

**TOWARDS A FUNCTIONAL AFRICAN STATE
BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE PEOPLE**

Wale Are Olaitan
Department of Political Science
Olabisi Onabanjo University
Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria

Paper Presented at CODESRIA 11th General Assembly,
Maputo, Mozambique, 6-10 December, 2005

TOWARDS A FUNCTIONAL AFRICAN STATE: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE PEOPLE

The reality of underdevelopment in Africa is undeniable, as the continent displays gory characteristics and statistics of such underdevelopment. There is massive lack of infrastructure even as the people also significantly lack proper and adequate feeding. The conditions of existence and living are so abject that it is said that more than half of the people in the continent survive below the poverty line. Indeed, Africa is constantly presented as the typical face of underdevelopment with images of malnourished and dying children and undernourished parents, such that the continent is at the mercy of aids and donations if only to keep up the appearance of decent humanity. The issue, therefore, in Africa is not about the reality of underdevelopment and lack of development, but is rightly about how to change that reality and bring real and meaningful development to the continent (Mkandawire and Olukoshi, 1995; Nabudere, 2000; Tipoteh, 2000).

Incidentally, the reality of underdevelopment in Africa is not just about the impoverished conditions of the people, as the continent also suffers from the impoverishment of its institutions, with the impoverished institutions implicated in the drama of underdevelopment. The point here is that the underdeveloped situation of Africa is not through a natural disaster or lack of resources as the continent is well endowed with human and natural resources, but is in its present conditions through a combination of institutional and processual failures which have to be corrected for the continent to have development. And chief among these institutional problems is the state which has seriously contributed to the underdeveloped nature of Africa by virtue of its providing the framework for every organization within its jurisdiction (Laski, 1982). The state has been presented as the basic modern organizational condition for existence, and it must follow that the state would influence all the actions and inactions within its jurisdictional competence. This is the sense in which the African state has been pinpointed as a major component of the developmental failure in Africa, suggesting that the problems of the state have to be addressed as part of the solution to the problems of underdevelopment in the continent (Yahaya, 1989; Gibbon, et al, 1992).

To be sure, the conditions of existence of the state in Africa are such that present it in a non-functional, if not dysfunctional, sense going by its inability to maintain a reasonable and effective control over its territory. The African state is such that exists more as a juridical entity, existing and functioning at the mercy of international recognition rather than through the affirmation of its people, as it presents itself as an exploitative and oppressive force over the people rather than an instrument for their welfare and edification (Jackson and Rosberg, cited in Bratton, 1989; Clapham, 1996). The truth is that the African state at present functions as an entity apart from the people and is thus enmeshed in a crisis of significance and legitimacy as it struggles to justify its existence, and it is only to the extent that this crisis of legitimacy is successfully confronted that it could become a force for development on the continent. The crisis of legitimacy and relevance means that state structures are continually contested, such that the African landscape is replete with wars and other violent struggles to gain control of the contested structures and this reality is not only uncondusive to real development, but imposes more

burden on the people. The reality, therefore, is that the context of the state has to be made conducive to development in Africa and this must mean a radical transformation of the state to make it functional and more people oriented. The argument is that the present non-functional state in Africa is a negative influence on the development processes and this has to be changed to ensure that the state provides the right context and the enabling environment for real development. The challenge of making the African state a functional entity that would be promotive of development is what is addressed in this paper as it explores the different strategies of bridging the gap between the state and the people given that an abiding characteristic of the state's non-functional existence is its existing apart from the people.

The Reality of the Gap Between the State and the People in Africa

The African state is remarkable for its enormous and untrammelled power over the people, even as it is set apart from the people. Perhaps deriving its essential conception from its colonial pedigree, the state in Africa operates as an imposed power over and above the society, surviving by the exploitation and oppression of the people. Rather than operating as an organ of the society for the protection and promotion of the interests of the society, the state acts as an organ apart from the society, deriving its survival from the suppression of the society. This is the sense in which the African state has been described as a 'leviathan' state (Callaghy, 1988), because the state exists as an octopus power, not answerable to any check or countervailing force due to 'its lack of autonomy, the immensity of its power, its proneness to abuse and lack of immunity against it' (Ake, 1996: 7). The reality is that the state is set as a force above the society and it exercises its power without any visible restraint.

