggering off development in Africa for several reasons. Principal among which is that it extenuated the drive to self-reliant development, a precursor to the emergence of some of the imperatives of good governance. The phenomenon of tied-aid contributed to capital flight and further underdevelopment because the prices are often exorbitant and Africans are denied the opportunities offered in a free market. Further consequences of

development aid are that it intensified the orientation of African economies to those of the metropolises and thereby the consolidation of the position of foreign forces as the sources of legitimacy for African leaders. The gap between the masses and their rulers expanded further.

The problem of financial dependence on revenues from mineral resources would have been averted had the African political leaders used these revenues to diversify the economic bases of the states through investment and reinvestment in productive endeavours, most importantly in the promotion of agricultural products that are immediately needed by the people and in industrialisation that initially strives to process the agricultural products. Diversification of the economic bases of African states would have possibly led to the emergence of a productive middle class that earns its living outside the ambit of state power. This is the class that would have been in position to effectively demand good governance and respect for human rights and democratic principles.<sup>15</sup> The drive of ambitious people to try to accumulate capital only with direct or indirect control of state power would have been mitigated. This is one of the contributory factors to state collapse because it increases the incidences of graft, undermines the goal of good governance and leads to violence in politics. Instead of diversification, the rulers and their chosen cohorts preferred to embezzle the revenue in cooperation with Western and Eastern firms and thus increased the economic hardships of Africans.

#### **5.4.4 Import Substitution Policy**

The relatively low-level development of instruments of production and the lack of capital was to be improved through an industrialisation policy which was supposed to lend the needed impetus to development. But the industrialisation policy

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<sup>15</sup> The critique that this line of argument is too Eurocentric and does not necessarily have to be the African way is correct. However, it is appropriate here because the modern African states were modelled after their metropolitan founders and it is my concern here to show that the conditions that influenced this development in Europe were and are not available in Africa. Whatever the African way would or could be, historical lessons have emphasised the complementarity of interests between state makers and indigenous resource bearing groups and that the conditions under which African states found themselves obliterates the possibilities of this indigenous group(s) ever emerging.

emphasised import substitution – local production of imported goods in order to reduce expenditure on imports and subsequently conserve capital – and was not successful for several reasons. Primary among these reasons was the fact that the economies of African states were monopolised by a few European firms. These firms often have financial in the home countries from which they regularly imported and promoting import substitution in Africa will be detrimental to those interests at home (Ake 1981: 148). They therefore did not pursue the goals of import substitution wholeheartedly and even subverted the policy in some cases. This industrial policy (which was relatively successful in Latin America) is preconditioned on the fact that an industrial base already exists and has only to be geared towards the production of goods that gulp scarce foreign exchange. But because this precondition is not met in Africa, this policy implied a high demand of foreign inputs in the area of capital goods. For example, the technology was to be imported from the West and this importation contributed to balance of payment deficits. It also sharpened the contradictions that already existed between the basic needs of the African masses and the policies of the neo-colonial states. There were other technical problems. Most of the imported technology was antiquated. Extensive decaying of nation state structures combined with the alien origin of the technology generated problems of maintenance of such technology. The policy therefore contributed neither to economic development nor to the accumulation of capital. Rather, underdevelopment and state decay progressed as the institutions of state and social infrastructure became extensively dysfunctional.

#### **5.4.5 Indigenisation Policy**

The need for a more solid material base led some African countries (for example Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Senegal Zaire etc.) to embark on a policy of economic indigenisation between the middle of the 1960s up to the 1970s. The spirit of nationalism with which independence was fought for and dependency theory which postulated a positive correlation between economic dependence and underdevelopment partially influenced the introduction of this policy. This policy

made it mandatory for foreign firms to sell a portion of their shares (up to 51% in some cases) to indigenous business people. The purpose was to ensure the accretion of indigenous capital by buying out foreign capital. The state even gave loans to prospective buyers in certain countries.

This policy failed for several reasons. Neo-patrimonialism ensured that shares were sold to politicians and bureaucrats instead of real business people. The accumulative tendencies of the bourgeoisie in power led them to exploiting the resources of the firms exactly the way they exploited the resources of the state. The result of such attitudes in the economy (collapse of some of the firms) came quicker than its result in politics (collapse of some of the states). As a result of this policy, some of the firms folded up. In some other cases, the firms maintained their foreign ownership by selling their shares to African proxies (mainly in Nigeria and Ghana). That is, African names were being presented as shareholders while the firms actually still belonged to their original owners. Anyway, the political class did achieve its aims of primitive accumulation even at the expense of economic development.

