The London School of Economics and Political Science

Re-Imagining the State in Africa: A Case of Unfinished Business

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ABSTRACT

From Zimbabwe to Kenya, from Guinea Bissau and now to the Ivory Coast, the African continent is increasingly riddled with incidents of violent conflict associated with periods of democratic transition. Indeed, the past two decades have proven critical in the evolution of African statehood, during which age-old strategies of state control have broken down, giving rise to a wealth of debates over the 'failure' of the post-colonial African state. This phenomenon has also led to attempts to revise and expand theories and concepts of statehood, catalysing a search for more empirically viable understandings of statehood than those devised by European colonisers. Much of this is witnessed in the rise of constitutions framed following conflict whereby the benefits of a constitution as a key element of post-conflict peace building are hinged on its ability to reconcile groups, to address intolerable grievances and to prevent further polarisation and conflict. Yet Africa's 'constitutional moment' has gone relatively unnoticed, lying largely outside the mainstream of contemporary international relations discourse. This study aims to foreground the role of constitution making and reconfigure it within the historical processes of a people in struggle for a more just and inclusive political order.

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER ONE

IMAGINING THE STATE IN AFRICA: A NEO-WEBERIAN APPROACH

1.1. Introduction

The centrality of debates on democratisation and concomitant constitution-making processes are perhaps the first and most apparent indications of the proliferation of significant political changes occurring on the African continent. The past twenty years have witnessed a constitutional renaissance in Africa, encumbered by neither the direct exploitation of colonialism nor the manipulation of the Cold War. Several African countries including South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, Rwanda and Kenya have adopted new constitutions, demonstrating the strong desire for a stable democratic order achieved by establishing a constitutional order that is legitimate, credible and enduring, and which is structurally accessible to the people. Other countries including Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Liberia are in the process of negotiating new constitutions. This phenomenon reflects decades of attempts to reconstitute statehood through a search for more indigenous and empirically viable alternatives to those devised by the European colonisers. Yash Ghai (2006) notes that this activity signifies a changed perception of the importance and purposes of constitutions, and which are more recently the consequences of the settlement of long-standing internal conflicts centred on the reconfiguration of the state. This suggests an emerging constitutional renaissance whereby the overhaul of entire governance systems – spearheaded by internal constitution-making processes and aided by external assistance – have come to be considered an integral, if not the preeminent, component in the reconstitution and stability of the African state.

Yet Africa's constitutional moment has not received the scholarly attention it deserves. Instead, this phenomenon has escaped much of the literature on Africa in International Relations (IR) and political science, which has largely remained gripped by despair and malaise over the 'failure' of Africa's democratic experiments and their implications for old and new security threats, such as weak state contagion or terrorism, or regarding the impact of orthodox neoliberal economics on policymaking and state reform. With constant reports about the crisis of the African state, challenges to the nation-state, and other dystopian images of an undifferentiated Africa consumed by violence, predation and state criminality, and in which prospects for regeneration are unimaginable, the continent's marginalisation from mainstream discourse has not been altogether surprising. Yet at the same time, Africa is undeniably the geographical space where much that is systematically important in IR has played out, from colonial rule to resource competition to post-conditional aid dependency and to what now is

being termed the 'new scramble for Africa', as well as being a space of much empirical research (Harman & Brown 2013). Today, it is also the site of immense social changes and uprisings (as in North Africa) in which both new power configurations are emerging (such as South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya) and old power configurations play out. Indeed, despite their limitations, the democratic experiments of the last two decades have left important imprints across the continent, resulting in some calling the constitutional renaissance a 'rebirth of African liberalism' and even Africa's 'second liberation' (Mazrui: 1992). All these dynamics make the continent a flourishing field for study.

As such, this study calls for a rethinking of approaches to state and political authority in Africa that moves beyond the language of state failure. It does so as it recognises that in the context of state building, international involvement in managing, strengthening and possibly reshaping economic and power relations through constitutional design and development is not new and is in fact arguably at its peak. However, much of the writing on constitution-making processes has been largely technocratic and template-driven in nature, proceeding from the assumption that state failure is fundamentally a function of low capacity and in which all states are supposed to function in much the same way. This, in turn, has left little room to explore more flexible and context-specific approaches. As a consequence, the focus of the literature, concerned mainly with 'inputs' such as time, financial aid, troops and the promotion of particular templates that are normatively questionable, has run the risk of conceptualising and treating the societies that are subject to state-building interventions as ahistorical 'things'. This has further fuelled notions of 'African exceptionalism' and even 'Afro-pessimism'. In its analysis, this study demonstrates that this approach has neglected the critical processes of conflict and politics in state building as seen nowhere better than a people's search for a more just and inclusive political order. It proposes that exploring this aspect of state building provides a more useful and accurate understanding of the continent's response to the challenges it faces as well as the prospects for its future stability.

