The state and the challenges of nationhood in post-conflict West Africa: Ake's theory of political integration

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Abstract
This paper examines Claude Ake's analysis of the problem of political integration and its continuing relevance for contemporary Africa. One of his major works, *A Theory of Political Integration*, is discussed in the light of his conception of the conditions for achieving political integration in the 'new states' in the immediate post-independence period. Focusing on West Africa, the paper discusses the complex web of violent conflict and wars over natural resources from the 1990s as an impediment to political integration in the continent. Epitomized by the erosion of the stateness of many African polities, a renewed salience of informal politics and an adaptation to diminished state presence and service provision, the post-cold war conflict situations in Africa are significant departures from the cold war experiences in the continent. This paper examines the emergent political complex in the region and establishes how it feeds into the global struggles for natural resources and on-going structures of imbalances characterizing the global flows of capital and Africa's growing marginalization and poverty. It highlights the limitations of states' responses and extends Ake's works into a theory of forging nationhood in post-conflict Africa.

Keywords: Claude Ake, political integration, resource wars, state decline, post-conflict West Africa.

Introduction
Without question, Claude Ake is one of the most influential voices in African political thought. While nation-building and political integration were important themes in the theoretical thinking on Africa in the immediate post-independence period, within the literature of that era, Ake's text is a seminal and probably the most sophisticated treatment of the disintegrative impact of the colonial presence on the emergent states in the continent. It is also an original contribution to understanding 'centrifugal pulls' and

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2 Since its publication, it has been virtually impossible to study the impact of colonialism on 'nation-building' and 'state formation' in Africa without an explicit or implicit reference to his thesis on this subject. See Claude Ake (1967a).

3 Although the concrete discussion is mainly of Africa, the potential relevance is broader, particularly for the post-colonial world.
movements of the excluded' in post-colonial societies. Whatever the intellectual addition one proposes to Ake's works in this regard–and this article does have a few–it is nevertheless an important reading for all historians of Africa, whatever their regional specialization. Focusing on the experience of the 'new states', Ake engages brilliantly with the emergent fissiparous challenges in the immediate post-independence period in African history. These had to do with rising conflict based on post-independence political alliances, the emergence of separatist tendencies, the effect of modernization on political stability in new and transitional societies (Ake 1974) and the impact of cultural heterogeneity, low regime legitimacy, economic backwardness and the ethnic factor on the continuity of these political systems.

This paper examines Ake's analysis of the problem of political integration and its continuing relevance for understanding contemporary Africa. It provides an insight into the historical context of his study and his contribution in this regard. It discusses some of the challenges, which faced the newly independent states during the period under review and how they were captured in Ake's works. While the attainment of political integration has long been a crucial concern to political scientists generally (Lijphart 1971), for the post-colonial world, it has remained more of a goal than an achievement (Syed 1980). For many reasons, attention is now widely focused on Africa in on-going debates and discourses on state formation.

What factors make political integration and stability difficult to attain in Africa and under what conditions can such inhibitions be overcome? What political complex is emerging in West Africa? And how relevant are Ake's works for understanding some of the transformations taking place across the continent? This study answers these questions and extends Ake's thesis on political integration into a basis for forging nationhood in Africa. As is widely known, the extent to which Africa's colonial past still influences its post-colonial present is a contentious subject of continuing debate.

In this connection, the passage of time spanning over forty years after formal independence presses scholars to consider new experiences, which progressively re-shape social memory, obscure and transcend the colonial past through the introduction of new defining events, political practices and agendas in the continent (Ellis 2002). The argument of this paper is that in addition to the colonial legacy, the novel civil conflicts over natural resources and other challenges of state decline from the 1990s now

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4 While the historical context of his study was the experience of 'the newly independent African states', in laying the groundwork for a general theory, his concern was extended beyond the African experience.

5 For an expansive treatment of the impediments to political integration in the 'new states', see Claude Ake (1967b); Claude Ake (1973); James S. Coleman (1955) and Howard W. Wriggins (1961).

6 Africa is tremendously important in recent studies of the state not only because more 'new states' were formed in Africa during the 1960s than had been formed in the rest of the world for many centuries but also because immediately after its pre-colonial history, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, Africa offered more examples of emergent states than any other region of the world. This was because in other continents such as Asia or even Europe most of the smaller states of this type had long been absorbed into larger empires, while in aboriginal Australia state forms never evolved at all and in the vast area of pre-Columbian America they were only achieved in the limited areas of Meso-America and the Andean region. Africa thus provides the largest number of examples both of recent indigenous states and of contemporary states formed out of colonial territories. For an elaborate treatment of state formation, see Aidan Southall (1974).

7 For a detailed treatment of this debate, see Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz (1999); Achille Mbembe (2001); Crawford Young (2004) and Nic Cheeseman (2006).
constitute an emergent problem undermining political integration in Africa. This no doubt feeds into the tides of globalization.

Following the introduction, this paper is divided into seven sections. The first re-states Ake's thesis on political integration in Africa. This is fore-grounded using the perspectives of other scholars and Ake's linkage of this problem with the limited autonomy of the state—as the unique feature of 'the state in Africa'. The second section discusses the state decline, which occurred in West Africa in the 1990s. The third section examines the resource war and state collapse in Sierra Leone—also in the 1990s. The examination of Nigeria's Niger Delta in section four is followed by section five, which advances a critique of the neo-liberal approach to peace-building and state reconstruction in the continent. Section six examines Claude Ake's intervention on how the state in Africa might be re-invented. Section seven provides the conclusion.

Ake's thesis on political integration: a re-capitulation

Ake's study was developed from an analysis of the problem of political integration in the 'new states' to the more general question of their capacity for undertaking social change on a large scale and for withstanding the disruptive impact of such change. His aim was to "formulate a theory of the conditions of political integration, engineered large-scale social change, political stability and the relation between the three phenomena" (Ake 1967a: 1). Following Sidney Verba (1965: 513), Ake locates political culture as central to political integration. He defines political culture as comprising "the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place" (Verba 1965). He frames 'the problem of political integration' as one of developing a political culture and of inducing commitment to it (Ake 1967a: 1) and argues that this crucial problem is 'a shorthand expression for two other related problems':

a) How to elicit from subjects deference and devotion to the claims of the state.

b) How to increase normative consensus governing political behavior among members of the political system.

Some points about Ake's (1967a: 3-4) illustrations on political integration should be underlined:

A political system is integrated to the extent that the minimal units (individual political actors) develop in the course of political interaction a pool of commonly accepted norms regarding political behavior and a commitment to the political behavior patterns legitimized by these norms.

… A political system is malintegrated to the extent that political exchanges are not regulated by a normative culture. In malintegrated political systems the emphasis is on effective rather than on legitimate means for pursuing goals; in highly integrated political systems the emphasis is on legitimate rather than on effective means.

… In a minimally integrated political system—and such a political system can only be an ideal type—the "subjects" obey the rulers not out of a sense of obligation but only because they are obliged to.

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8 A detailed re-telling of the particularities of Ake's theory of political integration is not possible in this section. Nevertheless, a re-capitulation of its essential elements is indispensable for our task.

9 Understandably, he refers to the populations in a minimally integrated political system as 'subjects' and not 'citizens' because such a system of relations is strictly speaking 'pre-civil'. His view of political integration leans towards the consensus theory of social integration, which sees value consensus as the pervasive character of society and for which the role of coercion in social integration is the subordinate one.
He refrains from using the term 'national integration' not only because 'nation' suggests a highly integrated human group but also because the concept of nation is both controversial and problematic, especially as different writers explain the bond of nationality using different categories—common history, culture, language, social communication and will. For Africa, Ake defines the problem of political integration as entailing 'the transformation of a multiplicity of traditional societies into coherent political societies'; 'the increasing of cultural homogeneity and value consensus'; and 'the eliciting of deference and devotion from the individual to the state' (Ake 1967a: 96). According to Ake (1967a: 17-18):

The crucial problem of the postcolonial situation is the integration of the new nation which is threatened by strong centrifugal forces. The nationalist movement, invariably a coalition of ethnic, professional, religious, and social groups, tends to disintegrate with the elimination of imperial control. At the same time, the solidarity of the political leaders suffers partly because of differences in approach to the problems of administering and developing the country which now loom large. The optimistic psychological atmosphere characteristic of revolutions raises expectations to heights that the new government cannot possibly satisfy with the meager means at its disposal. The divergence of hopes and fulfillment tends to cause frustration and alienation.

Some people seek to compensate themselves for the frustrations of colonial oppression by enjoying their newly won freedom with exuberance; sometimes there is an almost pathological hatred for all forms of social and legal control. And all these tensions and cleavages arise in a period of rapid social change when, because many traditional usages are being abandoned and habituation to new ones is yet uncompleted, expectations in regard to roles and responses are temporarily confused. This is the chaotic situation faced by a new government with limited experience and yet to establish its legitimacy. The crucial problem is how to establish and maintain authority under such difficult conditions.

He identifies 'cleavages in the nationalist movement'; 'elite competition'; 'cleavages in the social structure' and 'the problems of policy' as major centrifugal pulls, which impeded the integration of these states in the immediate post-colonial period (Ake 1967a: 17-35). Cleavages in the nationalist movement were manifested *inter alia* in 'the confrontation of special interests within the nationalist movement'; 'the impact of an expanded franchise' of controlling deviancy. It should be added, however, that the political system held together 'purely' by normative consensus, what one might call 'optimal integration' is only an ideal type, for we know of no political system that does not deploy legitimate coercion in some form or other.