The non-involvement of the new indigenous “owners” in productive activity contributed immensely to the failure of the policy due to the fact that they possessed neither the capitalist spirit nor its ethos. Capitalism progresses through the purposeful management of investments and the reinvestment of the accumulated capital. To do that, one has to possess the capitalist spirit which induces him/her to further invest and develop capital; and the ethos which ensure that the tenets of successful business management are upheld. The squandering of such riches in ostentatious consumption as the new holders did is inimical to the goals of capitalism.

This policy was implemented in respective countries with various approaches which produced less than desired results. In some countries, the programme was doomed to failure because the finances to sponsor the policy were to be provided through external means. In Kenya for instance, the control of



agriculture by foreign capital was not tampered with; foreign capital was even to provide 82.39% of Kenya's Agricultural Development Corporation budget in the development estimate of 1971/72 (Ake 1985). In a few others, the rulers simply dispossessed foreigners of their firms and gave them to their clients. Some socialist countries (Tanzania for example) even nationalised majority of the foreign firms. In such countries, the preponderance of pre-capitalist forms of production, with special reference to the low level of development of the production instruments combined with the lack of capitalist spirit and ethos to render the policy a mere redistribution of poverty in a system of less neo-patrimonialism driven by coercion.

## **5.5 International Politics of Poor Governance in Africa**

In the course of all these developments, good governance<sup>16</sup> - the fight against corruption and against neo-patrimonial politics, the diversification of the economic bases, adequate representation of the interests and needs of the masses in national politics, inward-looking development strategies, respect for human rights and democratic principles, rule of law, etc. - was neglected. In none of the international partnerships for African development was the quality of governance in Africa on the agenda, be it the demand for a New International Economic Order (N.I.E.O.) in the 1970s or the declaration of the 1980s as the Development Decade by the United Nations among others. Authoritative regimes were even seen as being favourable to economic development. It was the time of the Cold War which determined the foreign policies of the Super and the Great powers. The world was divided into two blocs and each bloc was primarily concerned with securing the support of respective African leaders which they did with expressive political patronage and the allocation of development aid. It was therefore strategically self-defeatist to criticise the internal policies of an African state unless the state has openly declared for the opposing bloc. In this case, the criticism was never considered on its merit;

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<sup>16</sup> Although the terminology of good governance found its way into the mainstream of political discourses on Africa at the beginning of the 1990s, its lack in African political life is at least as old as the modern African state.

rather it was subsumed under the politics of the Great Divide. The interests and needs of the African masses which naturally coalesce with the genuine pursuit of economic development and good governance were never seriously considered.

### **5.5.1 Cold War and Neglect of Good Governance in Africa**

Because of the dependence of African states on external sources of revenue (foreign trade, foreign investment and foreign aid), the sources of legitimacy was also foreign. Each bloc did everything possible to maintain their own African leaders in power even in the face of glaring evidences of loss of legitimacy by such leaders. The local populace remained politically emasculated. Consequently, African leaders never experienced the imperatives of making political concessions in the direction of reduction of state power and granting individual political rights and liberties to their citizens as was the case in Europe. Locally and internationally, there were no social forces in a credible position to demand good governance in Africa.

As was earlier mentioned, the speedy rate of increase in the debt owed by the African states made the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) progressively powerful in the making of financial policies and development plans in Africa. With the failures of import substitution industrialisation and transfer of technology, underdevelopment in Africa accelerated and the marginalisation of Africa in international political economy deepened. The masses of Africa became more and more agitated. The disappointment with the non-materialisation of the very high hopes raised during decolonisation struggles (that political independence will be the harbinger of a better life) impelled a lot of criticism on African leaders and their policies. Almost 20 years after independence, the conditions of life for majority of the citizens have deteriorated manifestly. Criticisms were not only directed to African leaders but also to their international partners. This disappointment therefore prompted some radical African scholars (A.B. Babu, Issa Shivji, Claude Ake, O. Nnoli, B. Onimode etc.) to recommend socialism as a solution to economic underdevelopment of Africa.