As such, this thesis begins from the assumption that the focus of conflict and social ferment in Africa has been a struggle over the nature of the state rather than simply the weakening of its structures as put forward in the discourse. At the core of this is how state power is organised, shared and exercised. In other words, the constitution of the state – the sum of its power and authority – is what lies at the heart of the crises of the modern African

state (Mutua 2008). Thus, rather than the failure of the Western model of statehood, 'it is specifically what remains of the colonial state in Africa that is collapsing' and subsequently, the focus of political struggle (Mamdani 2001, p. 652). It therefore takes the position that the crisis of the post-colonial African state is better explained through the ongoing practice of 'contestation, negotiation and bricolage' (Hagman & Peclard 2010, p. 539) centred on the reconfiguration of the state and where constitution making has become part of a broader attempt to transform conflict. Considered in this way – as a wider process, a continuing conversation, or a forum for negotiation amid conflict and division – its goal is understood as a working consensus on the principles and practices of governance in new and changing nations (Hart 2001). By so doing, it takes the ongoing processes of negotiation occurring violently or non-violently at various levels of society for control of the machinery of the state as part and parcel of the processes of state building in the post-independence period. Such an approach calls for state building to be viewed not as an end in itself, but rather as a set of political processes fuelled by the constantly evolving 'relations of control and consent, power and authority' (Hagman & Peclard 2007, p. 544).

For this reason, this study turns its attention to the rich and multidisciplinary scholarship of a critical intellectual tradition within African political thought. This, according to Amina Mama (2007), is defined as a critical tradition for being premised on an ethic of freedom that holds itself integral to the struggle for liberation and holds itself accountable not to a particular institution, regime, class, or gender, but to the imagination, aspirations and interests of ordinary people. It is a tradition, Mama adds, that some would call radical, as it seeks to be socially and politically responsible in more than a neutral or liberal sense. Being so, it is guided by an ethic that requires scholars to be identified with, and grounded in, the broad landscape of Africa's liberation and democracy movements. While the temptation may then be to consider 'how to bring this scholarship in' as has otherwise been the case in IR more recently (see Harman & Brown; 2013, p. 69), this study suggests otherwise: that by virtue of its very existence, Africa's critical tradition offers a unique window from which to study Africa as a place in and of the world, thus capturing its politics and societies as both unique and global. As such, this chapter begins with an overview of the dominant discourse on statehood in Africa by way of a literature review. This serves two purposes: firstly, it highlights the need for alternative ways of conceptualising contemporary statehood; and secondly, it recognises that any attempt to do so must draw on the insights and diversity of arguments provided by the existing literature. This

sets the foundation from which to develop a more realistic understanding of the challenges facing the continent and its people. It concludes with an outline of the chapters ahead.

1.2. The Concept of the Failed State

The end of the Cold War captured a sense of growing optimism that the international community had entered a new era where combined action by its members could reduce conflicts and alleviate the suffering of those affected by them. Africa had been swept up in transformations that provoked metaphors of 'sweeping and dramatic' change following the 'waves of reforms' that saw the demise of the one-party state and the emergence of multi-party politics and elections on the continent (see Villalon: 1998). This, however, was to be short lived with the eruption and intensification of civil war as the predominant form of violence globally. Africa was no exception. On the one extreme was the tragedy of unspeakable proportions experienced in Rwanda and still ongoing in parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and South Sudan. On the other, the seemingly peaceful transitions to democratic majority rule occurring in other parts of the continent had become increasingly riddled with incidences of violent conflict as was seen in the experiences of Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya during electoral cycles. *Seemingly* claims to suggest that, in the meantime, 'everything in the middle' had occurred as African regimes exhibited responses to the pressures for political change that spanned the spectrum from disintegration to profound reconfiguration. Nearly three decades on, it is almost undeniable that the imposed model of democracy and multiparty politics has not been consolidated in most parts of Africa. Rather, it is increasingly clear that the post-colonial state in many cases has not given rise to deeper socio-cultural transformations but is said to have instead become a driving force behind military coups, civil wars, repressive regimes, refugee flows and economic stagnation.