This definition applies to other 'new states' as well.

Comprising trade unions pressing for higher wages and the ending of racial discrimination; intellectuals angered by their subordination to semi-literate colonial officials; syncretistic movements reacting against the inroads of Christianity into the native culture; traditional authorities smarting from their diminishing influence; as well as those who hold the colonial government responsible for all social ills, the nationalist movement was not a united body of people with a common approach to social problems but a coalition of special interests. The maneuvering by these groups for insulation against exploitation not only undermined the solidarity of the nationalist movement but also stimulated previously politically inarticulate interest groups to seek political influence. At independence there was no common coin of national unity—ethnic, socio-economic or psychological. Being personified by sectarianism rather than national unity, there was no leader of stature to serve as a national symbol. In Sudan the anti-colonialist agitation eventually led to the factionalization of politics along old ethnic and religious lines. In Ghana ethnic particularism, politically manifested in the National Liberation Movement, the Muslim Association Party and the Northern Peoples Party threatened the supremacy of Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party. Uganda's National Congress was frightened by the breakaway Uganda Congress Party, which expressed Ganda
Economically, he says in spite of 'self-rule', multinational corporations still controlled the most crucial sectors of the economies, while the new bourgeoisie was more statist than bourgeois (Ake 1967a). Elite competition was manifested in 'the differences in the ideological orientations of the leaders'; 'the suspicion between professional politicians and alienated intellectuals whose oppositionalism spilled over to the post-colonial regime' (Ake 1967a: 27); 'the competition for office that came with independence'; and 'ethnic competition' (Ake 1967a: 28-29). Cleavages in the social structures of these states were played out in 'the uneasy relationship between the leaders and their masses'; 'the disenchantment with the revolution and its leaders who could not translate 'the development slogan' and other abstract notions of democratic rights into immediate material improvements'; bitterness at the politicians who developed their own wealth at the people's expense, and the continued yearning for development in the form of schools, hospitals, marketing facilities, and a chance both to earn money and respect (Ake 1967a: 30-31); 'the problems linked with 'integral decolonization' and other initiatives with which the leaders sought to re-socialize their masses from colonial indoctrination to the real conditions of their milieu and also from their traditional ties to the rational-bureaucratic culture required for a successful industrial revolution' (Ake 1967a: 31-32). The problems of policy were noted in 'the attempt to adopt one of the indigenous languages as lingua franca'; the tribalism. In Kenya, the Kenya African National Union dominated by the Luo, the Kikuyu and other bigger tribes was opposed by the Kenya African Democratic Union, which insisted on the protection of minority rights through a loose federal constitution. And in Nigeria, the contention by majority-minority ethnic groups informed the appointment of a special commission to look into ways of allaying minority fears.
controversies that surrounded their education reform' (Ake 1967a: 33); and 'the difficulty of finding acceptable cultural symbols around which 'the new nations' could be united' (Ake 1967a: 33-34). There was therefore, much trouble in transforming these states into symbols that inspired popular loyalty. Ake observes that although a few unifying potential may have been noticed in these states–'the unifying capacity of Christianity and Islam'; 'the language and political philosophy of the imperial powers'; and 'the bonds of wider economic interaction', he says on balance, the disintegrative pressures on the nationalist movement far outweigh these centripetal factors.\footnote{Ake (1967a: 34) states that:}

A major defect of current theories of political integration is their insensitiveness to the complexity of the problem with which they are concerned. Because they oversimplify the question, they are prone to offer superficial answers. It is clear, for instance, that those theories which conceive political integration mainly as the bridging of the sociocultural gap between the elite and the masses are inadequate. …. the elite-mass dichotomy is only one–and by no means the most important–dimension of the problem.

He concludes with postulations on the conditions under which political integration and stability are attainable by these states.\footnote{He states that the primary prerequisite for a high degree of integration is the acquisition of 'a mature political culture' and that the essential preliminary for this is the broadening and intensification of social communication. Following Karl Deutsch (1961) Ake argues that to improve their communicative efficiency these states must undertake social mobilization–"the process through which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken down and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior". He observes that the problem of political integration is not confined to Africa–but is shared by the post-colonial world–and is one of the regressive features differentiating the state in the East from its counterparts in the West. Of this difference, A. H. Somjee (1984: 1) observes that:}

In marked contrast to the experiences of the developing countries, which set up their political institutions during the short period of decolonisation following the Second World War, the mature democracies of the West took two to three centuries to develop the operational efficiency and durability of their political institutions. And what is more, along with such a development, they also evolved the requisite political capacity and political skill to sustain and operate their political institutions and repel the periodic infractions against them.

In the countries of the West, the liberal political institutions developed along with, and as a result of, the growth of capitalism. Capitalism's modernising thrust and its search for increased profits forced the Western European societies to change their legal and political institutions and allow maximum entrepreneurial activity with minimum political restriction. Consequently, the major social and economic historians of European societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Marx, Weber, Sombart, Tonnies, Michels, Tawney, Lukacs and Moore, were inclined to treat the growth of institutional changes as the handiwork of history and its impersonal forces rather than the work of men. To these thinkers, however,

\textit{bitterly opposed the effort of the Sinhalese majority to raise the status of Sinhalese to a national language; the attempt to make Hindi the official language in India raised a political storm; while the sharp reaction anticipated from the Igbo, Yoruba and other ethnic groups prevented the state from making Hausa the official language in Nigeria.}\footnote{Ake concedes that in spite of these tensions, the Convention Peoples Party in Ghana, the India National Congress and the Parti Democratique de Guinee were examples of nationalist parties, which displayed considerable solidarity.}

\footnote{For a detailed treatment of these conditions and his illustration of the experiences of some historical political systems, see Claude Ake (1967a: 96-150).}
the role of ideas and the direction given by creative thinkers and influential statesmen was also important. But these latter became significant to the extent to which they catalyzed and released certain historical forces to shape the direction of human institutions and processes. Consequently, for these thinkers the problem of sustaining newly created institutions did not arise. For them the historical forces which created such institutions also sustained them. When a different set of impersonal historical forces appeared on the scene, they either reshaped the existing institutions or created new ones. The relationship thus conceived was between historical forces and institutions rather than between men, in or out of office, and institutions.

This problem has assumed several forms over time and space. It has also been formulated around different issues and themes by various scholars according to the political and social histories, ethnic and other attributes of the societies in question. For example, Jeyaratnam Wilson and Dennis Dalton (1982) explain it with reference to South-Asia in terms of the region’s inability to transform 'the congeries of artificial entities' left behind by the imperial powers into truly modern state-systems based on the rule of law and appropriate constitutional designs. Post and Vickers (1973) capture it in terms of 'instability and political conflict' in Nigeria's First Republic. Cyril Obi (1999) depicts it as 'resource wars'. A. H. Somjee (1984) hinges it on 'the development of accommodationist tendencies and strategies' in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kenya and Nigeria. In Rwanda, it has to do with "the Bahutu-Batutsi question and the corresponding challenge of breaking out of the conflictual notion of the state as a representation of a permanently defined majority" (Mamdani 2003: 227-270). In the great lakes region, it is formulated around the recognition of the rights of the local populations to the region's mineral wealth by the state and foreign multinational corporations (Nabudere 2004). On Ecuador and Bolivia, Andres Guerrero and Rossana Barragan pose the problem in terms of "how to deal with the Indians and other 'dependents' that constitute the majority of the population" (Guerrero and Barragan 2003: 59-96). The complexity of this problem thus requires that attention is paid to particular case studies within individual countries and regions.

Ake argues that Africa's problem of political integration is centrally linked with the character of the state--its limited autonomy--and its implications for conflicts and socio-economic development in the continent. He captures 'autonomization' as 'the very essence

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20 He relates this problem to the complex linkage between population, resource scarcity and conflict in Africa. He debunks the thesis that 'rapid population growth, beyond the limits of the carrying capacity of the ecosystem or resource-threshold' generates stresses and ultimately provokes conflict. He says, beyond these factors, efforts at understanding the roots of conflict in Africa must consider the often ignored but real threat posed to the continent's resources from a small fraction of mankind in the North who are cornering the continent's natural wealth while also blaming its victims for being poor and promiscuous.

21 Maintaining a formal, separate status for them as dependents as in earlier colonial legislations, was not an option since it went against the very principle of a 'modern' constitution. Yet, including them among the citizens was equally unthinkable.

22 Using some 12-point indicators, which include 'nation-building abilities and potentials', 'institutional strength and fragility', 'the vulnerability of states to violent internal conflict', 'societal deterioration' and other 'economic', 'political', 'social' and 'military considerations', the Washington-based Foreign Policy Journal Index on Failed States, 2007, cited in The Times of India, placed eight African countries among the first ten 'failed states' in the world. In a recent study, which ranked 177 countries based on data made available from more than 12, 000 public sources collected between May and December 2006, the Journal's 'Failed States Index' ranked Sudan as the first failed state in the world, with Somalia, Zimbabwe, Chad, Cote d’ Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea and the Central African Republic as the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, ninth and tenth respectively in the world. See The Times of India (2007: 10).
of the state' and identifies 'the autonomization of the mechanisms of domination' as the central feature of the state both in political theory and also in the advanced capitalist societies (Ake 1985a: 106-107). According to him, this does not mean that the state is entirely neutral, but that it is significantly independent and autonomous of the existing social and hegemonic classes within it. According to him, the state's autonomization is concretely expressed in two ways. According to Ake, "autonomization … institutionalizes the equal treatment of unequals that underlies the capital relation" sic. "Thus epitomized as the rule of law, autonomization reproduces the rule of capital over labor by the very rights it guarantees, for example, the worker's right to sell his labor to whoever he or she pleases, the capitalist's right to surplus value and its free disposal" (Ake 1985a: 107).