Revolutionary pressures were building up in several African countries, (most especially in West Africa). The devastating material conditions were not alone responsible for that. Socialist propoganda from Progress Publishers in Moscow coupled with African and Jamaican music (reggae) suffused with rebel lyrics contributed immensely to the accretion of revolutionary consciousness by challenging the youths to dismantle the system that holds Africans in bondage. And there was Libya, admonishing African youths to rebel against their governments whose closeness to the West was blamed for the suffering of the African masses and pledging all sorts of support for the rebellion.

### **5.5.2 Revolutionary Pressures and African rulers' Reaction**

Towards the end of the 1970s, African rulers were so under pressure that they had to take actions to relieve the revolutionary pressures which could threaten the continued existence of their regimes. Under the auspices of the Organisation for African Unity (O.A.U.), African scholars were assigned the duty of working out an endogenous development plan for Africa. They came up with the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa (1979). In 1980, the O.A.U. met in Nigeria and adopted the Lagos Plan of Action which was to implement the Monrovia Strategy. It marked the first inward looking African development plan made by Africans for Africans. It was equally a proof of the pressures under which African rulers found themselves that they for the first time, tried to reject the development plans made by foreign agencies. With specific reference to West Africa, these revolutionary pressures were discharged in the initial popular support enjoyed by coup plotters and rebels that attacked several governments in the 1980s and 1990s which in some cases led to the collapse of the states. Even up till these days, the revolutionary pressures (yearning and aspiring for change) are still existent because the material conditions that produce them have not changed.

## **5.6 The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), State Collapse and the Demand for “Good Governance”**

The Lagos Plan of Action was based on the principles of self-reliance and sustainable development by reducing external influences in the development of Africa. For this reason, the IFIs did not support the Plan of Action. Contrariwise, the World Bank designed the Accelerated Development Plan for Africa: An Agenda for Action (1981) in which African states were advised to abandon the path of self-reliant industrialisation and concentrate on the production of agricultural goods. Of course, the African leaders did not accept this strategy. A stalemate arose in which African leaders were forced to chicken out. They had to because they had so badly managed their economies to the point of heavily deepening their dependence on credits from the IFIs. The acceptance and subsequent implementation of this plan worsened the economic situation of Africans. For example, in 1984, the World Development Report observed that increases in the incidences of infant mortality, under-nourishment and dependence on imported food items are threatening the life of about 100 million people in Africa.

The above-mentioned document of the World Bank (Accelerated Development Plan for Africa) offered the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)<sup>17</sup> as the solution to Africa’s economic problems. According to the World Bank, this neoliberal economic program was supposed to function as an additional impetus to the reactivation of African economies. This it should do through the opening of African markets to foreign capital. To this end, African economies have to dismantle all forms of economic protection and liberalise trade in order to attract foreign investment. SAP designers were also of the opinion that African currencies were overpriced; a fact that makes African goods in the international market too expensive, less marketable and therefore reduces the availability of foreign currency in their economies. As a solution, they recommended export promotion through a

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17 Later on, this became known as the Washington Consensus because the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are based in Washington.

reduction in the exchange rates of national currencies. SAP equally sought to cut back budget deficits through a reduction in public expenditure; for example, through the removal of subsidies on several items, retrenchment of civil servants and employees in public service and the privatisation of national service agencies like post office services, telecommunications, etc.

#### **5.6.1 Effects of SAP and of the End of the Cold War**

The implementation of this programme led to further debilitation of African economies and sharpened the contradictions between the masses and the ruling class: it led to double and triple digit inflations, increased the level of poverty and hopelessness in Africa, further agitations and violent demonstrations against several governments, massive unemployment etc. In fairness to SAP, the selective manner of its implementation which was preferred by the African leaders accounted partially for the inclement effects of SAP on the populace. They forced austere economic measures on the populace without reducing their penchant for capital accumulation through control of state power. They therefore continued to lead ostentatious life in the midst of abject poverty of a large percentage of the population. As the masses became obstreperous, most of those leaders invested heavily in strengthening their coercive apparatus even to the extent of establishing personal armies, disguised as national guards, to protect them from the surging youth protests. These unemployed youths provided the rebels that attacked several states in West Africa towards the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s with initial recruits.