Against this backdrop, the dominant discourse of African statehood became that of 'state failure' and 'good governance': a discourse that developed alongside the economic and political reforms that were imposed on African states from the late 1980s and through the 1990s (Moe 2011, p. 89). During this period, the Cold War logic of global containment gave way to a neoliberal discourse of promoting democracy, good governance and free markets. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the United States, concern over failed states rose to

the top of the security agenda as the West constructed a new nexus between security and development. This narrative was based on the perception of 'their' security being important to 'our' development, as links were established between Afghanistan providing training grounds and a safe haven for Al Qaeda. A 2002 report by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID 2005, p. 1) titled *Foreign Aid in the National Interest* declared for example:

'The phenomenon of weak or fragile states is not new, but the need to address their weakness is more critical than ever. The President's 2002 National Security Strategy made that clear when he elevated development to be the "third pillar" of our foreign policy—on a par with defence and diplomacy. The strategy recognises that a root of the national security threat to the United States and the broader international community is the lack of development, which can't be addressed by military or diplomatic means alone.'

With security and development at its core, the state-building discourse gained prominent due to the appeal of integrating development, security and conflict-prevention policies and because, according to Francis Fukuyama (2004, p. 120), 'learning to do state-building better' was 'central to the future of the world order.'

Contemporary international policy discourse on international development and security followed the lead of Western states as international institutions, bilateral and multilateral donor organisations, think tanks and research institutions entrenched in their discussions the conceptual and theoretical vocabulary of fragile states. For instance, the World Bank's Low-Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) initiative aims at improving development aid effectiveness in fragile states; the Fragile States Group of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also pursues the improvement of international engagement in fragile states; the United Kingdom's then-named Department of International Development (DFID), USAID and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) all produced guidelines for policy in fragile states to addres the specific conditions of aid activities in these states (Gruffydd-Jones 2013, p. 51). The framing of the security/development discourse went beyond the practical security and development policies of major donors as scholars in international development, IR and comparative government grappled with understanding, explaining, predicting, preventing and/or reversing state failure. Closing the gaps within the mutually reinforcing relationship between academic research,

policy discourse and think tank reports was a sustained outpouring of publications, reports and analyses addressing the challenges of fragile states that emerged instrumental in merging the security of the north with the security and development discourse over the past decade.

The conceptual and theoretical understandings of state failure that have been applied widely in the literature to explain socio-political crises share a variety of assumptions. Together they take the capability of states to perform certain functions or achieve specific outcomes as central to conceptualising the phenomenon of state failure (Migdal 1988; Zartman 1995; Rotberg 2004; Jackson 1987). According to Robert Rotberg (2004, p. 85):

'*nation-states fail because they can no longer deliver positive political goods to their people. Their governments lose legitimacy, and in the eyes and hearts of a growing plurality of its citizens, the nation state itself becomes illegitimate.*'

From this perspective, nation states exist to deliver positive political goods to their people within given borders. These include more coercive public goods such as (a) security and (b) institutions to regulate and adjudicate conflict, rule of law, contract enforcement and secure property rights; and the non-coercive public goods of (c) political participation and (d) social service delivery, infrastructure and regulation of the economy (Rotberg 2004). According to Rotberg (2004), states can succeed or fail across a variety of these dimensions. However, it is 'according to their *performance* – according to the levels of their effective delivery of the most crucial political goods – that strong states may be distinguished from weak ones, and weak states from failed or collapsed states' (Rotberg 2004, p. 2). In this case, political goods are arranged within a hierarchy ranked according to the number of dimensions in which a state fails to deliver (Wai 2012, p. 30; see also Gruffydd-Jones 2013). These range from strong states, which perform well across all categories (these can be considered too strong and therefore totalitarian, as in the case of north Korea); weak states, which show a mixed profile; and failed and collapsed states, which are defined within the category of the weak and are described as a 'vacuum of authority…a mere geographical expression, a black hole into which a failed polity has fallen' (Rotberg 2004, p. 9). Given this, the legitimacy of the state becomes intimately and ultimately bound to the functions it performs.

Within discussions of state failure, failed states have been described as those 'in which public authorities are either unable or unwilling to carry out their end of what Hobbes long ago called the social contract, but which now includes more than maintaining the peace among society's many factions and interests' (Gros 1996. p. 455). Zartman (1995, p. 5) argues too that a state fails when 'it has lost its right to rule'; in other words, when 'the structure, authority (legitimate power), law, and political order have fallen apart' and it 'can no longer perform the functions required for them to pass as states' (cited in Hill 2004, p. 145). For Jackson (2000, p. 296), a state fails when 'the structure, authority (legitimate power), law, and political order have fallen apart'. Despite the conceptual and theoretical entry points between the numerous scholars who use the concept of state failure to explain what they see as the political failures, and the different situations in which they have come to apply the different labels to describe the phenomenon, two common strands can be identified here (Hill 2004, p. 145): firstly, the idea that failed states are either *unwilling* or *unable* to perform the functions that they should; and secondly, underpinning the descriptions of the failed state are pre-determined definitions of what these functions actually are. Based on this understanding, failed state theorists outline the functions a state must perform for it to be considered a state and then proceed to describe the state as failed if it is either unwilling or unable to perform these functions.