For Africa, Ake indicates that an understanding of the history, nature and character of the state is very important for capturing the dynamics of socio-economic formations, their configuration and transformation within it. He traces the history of 'the state in Africa' to (i) colonialism and the capitalist penetration of the regions (Ake 1981: 19-31 and 32-42) and (ii) the eventual political legacy of colonialism for the continent (Ake 1996a: 1-6). Having characterized the capitalist mode of production as 'the ideal setting' for the development of the state's form of domination, Ake refrains from referring to the social formations in Africa as 'independent states'. This, according to him is because the specific form of capitalist development, which occurred in Africa, is both 'enclave and peripheral'. Furthermore, he says, 'the process of state formation in the continent is bogged down by knotty contradictions, which stubbornly resist transcendence' (Ake 1985b: 3). Speaking to these contradictions, he refers to the wholesale importation of the mentalities, practices and routines of the colonial state into its post-colonial successor and the limited nature of the state's independence, which resulted from that process (Ake 1996a: 1-6). According to him, "In Africa, there are few social formations that are capitalist enough or socialist enough to be identifiable as clearly boasting the state form of domination" (Ake 1985a: 108).

He argues that far from being overwritten, significant legacies of Africa's 'colonial past' still influence the 'post-colonial state' in remarkable ways (Ake 1996a). He identifies 'limited autonomy' as 'the unique feature of the state in Africa' and points out that being a 'post-colonial state', its limited autonomy furthers its dependent and peripheralized status within the polarized system of global capitalism. In doing this, he draws attention to the role of the state, which he describes as central to the worldwide polarization of the capitalist system by intensifying its dependent status to the metropolitan economies. Politically, he observes that in spite of independence, the 'absoluteness', 'arbitrariness' and 'statism' of the colonial state crept in intact into its 'post-colonial heir' and still define its character as an autocratic and exclusive state, which alienates the people in economic and political decision-making processes (Ake 1996a: 1-3). Economically, he observes that the

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23 One, in the fact that economic domination operates independent of the social groups that dominate and is perceived as a natural force, or at any rate, as an impersonal force: he calls this 'market forces'. Two, in the political sphere. He argues that the autonomization of domination is generated and reproduced through the mediation of commodity production and exchange 'in the manner in which the state is constituted'.

24 This according to him is because the state is the central locus of politics and therefore the major determinant of the direction of most societal processes. For an elaboration of this position, see Claude Ake (1985b: 1-32).

25 On the implications of 'the limited autonomy' of 'the state in Africa', see Claude Ake (1985a: 108-110).
'dependence', 'disarticulation' and other 'contradictions' of the colonial economy still loom large (Ake 1981: 44-65).

It should be stressed that the limited autonomy of 'the state in Africa' engenders conflict in a number of ways. One, 'the state in Africa' is burdened with onerous responsibilities, which it is hardly able to meet: "it is supposed to undertake economic development in the face of a weak or non-existent entrepreneurial class". "It is also expected to undertake state-building, nation-building and political integration" (Ake 1997: 2). However, as Ake (1997: 2) observes, the contradiction with these expectations is that:

... these are tasks which presuppose the absence of the state or its rudimentary existence. Somewhat incongruously, a fledgling state is expected to tame the anarchy of complex heterogeneities and their immanent centrifugalism when it is ludicrously weak. Quite clearly, this is an improbable proposition.

Given this context, the stakes and struggles for state power are very high and often assume 'a zero-sum game approach' (Ake 1997). In the process, the state is immersed in the struggles by contending elements and is often hijacked by the hegemonic social classes within it. This leads to an exclusive politics articulated in the struggle for power based on efficiency norms rather than legitimacy norms; the triumph of the vicious circle over the virtuous one (Ake 1997); the centralization of power; the imposition of domination and political control; the alienation of the leaders from their masses; and the deployment of extremism in the exercise of power (Ake 1982: 1-3). In effect, the "people tendentially retreat into their primary groups which become the beneficiary of their residual loyalty" (Ake 1996a: 3) and explore other 'extra-juridical' and 'non-state means', which often have very high conflict potential. In the process, society becomes deeply divided; and alienation is endemic, while distrust and anxiety among the contending groups are so pronounced that the state stumbles on the brink of disaster, almost headed for disintegration in an orgy of political violence, recrimination and war (Ake 1982: 1).

Under these circumstances, state-building is subverted and becomes the political equivalent of primitive accumulation 'in a rather violent form' (Ake 1997: 2). It entails conquest and subjugation since it is projected as arbitrary power. It revokes the autonomy of communities and subjects them to alien rule within an otherwise independent political system (i) by laying claim to the resources of subordinated territories and (ii) through its exertion of 'legitimate force' in counteracting resource wars and pro-democratic resistance (Ake 1997: 2). Thus, while "state making is not undifferentiated in its dynamics and impact" (Ake 1997: 2), in Africa, it assumes a very high conflict profile. These experiences feed into the implosion of violent conflict and wars over state power and the natural resources in the continent–leading to 'state decline', 'weaknesses', and sometimes–'disintegration'.

26 The limited autonomy of 'the state in Africa' no doubt explains its class partisan character.
27 There is also the mutual alienation of the ethnic groups as ethnic consciousness is manipulated as a means for securing economic and political power and for retarding the development of an objective class consciousness.
28 This power is 'arbitrary' because those on whom it is projected originally owed no political allegiance to the state makers.
Resource wars and state decline in West Africa

How has West Africa fared since the post-cold war period? What political complex is emerging in the sub-region? And how is conflict impacting on its economy and socio-political landscape? This section answers these questions. It addresses the question of how conflict over natural resources undermines political integration and stability in the sub-region. As we have indicated earlier, the post-cold war conflict situations in Africa are significant departures from the cold war experiences in the continent. This section explores this difference with respect to West Africa.

Since the 1990s, fundamental changes have taken place within 'the state in Africa' (Ellis 1996). Powerful external forces in the industrialized world have exerted considerable influence on events on the continent. Such influences have also been aided by the tides of globalization and the revolution in communication and information technology, which are rapidly changing the world as a whole. While 'the end of the cold war' has emerged as a key topic in understanding the transformation of world politics (Hale and Kienle 1997: 1-12), with lots of efforts sunk in attempts at assessing its impact, analyses of its causes and consequences have largely focused on issues of global systemic change–thus ignoring the transformations now taking place in Africa and other regions of the South that have hardly occupied the centre-stage of global affairs (Hale and Kienle 1997: Back page). Yet, 'the end of the cold war' actually marked the close of an era for Africa in an instructive manner (Young 2002). Although the continent recorded some remarkable achievements in democratization and economic reform, the 1990s, nevertheless, became the decade in which endemic state crisis of an unprecedented magnitude was confirmed in the continent. 'Only the former Soviet orbit faced a comparable gab between "really existing socialism" and the imperatives of a postcommunist world' (Young 2002: 533).

To be sure, the significance of this period for sub-Saharan Africa lies in 'the coincidence of the transformation in the international system with a profound internal crisis of the state in the continent' (Clapham 1997: 99). From this period, constructive interaction within African states has remained largely elusive (Cooper 2006: 184). Needless to say, much has already been written about the origins of this crisis and its connections with the impact of the cold war for Africa–among other external factors (Ake 1985c, Amin 1990, Escobar 1995 and De Walle 2001). I do not wish to intervene in that discussion. Focusing on Sierra Leone and Nigeria's Niger Delta, my concern in this article is with 'violent conflicts and resource wars'–as major 'internal inhibitions' undermining political integration and state cohesion in the curious context of West Africa.

One major feature characterizing West Africa is the explosion of internal conflicts over its natural resources. This is due mainly to the forms of politics weaved around the allocation of the national revenues derived from such resources. While the emergent political complex in the sub-region feeds into 'the new war on terrorism' (Barnes 2005 and Obi 2006), this political complex derives largely from the economic and geo-political significance of the sub-region to the international political economy, particularly given

29 Globalization describes what a number of people perceive as a fundamental change in the conditions of human life.
30 While there has been a great contention on 'what' has changed and 'how', the literature on globalization focuses on the specific trends that appear to have pushed the sources and implications of social action beyond state borders.
the increasing demand by the major capitalist countries for its natural resources in the context of 'the New Gulf'.

West Africa is assuming a new and critical role in global affairs. An increased geopolitical relevance is a major feature of the emergent political complex and a growing interest in the sub-region's natural resources is at the heart of this renewed interest by the various international actors in the sub-region. Among the major capitalist countries competing in the sub-region, the United States is the most dominant and its involvement is not continuing its post-cold war decline. The year 2002 marked a major post-cold war shift in the U.S. relations to Africa. In that year, Africa was identified as a potential threat to America's national security. Two major reasons for defining the continent as a national security threat for the U.S. were 'terrorism' and 'oil'. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the war in Iraq confirmed the centrality of African oil in the country's dependence on external oil supplies. The United States consumes one-quarter of the world's oil supply--twenty million of the eighty million barrels produced every day. Between 13 and 18 percent of this comes from West and Central Africa (Barnes 2005: 3). There are also predictions that this may reach 25 percent within ten years with most of it coming from Nigeria, Angola, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea (Africa Action 2003 and Ebel 2004). The second leading US export to Africa estimated at about $717.3 million annually is also 'oil and gas equipment' (US Department of Commerce 2004: 9).