The manifestation of the untrammelled power of the state in Africa is such that covers the entire gamut of life and societal operations. Claude Ake (1996: 6-7), for instance, describes the workings of the state thus:

There is hardly any rule of law, no plausible system of justice, no transparency. The coercive institutions of the state are above the law, civil society is below it, ordinary people are out of sight, far beyond its protection. The judiciary is dissociated from justice, and the bureaucracy is oppressive and arbitrary. The ... state, like the colonial state before it, turns on the calculus of strength.

This obviously must be a state that does not and would not care about its society and people and would not make their interests its concern; it is a state in which power is exercised for the sake of power and not for the benefit of the people. The state here is a predatory one, existing for the oppression and exploitation of its own people through the use and deployment of its 'overdeveloped' structures which overawe all other structures in the society.

Incidentally, the exercise of untrammelled power by the state in Africa does not assure it of obedience to its rules and regulations or the ability to fully institutionalize itself. It has already been stated that the state survives 'on the calculus of strength' and the use of

force, suggesting that it is not in a position to generate an affinity with the people to the extent that it does not work for the interest of the people. And apparently in direct response to its predatory existence, the society and the people in Africa have also learnt to treat the state with disdain. Rather, than relating to the state as its own organ, the people have tended to correctly see the state as an oppressive entity and thus take necessary steps to protect themselves from it where possible. Since the existence and survival of the state and society are placed in contradiction by virtue of the preference of the state to prey on the society, the society is not in a position to have meaningful relationship with the state, thus placing the state at the level at which it could not fully and successfully institutionalize itself, or turn its power into obedience. And with the state relying on force in order to perpetrate and perpetuate its oppression, the society is at liberty to relate to it as a conqueror entity – to be feared and obeyed where it becomes necessary and to undermine it where it is possible. Claude Ake (1996: 8-9), again, offers an insight:

... when most of us encounter what answers to the state only as a predatory force on the rampage, when those who are supposed to defend us have turned their arms against us and never grant us any respite from exploitation... In these circumstances is it any wonder that we don't have a public morality, that we think nothing of subverting the state, stealing from it, cheating it in every way and refusing to pay taxes?

This means that the enormously powerful state in Africa is also remarkably weak to the extent that it is not able to tease out a meaningful relationship with its society (Chazan, 1988). This is the sense in which the African state has also been described as a 'lame leviathan', an octopus power that is yet unable to translate its enormous power into routine obedience (Callaghy, 1988).

The reality of a chasm between the state and the society in Africa is, therefore, real to the extent that the state does not exist for the promotion and protection of the interests of the people and the people also do not take the state as their own and are not concerned about its fate and health. Because the state is divorced from the people, the people are not in any way bothered about the way and manner its organs and processes are constituted and functioning. The people largely see the state as an impediment and try to work out their survival in spite of it, just as the state sees the society only as an entity to be plundered and exploited. The state and society in Africa are locked in an antagonistic relationship and it is the reality of such a relationship that gives a gap between them. Whereas the state and society are expected to function in a symbiotic relationship, with the state caring for the interests of the society and the society supplying the wherewithal for the existence and survival of the state, including internalizing the processes and rules of the state, the relationship between the state and society in Africa is characterized more by suspicion and negative feelings. It is in this respect that a gap exists between the two entities, with the state being interested in the oppression of the people and the people not concerned about the state and its workings. In reality, the state in Africa does not exist or function for the people, and the people themselves are not interested in the affairs of the state. The

implication is that neither the state nor the society benefits maximally from a relationship that should ordinarily be rewarding to them, as the state lacks full institutionalization and, therefore, has to routinely dissipate its power and energy on the use of force in order to exploit and accumulate resources from the society, just as the society also routinely get denuded of its resources through the exploitation by the state. The reality of the gap between the state and the people in Africa does not just, therefore, speak to an existing chasm, but bemoans an undesirable situation that has to be confronted and changed if the two entities are to benefit from their relationship, which beneficial relationship is a signification of a functional state existence and the benchmark for real development in the society.

Bridging the Gap: The Limits of SAP and Electoral Democracy

The reality of the gap between the state and the society in Africa has not really been contested vigorously in spite of the attempts to underplay its importance and significance to the developmental processes by some analysts, particularly those representing the notion of rolling the state back. (Kawonise, et al, 1998) The general consensus has been that the state in Africa has been ineffective and inefficient in its acts and that it necessarily has to be made efficient and effective for it to make any meaningful impact, even if there has been considerable disagreement about what it would take to achieve the end of a functional state in Africa. The Bretton Woods institutions, for instance, would believe that the African state has to be strengthened for it to be able to help provide the framework for the imposition and implementation of their reform agenda, such that the reformation of the state contemplated here would be such that only help consolidate its overarching powers, thus deepening its relation of force with the people. As Beckman (1992: 83) puts it:

The... focus of the World Bank is on the restructuring of the African state in order to make it supportive of its long-term strategy for the liberation of market forces...(in) African society.