As the Cold War drew to a close at the end of the 1980s, Africa lost its enviable strategic position in super power politics with the consequence that a larger part of the development aid was no longer forthcoming. Through this action, majority of African leaders lost the resources with which they have always bought legitimacy in a patron/client system. Driven by biting economic hardships, the crisis of legitimacy that has been continuously accompanied African politics was thence sharpened. Rampant demonstrations against several governments became frequent

and they reacted with increased repressions and violence. The citizens were so distressed and depressed that they seriously started questioning the sense behind the preservation of the African state project. As before (in colonial times), majority reacted once again with escape from the state: incidences of smuggling, criminal activities, prostitution, cultism (that venerated not only religions but also persons and criminal associations) increased and ethnic associations became prominent features of the political landscape once again as they strove to fill the gap being vacated by the state. The strength and scope of state functions and activities became cumulatively constricted. The intentions and even attempts at secession by relatively deprived groups became loud and clearly noticeable. The failure of the African state became increasingly present.

### **5.6.2 The Demand for Political Reforms**

In the midst of this crisis, the West demanded good governance and respect for democratic principles and human rights as a precondition for further development cooperation with African states. The discourse was introduced by the World Bank in its 1989 report titled, "Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth" and later expatiated in another study with the title of "Governance and Development" published by the bank in 1992. It was the bank's manner of reacting to the pile of criticisms against their SAP which did prove to be a colossal failure in jump-starting the African economy. According to the bank, SAP failed on the grounds of bad governance by African leaders and not because of its conception and intrinsic quality. This argument has been severally faulted by many African scholars who have consistently criticised SAP for not being a development program but rather, a program for the correction of balance of payment deficits and therefore inappropriate to solve the problem of economic underdevelopment of African states.

Indeed, its conception considered neither the interests of African masses nor the structure of African societies and did thereby contribute to the promotion of bad governance. The removal of subsidies in the midst of increasing poverty, high rates

of inflation, unemployment, and evanescent purchasing power for an overwhelming majority of the population had an inhuman effect: a pauperised populace was forced to pay relatively exorbitant prices for services that were formerly almost free without the possibility of a higher income. Beyond that, the retrenchment of civil servants and public service employees in countries where the state is the major employer of labour and in a context of extended family structure meant a worsening of living conditions for a large portion of the populations. Furthermore, the liberalisation of trade placed African economies in a disadvantaged situation because the reduction in the value of national currencies at an industrial stage that demands a very high level of external inputs led to increases in the unit production costs of such goods which again translated into increases in local market prices.

The weak position of African firms in competition with multinationals both in internal and in international markets was thus aggravated. All these contributed to worsening economic conditions which increased the intensity of popular demonstrations against the regimes which reacted with increased violent repressions. Watts and Lubeck note with particular reference to Nigeria, "Predictably the SAP has shattered the living standards among the wage and salaried groups...and reduc(ed) educational, social and health expenditures so far that universities have collapsed, cholera is widespread (the highest reported globally), and malnutrition, destitution and unemployment are common. In turn, each tightening of the screw has stimulated widespread rioting led by students, unemployed workers, market women and a burgeoning urban lumpenproletariat" (1994: 214).

In lieu of these developments resulting from the implementation of SAP, the World Bank (and of course the International Monetary Fund) earned a bad reputation out of which it had to manoeuvre itself. This was the role that the discourse on good governance had to fulfil: to clear the IFIs of all blames on the effects of SAP on African masses. The alteration in the international political

atmosphere was admissible of such a discourse as there was no opposing ideological camp to which African leaders could change. Western countries and the international community (including the donor community) orientated themselves to this discourse and declared the good governance and respect for democratic principles and human rights a condition for continued development cooperation. It would have been necessary for the bank to understand why she and other creditors are the only economic actors in a position to force economic reforms on African leaders: they are not subject to divisive interventions of Africa's governments (Bates 1999: 93). But by demanding economic reforms, international capital has assumed the political role of an economic middle class, judging by the European experience. But this role could not be substantively filled by outsiders. It would therefore have been more fruitful for international capital to concern itself initially with creating the economic basis for the imperatives of good governance before demanding it. In the absence of such a basis, the loans will not be paid and underdevelopment will persist.