The US investment in the oil trade is therefore immense. In 2004 it spent $17.8 billion on African oil. This amounted to 70 percent of all its purchases from Africa (US Department of Commerce 2004: 9). Between 1994 and 2004, US oil companies also invested from $30 to $40 billion in West and Central African oil operations (Barnes 2005: 4). More than one hundred thousand jobs in the US are estimated to be linked to African oil, especially in Texas, Louisiana and California. Similar situations also obtain within oil-rich African states. More than three thousand Americans work in Equatorial Guinea--almost all in the oil sector (Barnes 2005: 5). Disruptions in Angolan and Nigerian oil supplies therefore severely impact on the American economy since there are few, if any replacements outside the Persian Gulf. This understanding draws attention to the 'internal dynamics' of the oil-producing states in Africa. Violence within these states also reduces oil production and supplies. While illegal siphoning enables militias to secure money to purchase arms with which to either engage in criminal activities or protest various injustices, oil supplies are constantly kept vulnerable. Examples of such instances are the disruptions and strikes of 2003 in Nigeria, which decreased oil production by as much as eight hundred thousand barrels daily (Goldwyn and Morrison 2004: 16). In Angola's Cabinda and Nigeria's Niger Delta--Africa's largest oil-producing regions--separatist movements have emerged with intense anger and violent conflicts against the oil industry and national governments over

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31 Conceptualized by the USA, the idea of 'the New Gulf' refers to the recent efforts by the US government to explore Central and Western Africa for crude oil resources as an alternative to the volatile Middle East.
32 Others are Britain, the G-8 countries, the countries of the European Union (EU) as well as China and India.
33 According to the United States' Department of Energy, due to the warfare in the Middle East, Nigeria currently produces more oil than Iraq and Angola produces half of that amount. See US Department of Energy (2004).
34 This takes many forms including attacks against oil firms, workers and foreign expatriates by members of the indigenous communities; oil theft, hostage taking, vandalism of oil pipelines and other installations as well as state-ethnic, intra and inter ethnic communal clashes among others.
revenue-sharing; the lack of transparency in oil company payments to governments; youth unemployment and the destruction of the living and productive environment (Barnes 2005: 4 and 21).

Natural resources in Africa thus suffer a bad reputation. Oil and diamonds have especially been linked with the corruption, dictatorship, poverty and wars in the continent (Basedau 2005). The conflicts that engulfed West Africa from the 1990s are representative of a type of endemic warfare that has become common in the post-cold war situations across the world.\(^{35}\) They are resource-based and have expanded with the process of globalization.\(^{36}\) With globalization, international trade now stretches beyond states' borders into previously isolated regions for the raw materials needed for industrial production. However, while natural resources are vigorously haunted, transnational corporations hardly pay adequate attention to the conditions under which such resources are acquired—and their environmental and political-economic implications for the local communities. Given the context of 'corruption', 'ethno-regional competitions based on the struggle for power' and other harsh internal realities, conservative elite politics have failed to transform the sub-region's resource endowment into a basis for sustainable development. This is especially the case in Nigeria. Hence, the contention that 'resource abundance' in itself neither fosters democracy nor guarantees development (Ross 2001). A lot therefore depends on the autonomy of the state as a mediating institution, the context of elite competition and the forms of politics weaved around the allocation of revenues within such countries.

**Resource wars and state collapse in Sierra Leone**

The war in Sierra Leone represents one of the most tragic episodes in the country's post-independence history (Cheru 2008: 5). It began with the emergence of a non-state entity with a variable territorial structure and became an insurgency after assuming control over a resource base; routes over which resources were moved out of the source area, and exchange points from where resources were traded for weapons and other treasures (Silberfein 2004: 213 and Clapham 1998: 7-8). Anti-state rivals developed cross-border networks, which smuggled out valuable resources, notably diamonds, and smuggled in arms and luxury goods for the "gate-evading leadership" (Cooper 2006: 159). It took the form of 'crime disguised as war', and bore a close resemblance with criminal activity. It later degenerated into 'warlordism' and the weakening of state institutions (Cooper 2006: 186). Its perpetrators have therefore been described as 'entrepreneurs of war'. The resource war and state collapse in Sierra Leone are best understood as products of the character of the state and its limited autonomy—especially given the context of governance failure and 'the cake-sharing psychosis' of the elites. In understanding these developments, attention should be paid to elite practices in the country, which created the political conditions that allowed subalterns to usurp power and terrorize society (Kandey 1999). Such practices 'valorized pillage', 'massified society', 'banalized violence' and 'sobelized the army' (Kandey 1999: 349). Such practices came about through the

\(^{35}\) In 2000, approximately one-quarter of 'all the conflicts in the world' were resource-based. For a detailed exposition on resource-based conflicts across the world, see M. Renoir (2002: 149).

\(^{36}\) The major challenge with globalization in this connection is that it impels states to position themselves not as engines of development co-operation within the transnational space but as agents of unhealthy competition.
appropriation of lumpen violence and thuggery by the political class—a development, which undermined security and paved the way for the emergence of ‘armed marginals’.\textsuperscript{37}

Linking ‘resource wars’ with ‘state collapse’ in Sierra Leone helps us in appreciating the implications of the ‘limited autonomy’ of ‘the state in Africa’, which Ake theorized.

The political crisis in Sierra Leone began in the 1960s, shortly after Sir Milton Margai, the country's first prime minister and leader of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), died in office in 1964 and was replaced by his half-brother, Albert Margai, as party leader and prime minister (Kandey 2003: 191). Albert Margai's leadership of the SLPP however, triggered dissension within the party and led to the defection of prominent northern leaders who later joined the opposition—the All Peoples Congress (APC). When the APC defeated the SLPP during the second post-independence elections of 1967, Albert Margai and other SLPP stalwarts encouraged the army commander at that time to seize power. This interruption undermined a smooth transfer of power. It also marked a major reversal in the country's emerging democratic system. Although the APC was eventually installed one year later, the country's road to democratic governance had already been derailed.

The APC was in power in Sierra Leone between 1968 and 1992. These years were marred by corruption and repression among state officials. The four general elections (1973, 1977, 1982, 1987) conducted under the APC were also very fraudulent. In addition to political repression and leadership corruption (Kandey 2003: 192), the economy also tended towards a deep crisis. There was de-industrialization, excessive pilfering of public resources and a dependence on the petty-commodity sector for social reproduction (Bangura 1992). Economic devastation was particularly evident in the extractive sector (Kandey 1996: 401). These situations engendered alienation and "sowed the seeds of armed rebellion and subaltern terror" in the country (Kandey 2003: 192).

In 1992, a group of subaltern military underclass within the country's army—‘the militariat’—captured state power through a successful coup attempt and re-constituted power under the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) (Hoffman 2006). As Jimmy D. Kandey (2003: 192) observes:

The RUF rebellion hastened the removal of the APC in a \textit{coup d'etat} orchestrated by junior officers of the Sierra Leone army. The APC's ouster in a popular coup rekindled public expectations for an end to the RUF rebellion, the restoration of state capacities and a return to democratic rule.

However, contrary to its populist rhetoric, the NPRC, the military junta that replaced the APC, failed to adopt social transformative goals. It also failed to create new mobilizational political structures (Kandey 1996: 387-404). It was in fact, not fundamentally different from its predecessor, especially because it could neither end the war nor restore the state. It should however be qualified that in Sierra Leone, signs of institutional collapse actually predated the NPRC. In fact, such signs were among the reasons given for ousting the APC from power. Nevertheless, the emergence of the militariat as a major contender for power in the country highlights some of the pitfalls of clientelism as a mechanism of political domination. The subaltern militariat was mainly a retarding political force, which accelerated state collapse through the dual usurpation of

\textsuperscript{37} For a detailed treatment of this politics of elite collaboration with the junta, and its impact on governance, see Jimmy D. Kandey (1999).
military hierarchy and societal political leadership (Kandey 1996: 388 and Zartman 1995).

Eventually, the NPRC became a major source of predatory instability for the state in Sierra Leone. This was evident in the state's descent to terrorism, a development, which heralded the dawn of 'a new barbarism' as the outcome of a weak state. It also led to the fragmentation of power and the breakdown of law and order—signaling the protective and regulative collapse of the state in the final years of military rule in the country. The corollary of this penetrative shrinkage was the state's extractive and allocative retraction, especially as capital flight created a domestic liquidity crisis (Kandey 1996: 400-401). On balance, the collapse of the state in Sierra Leone created problems for democratization, state capacity and institution-building in the country. Public demands and external pressures for multi-party elections later compelled the NPRC to conduct elections and hand over power in 1996. Several issues have thus characterized the country's return to democratic politics.

Given the connection with the country's diamonds, the conflict in Sierra Leone has been quite difficult to end—especially due to the interests of some of the participants benefiting from the unsettled conditions of the conflict—conditions, which facilitate access to natural resources through smuggling and other shady trades. These situations undermine the newly won peace given the stand-off conditions, in which children, women and civilians have been vulnerable, social services have been moribund and the national economy is both stagnant and relapses into decline—a situation, which Marilyn Silberfein calls—'negative peace'—in which the structural imbalances underlining conflict remain intact (Silberfein 2004: 4).