The expectation here would, therefore, not bridge the gap between the people and the state as the state would be reinforced in its force relationship to the people. It was not surprising that the restructuring carried out under the aegis of the Bretton Woods institution in Africa produced more negative reaction as the people responded to the deepening intensity of the repression and oppression of the state the restructuring effected. This was the era of structural adjustment, deregulation and the regime of market forces in Africa under the aegis of the 'limited state'. The state was expected to become more efficient by presiding over the reign of market forces over the people by exposing them fully to the exploitative sting of international business and their local agents while pretending to concentrate on strict governance. The so-called strict governance being no more than the strengthening of the repressive apparatus of the state in order to cope with the negative reaction of the people to the impoverishing effect of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The reform of the state under SAP, therefore, did not bridge the gap between the people and the state as the state continued with its predilection to force and only strengthened its forces against the people and their agitation. The continuation of the gap would explain why SAP was 'characterised by

worsening living conditions and the intensification of demands for improved living standards' by the people in Africa. (Mkandawire and Olukoshi, 1995; Tipoteh, 2000)

The scenario, as expected, would compel further efforts at reforming the African state in order to give a semblance of affinity between it and the people. And one of the ways these efforts manifested was the attempt to impose democratization on the processes of the state. The case was made that the people and the state would work together, bridging the gap between them, with the people having a working control over the activities of the state through democratization, largely through elections. This was the kernel of the democratization process in Africa characterized by concern with the rudiments of the conduct of elections and the establishment of as many as possible political parties. This process became known as electoral democracy with many African countries going through the process of conducting elections in order to give a new order and perspective to the existence of the state. Within this perspective, elections are expected to help guarantee control to the people over their own affairs and ensure that they are in a position to install governments that serve their needs and ends. A government that is accountable to the people would run the activities of the state in a people-oriented and people-friendly manner and the end-result would be a state that would relate in a beneficial sense to the people. And what better way to get an accountable government than through the processes of election. As the argument goes, if only as a starting point, electoral democracy has the potential of redirecting the affairs and essence of the state positively toward the people. States Kunle Amuwo (1999: 16)

(The positive elements of electoral democracy such as) ... the legality of the political opposition, enlargement of the public space through a plural press and a rich array of civic organizations (and) gradual abandonment of undue persecution of conscientious objectors, etc. are important preconditions for the more elaborate, more arduous and long-term task of reconstituting and transforming the political ... institutions and political cultures.

The implication of this position, therefore, is that electoral democracy would help to remove the continuing oppressive bent in the activities of the state by turning the state over to the control of the people and thus ensuring that the gap between the people and the state is effectively curbed. This is the sense in which political reform was to accompany the economic reform carried out under SAP, with the two reforms ultimately delivering on real development for the people and impacting positively on their living conditions. (Kawonise, et al, 1998)

Unfortunately, the immense expectations invested in electoral democracy do not reckon with the guiding disposition of the state toward all acts within its territory. By this is meant the fact that electoral democracy has to be conceptualized and contemplated ultimately within the context dictated by the constricting nature of the state in Africa. And there is no way it should be assumed that a context that is anti-people would ordinarily yield itself to control by the people without the attempt to first change the context or more appropriately seek to achieve the control of the people by the deliberate

effort to change the context. This is the sense in which Claude Ake has suggested that democratization in Africa could only be real and meaningful if it seeks to address and change the constricting context of the state. Unfortunately, as noted again by Ake (1996: 6), democratization in Africa, manifesting in electoral democracy, has been 'conducted with no questions asked about the character of the state as if it has no implication for democracy'. The logic of this position is that to the extent that virtually every act falls within the purview of the context established by the state, elections themselves would reflect the overarching and overriding nature and essence of the state in Africa, which essence remains the anti-people disposition, such that elections would never yield control of the state by the people within this context. It is, therefore, not surprising that elections under the context of electoral democracy do not differ significantly from the manipulative trend that is consistent with the oppressive nature of the state in Africa, giving 'the voter only a choice between oppressors' and resulting in 'voting that never amounts to choosing' to the extent that elections continue to be 'manipulated through rules of the game that reduce the chances for fairness and by electoral fraud'. (Ake, 1996) This is why manipulations of elections has been a key feature of the democratization process in Africa, leading to disputed elections in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Togo and Malawi, with the manipulations sometimes serving as basis for further disputes and violent conflicts. Within this context, the existing gap between the state and the people would necessarily continue as the people are further impoverished in the avoidable conflicts engendered by disputed elections.