### **5.6.3 Internal Reform Pressures and Reversal in Western Reform Demands**

So far, I have tried to illuminate how SAP worsened the economic conditions of majority of Africans and their reactions to it. The challenge from the West on African leaders to democratise reinforced the resolve to further demonstrations against several African leaders. Thus, the beginning of the 1990s witnessed an avalanche of political demonstrations throughout the length and breadth of black Africa. At this juncture, we had to recall that revolutionary pressures have been building up against the African ruling bourgeoisie since independence. The demand for good governance was therefore an encouragement to the democratic forces in Africa. So they intensified their opposition in order to produce a synergy effect with the pressure from outside, hoping to make the pressure unbearable for their leaders. Although these violent demonstrations threatened a few states with collapse<sup>18</sup>, the

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18 Zambia, Zaire, Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Congo are typical examples.



democratic forces were however very hopeful that, at the long last, democracy will be ushered in and the interests and aspirations of the masses will take its due position of priority in the making of national policies. If violence and loss of lives or even the collapse of some states should be the price for it, it could be a worthy price.

This hope was shattered by the reversal in Western policy following the pervasive violence that accompanied the demand for democratisation. A fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and Time Magazine's Nairobi Bureau Chief at the time, Margaret Michaels, documented this reversal thus: "U.S. interests and international capital were not all that retreated from Africa this year. Movement toward democracy was rolled back in many African countries" (1995: 96). One wonders why the West had to reverse its policy just to curtail the violence. After all, the introduction of democracy to western European polities was equally accompanied with a high degree of violence. Furthermore, scholars have demonstrated that the change from a repressive to a democratic (even partial) regime is often afflicted with conflict, but only temporarily. Three quarters of the conflict generated by the transition disappears one year after (Hegre et al 1999). Violence in the process of political transitions in Africa should be inevitable because of the economic interests which political power serves and the consequent economic losses which the loss of power during transition could bring with it. It follows economic logic that they should resist it, even violently. This is symptomatic of class struggles in Europe and they were violent.

The reversal in the Western policy may have been undertaken out of fear that the crises would jeopardise Western economic interests and their ability of continued political influence in Africa. "France made it clear this year in several West African countries that democracy is relative and that Paris would not promote chaos over stability. The British seemed to prefer stability as well. U.S. Ambassador Smith Hempstone's relentless three-year drive for multiparty democracy in Kenya had British diplomats irate over its "naivete" and fearful that the election-driven violence would jeopardize millions of pound sterling invested in coffee and tea

estates" (ibid: 97-98). Likewise, the fear of African refugees streaming into the Western World and the financial expenses of conflict management (peacekeeping operations for example) may have been influential here. Reversal in Western policy meant that the ideals of democratisation were not to be pursued to the letters.

Democratisation was therefore reduced to electoralism, - the mere organisation of competitive elections between several political parties. This proved to be one of the inadequacies of understanding African politics from the assumptions of Western political developments. As Joseph puts it, "elections and democracy have become virtually synonymous in Western political thought and analysis" (Joseph 1999: 9). But for reasons that have to do with the social and economic structures of African societies, the foreign orientation of African political leaders, lack of democratic political culture, weakness of state institutions, pervasive illiteracy, corruption and electoral manipulations, elections in Africa are often undemocratic. It could even be manipulated to bestow democratic appearances on autocratic regimes. This was the case in Africa of the 1990s.