**Nigeria's Niger Delta**

The Niger Delta offers an instance in which the legitimacy of the state is severely challenged by 'anti-state mobilizations', which fault the state increasingly for not adequately representing their interests. While such mobilizations appear to be similar to the country's civil war experience, they are also fundamentally different, for, unlike the civil war, which was premised on a secessionist bid by the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria, the Niger Delta struggle is anchored on agitations for 'resource control', 'true federalism', 'self-determination' and an end to decades of 'economic exploitation' and 'internal colonialism' by multinational capital and the majority ethnic groups through the operations of a skewed federal structure. The Niger Delta question is therefore best understood as having many dimensions. One, it feeds into the predatory and rentier character of the Nigerian state, especially given the context of an oil-centric political economy and the legacies of hyper-centralized military rule. Two, it is related to the

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38 For a provocative treatment of the impact of state collapse on democratization in Sierra Leone and West Africa, see Claude Welch (1983). And for theoretical explanations on the presence of members of the armed forces in African politics, see S. E. Finer (1974).

39 In the Gambia where neither the state nor government collapsed, there was no discernible deflation of institutional capacity under the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC). For an elaboration on the Gambian experience, see Jimmy D. Kandey (1996: 402ff).

40 For recent works, which speak to 'the differences between the two struggles', see Axel Harneit-Sievers (2006) and Chibuike Uche (2008).
questions of rights, citizenship and the national question. Three, it is linked to the politics of elite aggrandizements, which underlines the 'non-developmental use of the country's revenues' through 'the prebendal appropriation of public offices for private gains'. Given the centrality of oil in Nigeria's political economy, violent conflicts in the region have serious implications for the country's viability (Ake 1996b: 34). These perspectives explain the weaknesses in the country's political economy; the imperatives of regime survival by self-seeking politicians; the pervasiveness of social injustices; the permeating of public institutions by endemic corruption; the fragmentation and breakdown of social trust; infrastructural and institutional decay; and the circulation of major political positions within a narrow set of elites (Joseph 2003: 162-163). They also underline the regressive dynamics of 'governance', 'institution-building', 'state-formation' and 'economic performance' in the country–interwoven processes–'running in reverse and handicapping development' (De Waal 2003). It is the politics weaved around revenue allocation in the country that engenders the legacy of conflict–through the competition for oil revenues by ethnically-defined constituencies (Williams 1980: 69)–and 'the politics of neglect and repression' adopted by successive regimes in their responses to agitations for redress by members of the oil-rich region (Cooper 2006: 174). On the impact of violent uprising in the region on Nigeria's stability and cohesion, Ake (1996b: 34) observes that:

What is at issue is nothing less than the viability of Nigeria, as oil is the real power and the stuff of politics in Nigeria as well as what holds the country in a fragile dialectical unity of self-seeking. It is time to call Shell to order and to account.

The 1990s have witnessed a renewal of violent uprising by ethnic communities against the state and oil-prospecting companies in the region. Unlike the agitation by the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in the early 1990s, which was limited to the Ogoni, the present context signals the implosion of violent conflicts, which have been fatal across the region, almost on the scale of an insurgency, with telling effects on national development. Taking the forms of 'attacks against oil firms and Nigerian military personnel protecting oil complexes and installations' (Ukiwo 2007), as well as 'hostage taking and hijackings' (Suberu 2004: 338), the Niger Delta crisis is presently the greatest challenge to Nigerian federalism as a design for managing ethno-territorial cleavages and other fiscal challenges (Ejobowah 2000 and David-West 1994: 33). The confirmations to this assertion have been cumulative and compelling. Nigeria's return to civilian rule in May 1999 has been followed by a deluge of political litigation in the judicial context; inter-governmental conflicts; constitutional and institutional crises; as well as ethno-regional and religious outbursts, which have been constitutionally contentious, politically explosive and regionally divisive for the federation. These

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41 The construction and nature of the state in Nigeria, rooted in "the colonial pedigree", as elsewhere in Africa, tend toward the institutionalization of ethnic entitlements, rights and privileges; so that rather than providing a common bond for the people through the tie of citizenship, with equal rights, privileges and obligations–both in precepts and in practice, the state furthers their bifurcation. For more on this position, see Said Adejumobi (2001).

42 Hence Richard Joseph's (2003: 166) description of the region as "a semi-anarchic arena of ever-morphing conflicts among ethnic and clan groups", and "between members of the local communities, the security forces of the state and international oil companies".
conflicts bear on the ownership of off-shore oil resources; the distribution of public revenues; the implementation of Islamic Sharia law; the management of the police and public order; the agitations for resource control and self-determination in the Niger Delta; as well as the status and control of local governments in the country. Among all these issues, the Niger Delta crisis has been most de-stabilizing for the country in terms of its impact.\textsuperscript{43}

What have aggravated the crisis are the responses by the Nigerian state–responses which have consistently been dismissive and repressive of what the people consider to be their genuine aspirations and rights. Such responses have also created 'a context in which the capacity for terror by previously marginalized armed groups and young combatants has become a new marker of elitism and a source of leverage on peace agreements' (Ismail 2008). Examples of such responses abound in the country's colonial and post-colonial histories.

The foremost expression of protest by the ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta against the Nigerian state took place under colonial rule against the creation of the 1946 three regional structure by the British colonial hegemons. The imbalances, which resulted from that historic arrangement, have been sources of controversy and crucial determinants of the structure of federal power that goes to the centre and the regions.\textsuperscript{44} In response, although the colonial government appointed a Commission of Enquiry in September 1957 to look into the agitation and the means of allaying them, and although the Commission confirmed the existence of what it called some 'genuine fears', the colonial state fell short of recommending any form of self-determination (Nigeria 1958). Similar response patterns have characterized the dispositions by the state to minorities' agitations in the post-colonial period. In the early 1990s, in response to MOSOP's demands,\textsuperscript{45} the then Military government in Nigeria crushed Ogoni resistance through the repression of Ogoni protest and the trial and hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other MOSOP activists in November 1995. In doing this, it failed to stem the tide of protests and violence in the region as other communities confronted oil companies and one another in bitter conflict (Obi 2006). In December 1998, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) released the Kaima Declaration in which it claimed ownership of the oil in Ijawland and asked all oil companies' contractors and staff to withdraw from Ijawland by 30 December 1998, pending the resolution of the question of 'resource ownership' and the control of the Ijaw area of the Niger Delta (The Kaima Declaration 1998). In response, the federal government declared a state of emergency in the region and deployed thousands of soldiers, naval troops and anti-riot policemen to protect oil installations and investments, while also dispersing Ijaw protesters. During the violent exchanges, which ensued, some

\textsuperscript{43} For an in-depth treatment of the explosion of conflicts in the aftermath of Nigeria's return to civilian rule in May 1999, see Rotimi T. Suberu (2008).

\textsuperscript{44} Each of the three regions was based on the dominance of one of the three ethnically-dominant groups while other ethnic groups within the regions were treated as minorities, a situation, which posed the fear of perpetual domination after independence. Consequently, such minority groups agitated for reforms including the creation of more administrative units in the forms of regions and later, states. For an analysis of the protest by the Niger Delta minorities and the responses of the colonial state, see Eghosa E. Osaghae (1991) and Abdul Raufu Mustapha (2003).

\textsuperscript{45} Contained in the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) in 1990 and its Addendum in 1991, the major demand by the Ogoni was for the "right to control and use a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development". See Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) (1990).
of the protesters and others suspected of being IYC members or supporters were arrested, with a handful of individuals killed (Obi 2006).

In May 1999, Chevron Texaco allegedly transported Nigerian military personnel in its helicopters from which they shot and killed two protesters on Chevron Texaco's Parabe oil platform. Also, in November 1999, federal troops razed the oil-producing town of Odi to the ground for failing to produce a criminal gang suspected of murdering seven policemen. In the process, about 2,000 inhabitants of Odi lost their lives while several others were displaced. As Cyril Obi (2006: 96) observes, "the operation at Odi fitted a regular pattern in which the Nigerian state deployed maximum force to deter and contain threats to oil interests and oil companies in the region". Far from assuaging conflict, such responses have only militarized the region, with the escalation of violent conflict proceeding along communal lines. The consequences of all these have been grievous for the oil industry and also for national development.

Although the failings of the state in managing the Niger Delta crisis are real and serious enough, they are surface phenomena none the less. They are manifestations of more fundamental problems associated with the objective character of the Nigerian elites, the bourgeoisie, and the neo-colonial character of the Nigerian economy. Situating these failings in the context of these considerations enables us reach a detailed understanding of the problems impinging on the social transformation of the Nigerian state and its economy. Put differently, the responses by the state to violent conflict in the Niger Delta region express the specific economic interests of its ruling class. In accordance with its objective situation, this class conceptualizes the state's control of the resources of subordinated territories as 'national interest', through the exertion of 'legitimate force' in repressing resource wars and pro-democratic resistance.

These failings are implicit in the nature of the state and its warped orientation to economic and social transformation. Its repressive disposition reflects the consciousness of the Nigerian bourgeoisie. Its currency and priorities also express the interests of this class, so that, in accordance with its objective situation, it conceptualizes the state's control of all resources in a manner compatible with the maintenance of an economic system that ensures its dominance and prosperity. In effect, its operations do not prioritize considerations of national interest. Instead, the question it raises mainly is how to enhance the interest of the ruling class and, more specifically, how the indigenous elite can increase its share of surplus from oil revenue in relation to metropolitan capital (Ake 1985b: 195-200). This disposition underlines the state's monopolization of oil revenue, and the country's continuing external economic dependence and internal political instability (Graf 1988).