Electoral democracy, therefore, does not address the fundamental nature of the gap between the state as being concerned with the nature of the state itself, which has to be changed for the effort to close or bridge the gap to become meaningful. The fact is that there is a gap between the state and the people because of a persisting oppressive nature of the state and it is only to the extent that this negative nature is confronted and changed that a meaningful relationship could be contemplated between the state and the people. The people, in maintaining an adversarial relationship with the state, are only reacting to the exploitative tendencies in the state's operations, such that a more congenial relationship could be contemplated as soon as the state changes its nature to want to relate or actually relate in a more positive sense toward the people. This situation means that working for a positive relationship between the state and the people would entail more than a question of election as such must involve a direct assault on the nature of the state itself to ensure a new conception and existence for the state where it would see itself as existing for the benefit of the people. Whereas achieving this end would include the constitution of governments through elections in order to ensure that governments are ultimately responsible to and held accountable by the people, it would not be limited to this as the overall context of state-society relations has to be re-constituted to engender an underlining of the centrality of the people to any act of the state. Electoral democracy is not able to significantly change the existing gap between the state and the people in Africa because it does not address the nature of the state as of first-order of importance and seeks to change the relationship without changing the context and nature of the state. It is only, therefore, to the extent that the nature of the oppressive and exploitative conception and existence of the state is addressed would it be possible to confront the reality of the gap between the state and the people and it is only by bridging this gap that

a functional and meaningful state could emerge to appropriately direct the processes of real development in Africa.

Lessons from the Decolonisation Struggle

The case has already been presented that the existing negative existence of the state in Africa is not perhaps unrelated to its pedigree in the colonial state, which colonial state saw its essence as that of subjugating and exploiting the people. The exploitative character of the colonial state could be said to be understandable as it was consistent with the subjugating and exploitative essence of colonialism itself. In which case, since the colonial state was set up principally to further the interest and the achievement of the objective of colonialism it would be expected to embody and replicate the overriding essence of colonialism. It was, therefore, not inconsistent for the colonial state to see the subjugation of the people in the colonies as its prime motive and objective. Consistent with this notion was also the reaction of the people in the colonies who saw the colonial state as an entity to be actively resisted and disparaged; if the colonial state was existing to subjugate the people in the colonies, it would not be out of order for the people to resist such subjugation and it was in this sense that the spirit of nationalism and the struggle for decolonization was born among the colonized peoples. The colonial state, therefore, was not just an entity above the society and existing for the subjugation of its society, it was a state that was also actively resisted and disparaged by the people (Callaghy, 1988).

The logic of this position is that there was never a time that the colonial state was accepted as the state of the people given its subjugating orientation and essence as the people appropriately saw it as an alien and negative entity that should be combated and destroyed. The question, therefore, was not how to reform the colonial state or make concessions to it, but was really about how to dislodge it and put another entity in its place that would not derive pleasure in subjugating the people as confirmed by the consistent rejection of any midway deal by the nationalists in Africa. The colonial state, given its nature, could not be reformed and had to necessarily be replaced if the people were to get back their true feelings as people and not live under the subjugating essence of a constricting entity. This was the whole essence of the decolonization struggle and the importance and value of this struggle could only be measured in relation to the nature and essence of the state the struggle was directed against. For in reality, the struggle was defined by the subjugating essence of the colonial state and the strategies and tactics deployed were those consistent with the objective of destroying and dislodging the colonial state.

It is remarkable that because of the clear objective of the decolonization struggle, those involved realized the duties and responsibilities it imposed on them and, therefore, enunciated strategies and tactics that would not compromise the objective. The nature of the colonial state was the prime object of their attack and they realized that the mass of the people had to be mobilized, without giving room for divisions, to confront the negative essence that the colonial state represented. Fortunately, the oppression of the colonial state was without reference to divisions, such that all the colonized people had an interest in seeing to its dislodgement. The logic to follow, therefore, was not to give

the colonial state any ground to water down the objective of the struggle through the mobilization of the mass of the people to identify with and participate in the struggle. In this wise, the nature of the colonial state was identified as the prime object to be engaged and appropriate strategies and tactics were devised to confront this prime object, with the notion of achieving decisive victory.