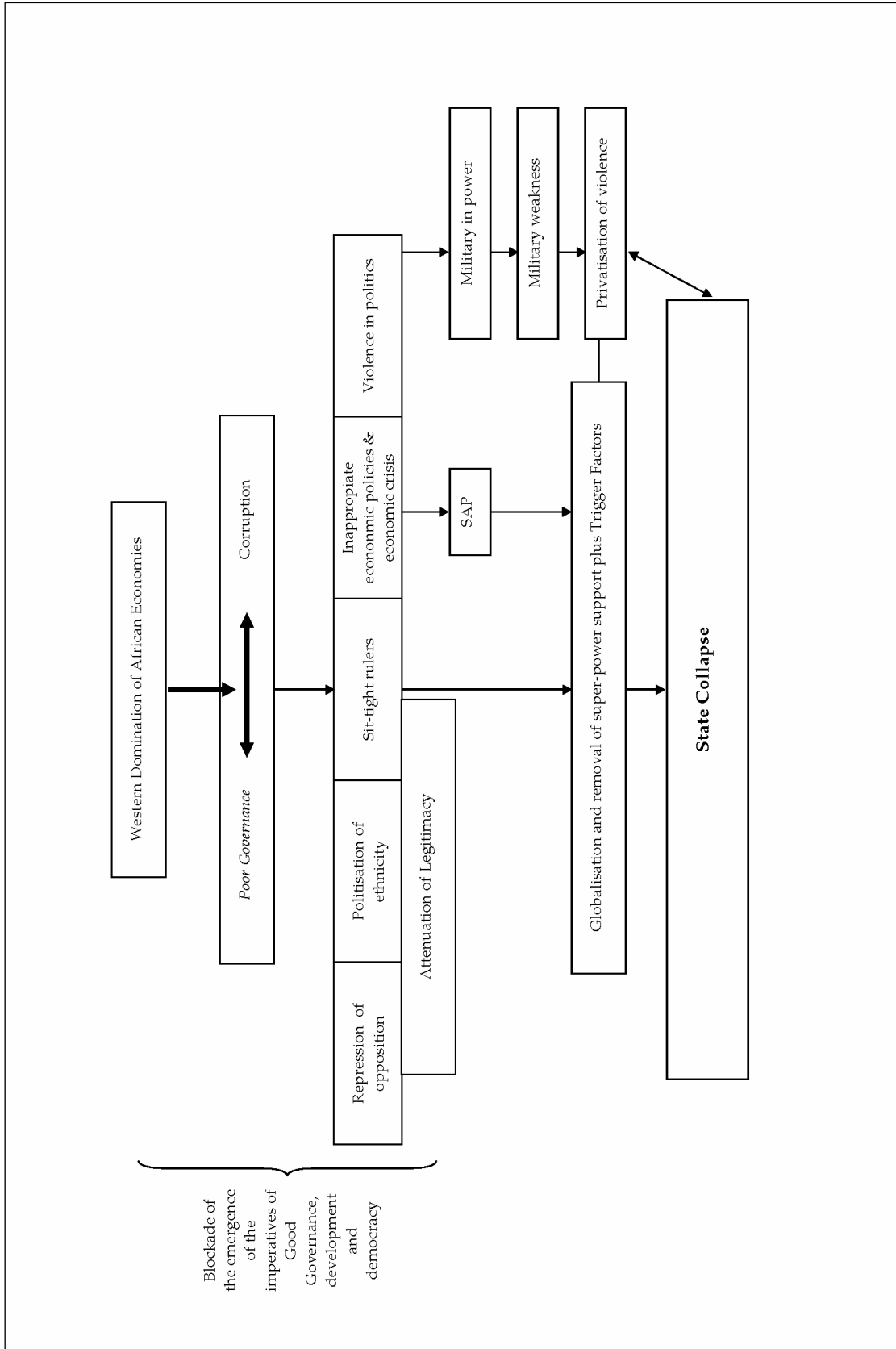
With the change in Western approach to democratisation, many African autocrats organised elections in which they rigged either themselves or their proxies in power. In most of these elections, securing the support of the IFIs by promising to adopt their SAP superseded the interests of the poor African masses in democratisation and good governance. Represented by the World Bank and the IMF, the West made the implementation of SAP a decisive condition for further economic cooperation (granting of credit lines etc.). Majority of African states were (and are still) so dependent on credit from these institutions as result of their economic weakness that they had to accept the conditionalities of SAP in order to have a chance of even running a government. The result was the production of choiceless democracies (Mkandawire 1999) and exclusionary democracies (Abrahamsen 2000: 134). Choiceless in the sense that the constraints provided by SAP denied the several political parties the opportunity of independently designing their own party programs even if they had actually wished to. Exclusionary in the

sense that liberal democracy is not suitable to African societies where the majority of the citizens still make their living in the primordial economy that could not be grasped by the horizontal system of political representation in a liberal democratic system.

The implication of the Western reversal policy was to confer a certificate of democratic legitimacy on the products of electoralism, and on other undemocratic regimes that provided a semblance of stability irrespective of the quality of governance. By this policy, the West may have accepted, though unintentionally, to put up with more cases of state collapse in future because as long as the governance is bad, the state will further debilitate, the masses will rebel and collapse might very likely result. This reversal policy has merely postponed the day of democratic reckoning in Africa because it is very hard to imagine that the masses of Africa will continue to condone bad governance indefinitely. This failure to pursue the ideals of democracy at the beginning of the 1990s contributed immensely to the collapse of some West African states towards the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium.