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46 For a comprehensive account of the state's responses to the Niger Delta crisis and its failings, see Cyril I. Obi (2006). See also Ukoha Ukiwo (2007).

47 Witness the contradictory 'securitization', 'tension' and 'fragile peace' in the region. Several 'anti-state' and 'anti-oil companies' mobilizational groups have emerged. The Egbesu Boys, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Martyrs Brigade and the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) are examples of militant groups that have emerged in the region, consequent upon the harsh responses by the Nigerian state--responses--which have only steered violence in more dangerous directions, rather than furthering the prospects for a peaceful negotiation of conflict.

48 This illustration corroborates Ake's thesis on 'the implications of the limited autonomy' of 'the state in Africa'. It also validates his case on the inhibitive role of "political conditions" as the greatest impediments to development in the continent. See Claude Ake (1996a: 1).
The objective character of the Nigerian bourgeoisie thus renders the resolution of the Niger Delta crisis intractable. It insists on the control of federal power as a means (i) for intervening in the economic process; (ii) for creating the material basis for its domination; and (iii) for maintaining the political conditions for further accumulation. As Andre Gunder Frank (1981: 188) posits, under these circumstances, far from being neutral, the state becomes the principal instrument used by the local and metropolitan elites for intensifying the conditions necessary for perpetuating 'super-exploitation':

The state is the principal instrument used by capital to create, maintain, extend and intensify the political conditions necessary for super exploitation, particularly... around the Third World. The state functions as the watchdog of superexploitation by repressing first and foremost labor and its organizations, and then by imposing "austerity" measures on the general population through "emergency" rule, constitutional "reform", and martial "law". These austerity measures are oftentimes enforced through repressive military regimes and then institutionalized through military and civilian authoritarian states.

The experiences in Sierra Leone and Nigeria's Niger Delta confirm Ake's position on 'the implications of the limited autonomy' of 'the state in Africa'. The underlying thesis that emerges from the fore-gone illustration is that conservative elite politics, by the very nature of mobilizing and placing the question of control and sharing of state power and resources on top of the political agenda, undermine development; exacerbate conflicts and tensions, and therefore make their management a critical matter, not just for the success of democratization, but also for the survival of the state as a whole (Osaghae 1994: 31). These weaknesses explain the vulnerability of 'the state in Africa' to conflict, not least over oil and other natural resources, which access to state power offers. In Nigeria, decades of misrule have not only undermined the emergence of an efficient bureaucratic state. They have also driven ethnic, religious and regional communities into developing 'sub-national conceptions' of 'ethnic citizenship' (Joseph 2003). In stead of resolving the Niger Delta crisis, the Nigerian state intensifies it, while 'international interventionism' rather explores avenues for further resource exploitation through primitive accumulation. While Nigeria's importance within and outside the continent can hardly be over-stated, the presence of numerous 'state-directed', 'inter-group' conflicts and the emergence of 'anti-state' separatist formations and other challenges to nationhood are indicative of the absence of a strong and legitimate state in the country (Babawale 2002: 379-383). Our contention is that post-conflict peace-building initiatives, which seek to be successful and enduring, must focus on the state, while also advancing institutional and structural solutions to the root causes of conflicts from the bottom to the top. The rest of this study discusses Ake's intervention in this regard.

State re-construction in 'post-conflict' West Africa: fragments of a critique

How relevant are hegemonic discourses on state-building and post-conflict re-construction in West Africa? To what extent do neo-liberal reforms strengthen the state in 'post-conflict' contexts? What lessons do the experiences of our case studies suggest in terms of institution-building and state capacity? And, what aspects of the state in Sierra Leone and Nigeria's Niger Delta region are to be re-constructed? This section answers these questions. Although abundant works have been done on the impact of neo-
liberalism on African and other developing economies, this study focuses on its impact on peace-building and state re-construction in post-conflict West Africa.

As an ideology, neo-liberalism is premised on a strong belief in promoting the 'public good' through following the principles of 'free market and open competition'; 'limited state intervention and welfare'; 'individualistic self-interest'; 'rational utility-maximization'; and 'comparative advantage' in 'free trade' (Haque 1999: 203). Although there are significant variations among its exponents on the intensity of their beliefs in various neo-liberal assumptions, nevertheless, they all have certain predispositions in common. Their positions are also linked with the principles of neo-classical economics, although the former pays less attention to market failures (Colclough 1991: 21). However, central to all shades of neo-liberal thought are (i) an emphasis on 'the role of the market' and 'a minimalist role of the state' (Sargent 1990: 97-99 and Watson and Seddon 1994: 170); (ii) the advocacy for policies based on deregulation and privatization (Fitzgerald 1988 and Haque 1996); (iii) an emphasis on comparative advantage and a simultaneous opposition to protectionist policies for domestic industries (Colclough 1991: 8-12); (iv) the liberalization of trade, facilitation of foreign investment and elimination of export controls and import licensing (Harvey 1991: 138); and (v) an opposition to economic development, poverty reduction through state intervention and other major objectives of structuralist thinking, and a simultaneous emphasis on economic growth, which in some cases endorses inequality as 'a prerequisite' for growth (King 1987: 3). With these assumptions, neo-liberalism takes on a global policy stance.

Through the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, it advocates 'the replacement of the interventionist developmental state' by 'a non-interventionist state' and encourages 'the expansion of market forces' by undertaking market-friendly policies.

Although neo-liberalism has a relatively recent history, attempts by the West at controlling the economies of backward regions of the world date back into the past. In the early years of colonial rule, the notion of 'the plural society' was explored as justification for colonial domination. This was later corroborated using the ideology of 'developmentalism'. The concept of 'the plural society' grew out of the study of colonial societies by European anthropologists. It was first introduced by James S. Furnivall, a British colonial administrator who spent his life-time as a civil servant in Burma. In his studies of the Dutch East Indies, he defines the plural society as "comprising two or more elements or social orders which live side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unit" (Furnivall 1939, 1942 and 1945). In such a setting, communities were separated on the basis of race, language or religion, with each community having a distinct set of cultural values incompatible with those of the other communities. Since there was, consequently, a total lack of consensus in such polities, only an externally imposed authority could hold such a society together. The obvious candidates for such a task were the colonial powers' (Chatterjee 1974). Subsequently, 'developmentalism', which first appeared in the 1920s in African colonies as state discourse, "became central to the legitimation imperative of the terminal colonial state, now subject to an increasingly

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49 Influential critiques in this direction include Adebayo O. Olukoshi (1993); David Moore (2000); David Moore (2001); Ifeanyi Onyeonoru (2003); Wale Alade Fawole (2004) and Thandika Mkandawire (2005).  
50 For an exhaustive treatment of the theoretical assumptions of neo-liberalism and their application to the developing countries, see S. M. Haque (1999: 197-218).
hostile international environment and a rising torrent of nationalist criticism" (Young 2004: 27). Developmentalism thus became the defining discourse of the late colonial state from the 1940 onwards.

'Developmentalism' was not limited to the terminal colonial state-craft. It continued into the post-independence period. Unfortunately, this project was born into the limitations of the old one—the colonial version of development. While "the moment of African independence coincided with the zenith of confidence in state-led development" (Young 2004: 30), formal de-colonization was accompanied by two developments: (i) the politics of modern imperialism or neo-colonialism; and (ii) the emergence of the United States as the unquestioned leader of the capitalist powers.51 Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, American social scientists immersed themselves in studying the cultures and institutions of African, Asian and Latin American societies. The product of that academic activity was 'the theory of political development'.52 Its fundamental conclusion was that the political development of underdeveloped countries could only be the result of "economic development—a rapid industrialisation of their productive systems and a thorough modernisation of their cultural superstructures" (Chatterjee 1974: 26). However, its actual aim was the preservation of vital interests of the United States and other Western powers. And, since the decade of African independence coincided with the apogee of the Cold War, the 'new states' became a diplomatic battlefield for the capitalist and communist blocs (Cooper 2006: 159-161). As Crawford Young (2004: 31) recalls:

The two major blocs competed maximally for the affiliation of African states, or minimally to pre-empt alignment with the other side. The currency of this competition was aid, economic and military. Although 'non-alignment' was orthodoxy in African diplomacy, the doctrine had many shadings, and its effectiveness in insulating the continent from global rivalries was necessarily limited.

Using this 'stagiest' notion of growth and development, the West tried to convince the ex-colonies on the possibility of a successful movement through the prescribed conditions into an established 'take-off' within the orbit of the democratic world, thus resisting the blandishments and temptations of Communist conversions (Ake 1979: i-iv and 60-98). This theory was however, short-lived.53 By the 1980s, symptoms of structural crisis were evident in Africa. The major factors identified as the source of this crisis were policy options, which concentrated all development activities in the state (Boesen 1986: 21 and 66). And, with the combination of economic mismanagement and adverse global trends, far from a development-oriented integral state, what emerged on the continent was an extravagant personalizing power, exemplified by the rapturous encomium paid to political leaders and state officials (Lewis 1996). This ushered in a paradigm shift in development economics, with the 'Washington Consensus' taking shape within the international financial institutions and much of the donor community touting the supremacy of the market. Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan aggressively advocated

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51 These two developments must be borne in mind when assessing the post-Second World War literature in the social sciences, for the upsurge of interest by American scholars in the post-colonial world is not unrelated to the emergence of the United States as a global power of the highest rank. For elaborations on this connection, see Partha Chatterjee (1974: 26).
52 For a comprehensive statement of its theoretical position, see Walt W. Rostow (1961).
53 For explanations on its failings in Africa and other parts of the third world, see Partha Chatterjee (1974: 26ff).
an anti-state ethos (Young 2004: 38). This restoration of neo-classical economics to intellectual hegemony forced African countries seeking aid and loan assistance to comply with the reform demands defined by 'neo-liberalism'.