The argument here is that the success of the decolonization struggle was owed perhaps to two principal ingredients of the struggle itself deriving from the nature of the entity against which the struggle was pitted, which entity was primarily the colonial state. And these ingredients were the fact that the struggle was meant to dislodge the colonial state and not to reform it and the enlistment of the mass of the people into the struggle as a reflection of its totalizing essence. The nationalists were very clear in their minds about the essence of the struggle which was to dislodge the colonial state since it had made the subjugation of the people its *raison d'être* and such an end would not accommodate a reform of the colonial state. The point is that no feasible compromise could be struck with an alienating and subjugating entity except to directly confront its nature by changing the entity itself. It, therefore, follows that everywhere in Africa, the goal of the decolonization struggle was to dislodge the colonial state, suggesting that a negative nature could not be addressed through compromise, but rather through direct engagement that would seek to fundamentally change the nature concerned. Even in instances during the decolonization struggle where the nationalists were offered juicy and 'temptatious' arrangements that would seek to reform the colonial apparatus as in the French colonies where the colonized people were offered citizenship of the colonialist state, the overall reaction was to insist on full independence rather than accommodation with colonialism. The lesson is, therefore, very clear that a negative nature has to be changed rather than reformed if any meaningful end would attend such effort.

In the same vein, the attempt to compromise the nationalists would not have failed spectacularly if those engaged in the struggle had seen it as one to be done for the people, as it would not have been difficult for them to seek their own satisfaction at the expense of the people ultimately where such offers were solidly made. In this instance, the conception of the struggle as one to be waged by the people themselves through the mass mobilization of the people ensured that the leadership could also not betray the people as the people were fully supportive of the struggle and had become its main ingredient. Within this context, the people were the motive force of the struggle and they were the ones who could determine its eventual direction, which necessarily had to be the liberation of the people from the subjugation of the colonial state. It was, therefore, not surprising that the decolonization struggle achieved its aim ultimately in spite of setbacks and obstacles as it was based on the strength of the conviction of the people to dislodge the colonial state because of the negativities it represented and not on the say-so of a few leaders or those who wanted to represent the people. The struggle was that of the people and it was logical for them to push it to its conclusion of being liberated from the subjugating clutches of the colonial state, rather than being the struggle of the leadership that could be derailed anytime by the compromises of the leadership. The ultimate lesson in the struggle against the colonial state was to invest the people with action in their own struggle and not seek to struggle for them. The leadership could engage in the

consciousness and the mobilization of the people, which task the leading nationalists performed admirably, but the ultimate action belonged to the people and it was to the extent that the people saw the struggle as their own and effectively deployed themselves into it that success was assured. In the last analysis, therefore, the direct participation of the people in their own struggle is essential for the attainment of success and this is particularly important where a negative essence is to be addressed or combated.

Confronting the Gap Between the People and the State

The reality of the gap between the state and the people in Africa works more to the disadvantage of the people as they are unable to live worthwhile lives under the constraints imposed by the debilitating existence of the state. While the state is also not assured of maximally-beneficial existence under the existing gap between it and the people, those who are in control of the apparatus and structures of the state obviously derive advantages from the use of the structures to exploit the people. In which case, those who derive such advantages are not going to be too interested in changing the existing gap as it works for them. This is the reality the nationalists confronted at independence when the colonial state was dislodged and the new independent African state was put in place in its stead, only for those who supplanted the colonialists as indigenous rulers preferring to perpetuate the exploitation associated with the colonial state. The reality was one in which the colonial state had been dislodged, but was yet being perpetuated now by indigenous rulers. The post-colonial state is, therefore, in reality the colonial state in another guise, continuing with the exploitative tendencies of the colonial state and reflecting and maintaining the gap that existed between the colonial state and the people.