The idea here is not to create the impression that the rebellions and civil wars which accompanied the collapse of states in Africa were ideological and mass-based. Rather, disgruntled elements and opportunists within the ruling bourgeoisie capitalised on the mass dissatisfaction to militarily attack the power holders. Most of them were members of the ruling class that were about to be rationalised out of the corridors of power in keeping with the recommendations of the international financial institutions that pushed for reforms. Others were mere opportunists that took advantages offered by state weakness, the eased integration in international market offered by globalisation and neoliberalism, availability of unemployed youths and the availability of small arms that found their ways into the international market as a result of the demise of Soviet Union to foment violence and use it as a means of capital accumulation; the so called warlordism.

Figure 1 Model of analysis of state collapse in Africa



A further explanation of the West for the failure of democracy in most of Africa is that African states lacked civil societies that should, among others, protect the citizen rights from the encroachments of the state.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, development policy was thence geared towards stimulating the emergence of civil society organisations with financial support. Some African out-of-power bourgeoisie reacted accordingly by establishing Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This resulted in the emergence of “portfolio” NGOs that although hardly relate to African societies, are intimately bound with the international community, especially the Western and donor nations NGOs. The interests of the African bourgeoisie in setting up these NGOs have to, in most cases, do with the financial support that flowed from the West, a major part of which finds its way into private bank accounts. The pursuit of good governance is still not the goal.

## 6 Conclusion

This analysis has clarified that poor governance in Africa is a political reality because there are no economic basis for an alternative quality of governance. Poor governance in Africa is a colonial and post-colonial phenomenon which was entrenched in Africa due to changes brought about by colonialism. In the absence of an indigenous productive class with the interest and ability to compel the government to perform better; and in the absence of imperatives necessary for such performance, it becomes the duty of the bourgeoisie in government to show strength of character by possibly committing “class suicide” in the overall interest of the society.<sup>20</sup> But the spirit of individualism engendered by imperialist education

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19 See for example, Sartori, Giovanni (1991), “Rethinking Democracy: Bad Polity and bad Politics”, *International Social Science Journal*, 129, pp. 437-450.

20 The concept of class suicide is used here for want of a better analytical term and is borrowed from Amilcar Cabral. It is based on the realpolitical assumption that the bourgeoisie, like any other class, always protects its own interest. But due to the specificity of the African situation, protection of bourgeois interests merely deepens underdevelopment. To develop Africa economically, this class will have to jettison its class interest and pursue the interests of the productive group in society. See

militates against this development. Within this context, the African population becomes a political burden to the African rulers which they can dispense with and in spite of that, maintain political power. The economic interests of the bourgeoisie in the pursuit of political power further precludes the chances of the emergence of the imperatives of good governance with the consequence that the economic and political problems continued to escalate till they considerably weakened nation-state structures and capabilities.

This analysis also has implications for development policy. The World Bank, the donor community and the international development agencies admonish the African rulers to rule better and 'support' them with development aid, but to no avail, at least till now. What I find critical here is that this approach lacks historical information. Lessons of history teach us that governments have never governed well simply because they decided to heed the admonitions of foreign agents. States only do that when it is in their survival interest to do so. Foreign agents are not in a position to engender good governance because of their wavering interests which make them lack the resilience that such struggles demand. Furthermore, African leaders have demonstrated that they can creatively exploit this lack of resilience to thwart the admonitions. Strengthening the state, good governance and development have always resulted from necessity. It might therefore be necessary for development policy to consider helping create some of the imperatives outlined in this discourse. Definitely, the granting of development aid and support for quasi-dictatorships, turning a blind eye to electoral malpractices and interference in the affairs of weak states to protect the interests of the strong states could not be the avenues to such a development.

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Nzongola-Ntalaja (1984), "Amilcar Cabral and the Theory of National Liberation Struggle", in *Latin America Perspectives*, Vol. 11, Nr. 2, Unity and Struggle: Reassessing the Thoughts of Amilcar Cabral (Spring), or Davidson, Basil (1984), "On Revolutionary Nationalism: The legacy of Cabral" in *ibid*, pp. 15-42 for detailed discussions.

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