In 'post-conflict' situations, neo-liberalism has also been influential, especially in the operations of peace-building and state re-construction in Africa. In attempting to build post-conflict failed states, the international community has drawn heavily on neo-liberal development paradigms. However, neo-liberal state-building has proved ineffectual in stimulating economic development in post-conflict states, thus undermining the prospects for state consolidation (Barbara 2008). Although there is no doubt that peace-building will continue to require international attention, the lessons of the past do not add up to a successful record of performance (Tschirgi 2004). One major obstacle undermining effective peace-building has been the failure of international actors to adapt their assistance to the political dynamics of the war-torn societies that they seek to support. This disconnect has been manifested severally at 'conceptual', 'policy', 'operational' and 'institutional' levels. Conceptually, the very notion of 'post-conflict' is fraught with tensions as it wrongly assumes an end to conflict. As David Moore (2000: 12) points out:

the concept is caught up in tensions between neo-liberal and more interventionist visions of development in general. It is also imbricated in contention over the resources allocated from the coffers of the advanced capitalist world to the rebuilding of war-torn societies on the periphery. More fundamentally, it is entangled in the complex nature of the causes of and cures for conflict in Africa.

Policy-wise, externally-driven state-building projects err by adopting 'a one-size fits all' approach in negotiating peace in war-torn states. Most post-conflict re-construction programmes have been conducted with little critical self-reflection on the underlying assumptions and structural biases of the post-conflict peace-building efforts. The major reason for this shortcoming is the missing connection, in the orientations of policy makers and practitioners between security priorities and the actual development needs of the societies in question (Krause and Jutersonke 2005). Institution-building has also often been undertaken prematurely. This is added to the widespread discrepancy between the prescriptions made by various donors and the resources, which they often make available (Ottaway 2002: 1001). Given the World Bank's perception of war-torn societies as an alibi for creating "market friendly opportunities on the levelled playing fields assumed by the 'post-conflict' discourse" (Moore 2000: 11), neo-liberal state-building has rather complicated internal conflicts in Africa, thus expanding their destabilizing potential across neighbouring states through creating numerous ungoverned territories, which have provided safe haven for terrorists (Obi 2006: 1-6 and Francois and Sud 2006).

Far from establishing 'developed' polities on the liberal democratic model through the restoration of 'political stability' in the process of this development, neo-liberal state-building has rather renewed the triple crisis of capitalist modernization in Africa. 'Primitive accumulation', 'nation-state formation' and 'democratization' remain largely uncompleted projects. As David Moore (2001: 909) elaborates:

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54 Unfortunately for the continent, the Soviet bloc at this period could not help at all, since it was also faced with a deepening economic crisis of its own, and the 'new thinking' associated with Mikhail Gorbachev nurtured reluctance for aid commitment to Africa. See Crawford Young (2004: 38).
Neoliberal globalisation simultaneously encourages these trends yet makes them difficult to resolve, given its anti-statism, its exclusionary version of democracy, and the violence inherent in the emergence of private property rights out of pre-capitalist modes of production that have been mediated by colonial and postcolonial institutions and the dynamics of the Cold War.

Above all, neo-liberal promises for failed states in Africa run against a major contradiction, namely: the structural impossibility of normal capitalist development—economic, political and social—in a colonial or post-colonial society (Chatterjee 1974: 24). In Sierra Leone, notwithstanding the return to democratic rule, many obstacles abound, ranging from governance weaknesses in terms of capacity and domestic regulatory schemes on diamonds to the existence of illicit mining and the smuggling of diamonds to regional instability (Grant 2005). While post-conflict elections have been widely expected to help consolidate its fragile peace and build legitimacy, 'legitimation' is a function of 'good governance', which transcends 'the successful holding of competitive elections'. Beyond the 'rituals' that go with 'regime transitions', democratic governance entails other critical considerations about 'how an elected government exercises power'. 'The institutionalization of civil and political rights', 'the operations of a free press', 'the existence of an independent judiciary', 'vibrant associational life and a culture of mutual tolerance', 'the possibility of compromise and the accommodation of dissenting interests and views' are all integral to democratization and state viability (Kandey 2003: 190). Although a few achievements have been recorded in Sierra Leone's democratic operations—the most notable being 'the peaceful alternation of the political parties in power through the ballot box in 2007', a development, which endorses public confidence in elections as mechanisms of 'peaceful' political change—the country is still confronted with a number of pending challenges. Such challenges include the country's inability to tackle 'the problem of corruption', 'mass deprivation', and the role of political parties as 'unreconstructed patronage outfits' unresponsive to popular currents and mass aspirations (Kandey 2003: 189 and Kandey 2008). As Andrew J. Grant () chronicles:

As a result of more than a decade of civil conflict, much in the way of infrastructure has been destroyed, such as roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, electricity grids, communication links, housing and commercial enterprises. Notably, what little existed in terms of infrastructure before the outbreak of civil war was already in poor shape because of more than two decades of corruption and 'bad' governance.... The social damage inflicted by the civil war should not be underestimated. Though difficult to assess in monetary terms, the losses incurred by Sierra Leoneans as a result of death, torture, injury and displacement are substantial. Thus the scope and depth of post-conflict reconstruction must extend beyond the simple rebuilding of physical infrastructure.

In Nigeria, decades of misrule have not only undermined the emergence of an efficient bureaucratic state, they have also driven ethnic, religious and regional communities into developing 'sub-national conceptions' of 'ethnic citizenship' (Joseph 2003). As Frederick Cooper (2006: 159) remarks:

During the struggles for independence, leaders of parties, trade unions, farmers' organizations, merchants' groups, students, and intellectuals aspired to a view of state-building with a strong "civic" dimension: the state would act in the interest of citizens as a body, through institutions accessible to all. Once in power, African regimes proved distrustful of the very social linkages and the vision of citizenship which they had ridden to power.
Instead of providing capital for diversifying and industrializing the Nigerian economy, oil revenues have mostly been used for the primary task of the political elite—patronage. Consequently, far from resolving the Niger Delta crisis, the Nigerian state intensifies it, while 'international interventionism' rather explores avenues for further resource exploitation through primitive accumulation. The presence of numerous 'inter-group' conflicts and the emergence of 'anti-state' separatist formations and other challenges to nationhood are indicative of the absence of a strong and legitimate state in the country. The greatest weakness of externally-driven state re-construction attempts is 'the limited attention focused on the state in such post-conflict settings'. This is a major inadequacy. Our contention is that post-conflict peace-building and state re-constitution initiatives, which seek to be successful and enduring must focus on the state, while also advancing institutional and structural solutions to the root causes of conflicts from the bottom to the top. The rest of this study discusses Ake's intervention in this regard.

**Re-inventing the state in Africa: the contribution of Claude Ake**

Although it is impossible to impose simple analytical categories or general classificatory schemes on the wide range of conflicts and wars in Africa (Fawole 2004: 297), Ake's intervention suggests that peace-building processes must take on the task of re-inventing 'the state in Africa'. One way of doing this is to re-think our understanding of 'colonialism' and its legacies for the continent; the role of 'multinational capital', 'dependent capitalism', 'the centralization of power'; and the impact of 'corrupt and authoritarian elites' in the continent (Ake 1997). He presents democratization as the most salient option for addressing the normless struggles over state power, ethnic conflict, resource wars and Africa's humanitarian emergencies.\(^{55}\)

While democratization is indispensable for transforming post-conflict West Africa, the imperative of re-constituting 'the state in Africa' cannot be over-emphasized. The failure to transform the character of the state in the continent, in spite of formal political independence, has been a historical default engendering conflicts and wars over state power and the resources, which access to state power offers. This failure is very much with us. Harping insistently on a 'now' as the temporal horizon of action, twentieth century anti-colonial demands for self-rule in Africa, achieved the vision of 'a quasi-independent state', but failed in transforming the structures of the colonial state or in imagining alternative conceptions of 'nationhood' and 'statehood' independent of the European model (Chakrabarty 2000: 8). Far from any significant contrast, the modern state has, everywhere in Africa, been patterned on the European model, with all its contradictions for the post-colony (Chatterjee 1993: 14). The historical patterns and global conditions which gave rise to 'the state in Africa' have also not been fundamentally altered (Cooper 2006: 183). This is a major limitation of the nationalist response to the

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\(^{55}\) He describes the conflicts and wars in Africa as 'humanitarian emergencies' and characterizes their salience in the post-cold war period as reflecting three commonalities, which he says, underscore the significance of transforming the character of 'the state in Africa'. One, he says, these humanitarian emergencies are "state-centred" and "are associated with the use of state power". Two, he says, with only minor exceptions, these "humanitarian emergencies tend to be associated with identity claims and identity solidarities if only as ideological representation". Three, these "humanitarian emergencies tend to occur mostly in developing countries especially those which are facing, in an acute form, the contradictions of capitalist modernity such as dislocations in power, economic, and status hierarchies".
colonial intervention (Chatterjee 1993: 34). This explains the continent's vulnerability to ideological and policy tinkering by 'neo-imperial brain trusts' with all their hard-nosed arguments. It also explains why the post-colonial state in its present form has been ineffectual–embroiled and hounded into various structural adjustment programmes by the external donor community and international financial institutions–and compelled by internal protest and external pressure to democratize. With neo-liberalism, the wheel has only come full circle.