What is important about this gap persisting between the state and the people is that the people are the ones bearing the major brunt of its negative effects and they are, therefore, the ones to benefit maximally from the reality of its being bridged. This is in contradistinction to the position of those presiding over the state that would prefer to continue to benefit from the gap. Within this reality it would seem that only the people could be relied upon to be interested in a change to the existing situation as they would benefit from the change while such a change would curtail the existing benefits and undue advantages of the indigenous rulers presiding over the apparatus of the negative state. The implication of this position is that nobody, therefore, has to take the indigenous rulers seriously when they speak of concern with changing the nature of the state to make it benefit the people as oppressors would always speak of helping the oppressed except by getting off the oppressive slate.

In any case, given the reality that the post-colonial state has been shown to be no more than a shade of the colonial state in terms of its oppressive tendencies, it ought to be clear that such a contraption would not be susceptible to reform as it necessarily has to be dislodged. Given that it is impossible to reform an entity with such a deficient nature, it would seem natural that all the efforts in the past at reforming the African state have come to nothing. And it would seem still natural that such efforts have always emanated from those controlling the levers of power of the state as they would prefer to continue to sell unworkable ideas and strategies in order to continue to preserve their undue

advantage while keeping the people in the present exploitative tentacles. The truth is that the existing gap between the state and the people in Africa is as a result of the deficient nature of the state and the only realistic way to seek to bridge the gap would be to change the nature of the state which would mean a fundamental reworking of the essence and existence of the state rather than its reform. The reform of the state in Africa would never lead to the bridging of the gap existing between it and the people and this would only be attained through a dislodging of the existing state and its replacement with a new conception that would be consistent with its serving the interest of the people. Incidentally, this was the strategy used in combating the colonial state during decolonization and it should be the recommended strategy where traits of the colonial state continue to dominate in the post-colonial state. The fact that those who are presiding over the state apparatus now are indigenous rulers should not be used to justify recourse to reform where fundamental change is required. The bottom-line is that the existing nature of the state is not conducive to meaningful relationship between it and the people and a new nature of existence is required for the existing gap to be bridged. What the existing nature dictates is exploitation of the people and the only way to proceed to meaningful relationship with the people is to institute a new state that would necessarily emerge by replacing the existing one and not by reforming it.

Obviously, the task of instituting a new state would have to devolve on the people as they are the ones negatively affected by the existing negative situation. And this would particularly be the case because what is at issue is the need for fundamental change; for as Walter Rodney (cited in Campbell, 2005) puts it, 'it is only the direct action on the part of the people, (their) own perception of what is possible, that can produce change', such that the desirable change in the nature of the state in Africa could only be achieved by the people themselves. The people are the ones disadvantaged by the existing gap in the relationship and they should be the ones to be relied upon to consistently seek a positive change and, therefore, be resolved to work for the actualization of such change. The people have to be invested with confidence to work for the actualization of the change required, rather than being consigned to the background while some seek change on their behalf. The truth is that those who are benefiting from the present gap would only succumb to pressure from the people as no power could withstand the conscious and deliberate desire of the people for change. It is, therefore, important for the people to be conscientised to the power residing in them as far as change is concerned, such that they would get ready to take their own destiny in their own hands and work for change themselves. The fact that those who are presiding over the state now have deepened their hold on the enormous powers and structures of the state and that these could be used to frustrate the agitations and aspirations of the people should not vitiate the enormous potentials in the ranks of the people themselves. In any case, ultimate power resides in the people and the capacity of the people to change their own conditions has never been doubted. (Campbell, 2005) Ultimate victory is, therefore, assured to the people's struggle to the extent that the people are committed to their struggle for change and they see the import and benefit that the change would bring to their existential realities.

What is important and required is for the people to have the right kind of consciousness and this could be achieved through deliberate conscientisation by those who believe in

the people and their cause and the disadvantage of exploiting them. In any case, the untoward condition of the people in terms of the negative effect of the existing gap between them and the state on them already disposes them toward desiring a positive change and all they would further need is help to believe in their own power to effect such change in spite of the overbearing presence and disposition of the state and those who preside over it at present. The people are the only ones who could successfully effect a change in the nature of the state and this they would achieve through their own commitment and conscientisation help to reinforce their commitment. Bridging the gap between the state and the people is really about changing the fortunes of the people and achieving improvement in their living conditions and this must impose the duty of effecting such change on the people themselves. The need for a functional state that would bridge the gap between it and the people in Africa is not just about strengthening the state, but is a developmental concern that touches ultimately on the living conditions of the people. This is why the ultimate duty is that of the people and the right strategy for achieving it would be to exhort the people to face the challenge of helping themselves.