State-building in Africa operates within the framework of a borrowed knowledge system whose representational structure corresponds to the very structure of power, which intellectual and nationalist leaders in the continent seek to repudiate (Chatterjee 1986). Although the anti-colonial vision has been powerful in its influences throughout the post-colonial world (Chatterjee 1986: 4)–instituting the foundations of modern critiques of socially unjust practices, of caste, oppressions of women, the lack of rights for labouring and subaltern classes, including the very critique of colonialism itself (Chakrabarty 2000: 4)–it has been ineffectual in erecting the foundations of 'an independent state' free from neo-imperial dominance, capable of delivering the expectations of a developmental state.

Nationalism may have succeeded in liberating the nation from colonialism but not from the knowledge system of the post-Enlightenment West, which continues to dominate the continent, even more powerfully. Through its opposition of colonialism, nationalism administered a check on a specific political form of metropolitan capitalist dominance. It dealt a deathblow on such blatantly ethnic slogans of dominance as the civilizing mission of the West–'the white man's burden'–but ignored the need for an epistemological revolution in the alien knowledge system on which the operations of the state are premised. Thus, while the lessons of decolonization and what it means for world history are irreversible, this failure explains the continued dominance of the continent by the knowledge system of the post-Enlightenment West under changing conditions and with much ideological turf.

Ake establishes the connection between 'knowledge production', 'state-building' and 'development' in the continent, and bemoans the 'poverty of ideas' with which state-building has been undertaken since decolonization (Ake 1997). He suggests that democratization cannot ignore the 'neo-colonial' character of the state. After all, the colonial state was not just the agency that brought the modular forms of the modern state to the colonies. It was also the agency destined never to fulfill its normalizing mission in the post-colonies (Chatterjee 1993: 10). And, the post-colonial state throughout Africa and Asia has "only expanded and not transformed the basic institutional arrangements of colonial law and administration, of the courts, the bureaucracy, the police, the army, and the various technical services of government" (Chatterjee 1993: 150, Thompson and Garratt 1934, Dutt 1947 and Habib 1995). Africa inherited the European system of government and administration in its original form–based on 'imitated' constitutional principles, 'borrowed' technologies of power and administration–merely replacing the personnel. The elites of the 'new states' could not think of an entirely new system (Pylee 1967: v and Chatterjee 1993: 15). Having replicated the Western model, 'the state in Africa' remains "an imposed institution inappropriate to the conditions of Africa" (Cooper 2006: 186). This way, decolonization foreclosed alternatives that were once at the centre of attention–supranational federations and Pan-Africanism–and put in place a kind of state headed by a ruling class conscious of its own interests and fragility.
Conclusion
This article has examined Ake's theory of political integration and its continuing relevance for contemporary West Africa. It has also highlighted the limitations of the nationalist response to the colonial intervention, and the ruinous impact of conservative elite politics for development and state transformation in Africa. Focusing on Sierra Leone and Nigeria's Niger Delta, it has drawn attention to the relevance of Ake's works in advancing an Africa-centred intervention on the conditions for re-inventing the state in the continent. In critiquing hegemonic discourses on post-conflict peace-building in the continent, this article is not breaking new ground. The limitations of state re-construction frameworks based on the neo-liberal peace paradigm have been indicated in the literature. The emphasis of this study—and by extension its contribution—lies in connecting Ake's argument on the implications of the limited autonomy of 'the state in Africa' with the proliferation of conflicts and wars in the continent. While several studies have focused on the conflict situations in Africa, few of such efforts have either historicized the state in relation to its conflicts and wars, or linked them to the character of the state in the continent. Consequently, such works gloss over the need for 'state transformation' as a prerequisite for sustainable peace-building in post-conflict societies. This study fills this crevasse. It resonates Ake's thesis on the implications of the limited autonomy of 'the state in Africa' for conflict, and establishes the need to focus attention on the autochthonous transformation of the state as a central component of peace-building programmes in post-conflict contexts.

One interesting outcome of recent debates on 'Orientalism', 'post-coloniality' and related issues has been a renewal of interest in the intellectual history of colonial Africa. A major contribution made by Ake to the understanding of political thought in Africa is the redirection of attention to the salience of the state, its character, unique feature(s) and their implications for conflict as well as socio-economic transformation in the continent. In this connection, while Georg F. W. Hegel, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir I. Lenin and more recently Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband have been central in understanding the state in the advanced capitalist societies in the West, Claude Ake, Hamza Alavi and Samir Amin are instructive voices in understanding its trajectory in Africa and other post-colonial societies. According to Ake, the major institution engrafted from the metropoles into the neo-colonies following the European model of the modern state, is 'the state in Africa' (Ake 1985a). However, unlike its European model, which developed within the society in Europe, given the context of colonialism, 'the state in Africa' is 'a force imposed on society from without'. This inversion in the logic of state formation in Africa underlines its 'alienness'. It is this alienness of 'the state in Africa'—its lack of conformity with the practices of the people—that makes it inadequate for its purpose in the continent. In effect, while most of the 'state forms' in pre-colonial Africa arguably approximated to statehood—at least to the extent that they were developed within the indigenous societies in which they were found—the same is not the case with the colonial and post-colonial state in Africa.

Put differently, while the stateness of the socio-economic formations in Africa is not in doubt—as systems of authority monopolizing the legitimate use of force over given territories—their 'autonomy', 'autotchtoneity' and 'Africaness' are unsettled matters of

56 Especially influential critiques of 'the neo-liberal peace paradigm' are Roland Paris (2002a); Roland Paris (2002b); Roland Paris (2003) and Roland Paris (2006).
continuing debate. This discursive constraint informs the descriptive referent—‘the state in Africa’—rather than ‘the African state’ adopted in this study. Its alienness underscores its existence as a power hanging both aloof and in abstraction from the society in a suspended capacity—based on the maintenance of law and order—as a condition for maximizing exploitation. It also explains the over-developed status of the state's apparatuses of violence relative to its educational, health and welfare systems. Regretfully, local elites under successive regimes in the continent have demonstrated neither the will nor the discipline to transform these inherited structures of the state. In re-inventing ‘the state in Africa’, Ake charges us to engage the epistemological bases of 'state-building' and 'state formation' from the perspective of knowledge production. This, according to him, is mainly because the ideological control and exploitation of the continent have been achieved, for the most part, through the continent's dependence on the West in the sphere of knowledge. In all their variants, post-Enlightenment traditions of European historiography have led to a long-standing neglect of knowledge produced from the continent (Holsinger 2002). Hence, the 'series of interventions across the different disciplinary fields, localized and bound by their own historically produced rules of formation, but thematically connected to one another by their convergence upon the most contested concept in the continent—'the state'. While several efforts have been directed towards transcending the knowledge systems of post-Enlightenment Europe, a persistent contradiction in that regard, has been the assertion of an inseparable complicity between this borrowed knowledge and its epistemic privileging over other local and often incommensurable knowledges. Hence the inability to vindicate the normative preferences of the nation and thus to provide valid grounds for claiming agency (Chatterjee 1993: xi). While acknowledging the role of external influences, notably the legacies of colonialism, the impact of the cold war and contemporary global politics, this paper has underlined the failure of intellectual and nationalist elites to transform the state, and the implications of such failings not just for conflict, but also for the programmed exclusion of the continent from the beneficial proceeds of the international system of global capitalism.

Africa's dependence in the sphere of knowledge has serious implications for the untransformed character of the state, the spread of conflicts and its lack of development. It is the failure to imagine alternative forms of the modern state—indeed of the European model—that underpins its continued dependence on the West for 'inspiration' and 'solutions' to its problems. This also underlines the interventionist basis of neoliberalism and other foreign recipes, which are not helpful to the continent's situations. Far from being autochthonous, state-building and knowledge production in Africa have been operated within a borrowed context (Kaviraj and Khilnani 2001). "The knowledge of backwardness is never very comforting" (Chatterjee 1986: 6). 'It is even more disturbing when its removal requires coming to terms with an alien culture' (Chatterjee 1986: 6). State transformation is an urgent task on Africa's agenda: and the question of 'Africanizing the state' through endogenous knowledge production is very critical in this regard. Crucial questions for Africa include: what kind of state is to be constructed; what kinds of relationships are to be forged across state lines; and what kinds of recognition within states should be given to the forms of affinity to which the citizens subscribe.

57 For elaborations on 'the character of the state in Africa and its impact on development', see Eghosa E. Osaghae (2005) and Frederick Cooper (2006: 156-190).
Although the restoration of their states' capacities is a critical component of the democratic order, Sierra Leone and other post-conflict states must work towards the progressive transformation of their governance and public administrations with a view to rekindle socio-economic development. The political processes in these states should also be re-constituted in a manner that genuinely engage and incorporate their citizens as a condition for the state re-legitimization process. While their overall frames remain largely derived–based on imitations from the forms of the state developed in the West–efforts should be made to endogenize these states by evoking innovative practices at the localized levels. It is also important to think of ways of transcending the legacies of the colonial past. The one-sided reference to the 'colonial past' in the understanding and unmaking of Africa is seriously flawed. By focusing 'exclusively' on the role of external actors, Africans wrongly absolve themselves of their failings and are reduced to the typical colonial role of helpless victims and chronically dependent actors–lacking the capacity for appropriating agency both for transforming the state, and also for re-dressing the historical structures underlining the reproduction of crisis for the continent.

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