Conclusion

This paper underlines the contribution of the negative existence of the African state to the problems of development in Africa and insists that a fundamental change in the nature of existence of the state is required as part of the efforts at repositioning the continent developmentally. This is particularly against the background of the fact that the existing nature of the state disposes it toward a negative relationship with the people, leading to a relationship gap between the people and the state, which gap has to be bridged for the state to have functional existence and be in a position to contribute positively to the developmental process in the continent which would ultimately be in the developmental interest of the people. The paper, therefore, poses the question of how bridging the gap between the state and the people in Africa could be approached and effected as part of the complex problem of confronting the problems of development on the continent.

The case is made that the reliance on SAP, electoral democracy and other forms of reform to help bridge this gap is misplaced to the extent that it does not directly seek to change the nature of the African state, but pretends that the nature is not important as far as the people could be shown to be formally taking part in the constitution of government through elections. This misplacement is not unrelated to the inability of the people to penetrate the locus of the existence of the state through elections that are also conducted and presided over by the existing negative structures of the state, such that the efforts are aimed at reforming the state where what is required is fundamentally change in the nature of the entity. It then means that the efforts at bridging the gap between the state and the people in Africa, especially learning from the experience of the decolonization struggle which massively involved the people and made fundamental change rather than reform its objective, should go beyond elections to involve the people themselves in the search for appropriate strategy and tactics with which to achieve their own emancipation from the clutches of the exploitation of the state. Indeed, the issue of strategy and tactics should not be contemplated or approached outside of the capacity of the people to effect change in their own conditions as change could not be done for or forced on the people; the people are the architects of their own change and should, therefore, be assisted through

appropriate conscientisation efforts to come to full realization of the enormous potentials they themselves possess, which potentials could be appropriately deployed to the advantage of rescuing themselves from the exploitation of the state. The extent to which the people would rise to this responsibility would be dependent ultimately on the level of commitment that could be derived from their appropriate conscientisation and the level of deployment of the commitment toward achieving the objective of changing the nature of the state in Africa.

References

Ake, Claude, (1996), *Is Africa Democratising?*, Lagos: Centre for Advanced Social Sciences (CASS) and Malthouse Press Limited

- Amuwo, Kunle, (1999), "Rethinking the Linkage between the Market and Democracy Africa", *Nigerian Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, Volume 2, Number 1, Ago – Iwoye
- Beckman, B., (1992), "Empowerment or Repression: The World Bank and the Politics of African Adjustment", P. Gibbon, Y. Bangura and A. Ofstad, (eds.), *Authoritarianism, Democracy and Adjustment: The Politics of Economic Reform in Africa*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet
- Bratton, Michael, (1989), "Beyond the State: Civil Society and Associational Life in Africa", *World Politics*, 41 (3)
- Callaghy, Thomas N., (1988), "The State and the Development of Capitalism in Africa: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Reflections", Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, (eds.), *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa*, Boulder: Westview Press
- Campbell, Horace G., (2005), "Philosophy and Praxis: The Life and Work of Walter Rodney", Paper presented at the AAPS Biennial Congress, Cairo
- Chazan, Naomi, (1988), "Patterns of State-Society Incorporation and Disengagement in Africa", Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, (eds.), *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa*, Boulder: Westview Press
- Clapham, Christopher, (1996), *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival*, New York: Cambridge University Press
- Gibbon, P., *et al*, (eds.), (1992), *Authoritarianism, Democracy and Adjustment: The Politics of Economic Reform in Africa*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet
- Kawonise, Sina, *et al*, (1998), *Economic Deregulation, Occupational Groups and Prospects of Popular Participation in Nigeria*, Ibadan: NISER and National Research Network on Liberalisation Policies in Nigeria
- Laski, Harold J., (1982), *A Grammar of Politics*, London: George Allen and Unwin
- Mkandawire, T. and Olukoshi, A., (eds.), (1995), *Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa*, Dakar: CODESRIA Books
- Nabudere, Dani W., (ed.), (2000), *Globalisation and the Post-Colonial African State*, Harare: AAPS Books
- Tipoteh, Togba-Nah, (2000), "Globalisation and Development", Dani W. Nabudere, (ed.), *Globalisation and the Post-Colonial African State*, Harare: AAPS Books
- Yahaya, A. D., (1989), *The Developmental State in the Process of Transformation: The Implication for the Political Science Discipline*, Ibadan: NPSA Annual Lecture