Added to this, the determining criteria for a state's success is its possession of positive sovereignty. Understood in the classical tradition on the use of force first developed by Nicolo Machiavelli and elaborated upon by Max Weber, the state is defined as 'a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory', even 'when the right to use physical force is ascribed to other institutions or to individuals only to the extent to which the state permits it' (Weber 1919). Building on Weber's basic test, Jackson and Rosberg (1982) posit that a successful state not only has international *de jure* statehood, but that a government and its organs also possesses *de facto* statehood in having the capability to project and protect sovereignty through its entire territory. In their assessments of the post-colonial state, for example, it is argued that the 'Westphalian' concept of statehood cannot be applied unilaterally, as the concept of statehood and self-determination that has emerged is significantly different to that which it possessed prior to the Second World War. Sorensen (1997, p. 260) states that 'the process of decolonisation has helped create a type of state which is qualitatively different from the state defined by the 'Westphalian concept'. Accordingly, the precondition of 'positive sovereignty' as the capacity for self-

government has not been experienced in postcolonial countries. Rather, sovereignty was bestowed upon these 'artificial ex-colonial "jurisdictions", which were multi-ethnic entities' because of the pressure for decolonisation as a result of the East-West conflict (Jackson 1990, p. 77). As such, a failed state is a state that is unable to control its territory and uphold its monopoly on legitimate violence.

1.3. New Wars and the Failed State

Having established the concept of a failed state, scholarly debates on the causes, consequences and repercussions of the crisis of post-independence African states (although varied in their explanations as to why states fail) point to the institutions and organisations of such states, describing them as among the weakest in the world. With specific reference to Africa, the economy of debate that has emerged since the 1990s has progressively understood causation within the discourse of new wars and neo-patrimonialism. For proponents of the new wars thesis, the new conflicts – characterised by the central breakdown of the state, lawlessness, competition over natural resources, widespread human rights abuses, the displacement of populations and international interventions – have all served to demonstrate that qualitative changes have occurred within the nature and character of conflict. Such conflicts, often occurring *within* states rather that *between* them, directed debate towards the failure of states facilitated by the process of globalisation as a root cause of their presence in the recent past. Here, it is argued that state failure (both a cause and product of new wars) can only be understood within the context of political, economic, military and cultural globalisation. For example, according to Kaldor (2001, p. 70):

> *'The processes known as globalisation are breaking up the socio-economic divisions that defined the patterns of politics which characterised the modern period. The new type of warfare has to be understood in terms of this global dislocation.'*

Kaldor is not alone in pointing towards the complexities of the processes of globalisation as a major component for state failure. Duffield (2001, p. 164) argues:

> *'Globalisation has effected a complex process involving the deconstruction and*

decentralisation of the power and authority of nation states. The growing influence of external actors is one aspect…at the same time decentralisation has been internal…market liberalisation has increased the ease with which new centres of authority have been able to emerge.'

Consequently, there is agreement that there has been a significant shift in the nature of conflicts experienced in (although not limited to) Africa.

In their analyses, scholars within this approach draw attention to the impact of globalisation on the political economy of states, highlighting its role in the deterioration of the state's authority, declining provision of public political goods and increased social vulnerability. Scholars have attributed these forces to the impact of privatisation polices championed by Bretton Woods Institutions. These policies pressured newly formed nation states to conform to liberal economic models of free markets through macroeconomic stabilisation, deregulation, privatisation and policies of conditionality. In effect, this resulted in disabling the state's capacity to build up its capabilities in the long term, serving to weaken the state's capacity and therefore its ability to deliver political goods. Owing to the pressures to conform from 'above', new challenges also arose from 'below', exposing the vulnerabilities of the state. The growth of private militias and/or groups in competition for resources over commercial activities, the rise of ethnic and other identity politics as well as the gradual privatisation and institutionalisation of violence effectively blurred the lines between 'state and non-state actors, public and private, external and internal, economic and political, and even war and peace', fostering a 'globalised war economy' which was at once local and at the same time dependent on transnational connections, built on 'plunder and the black market or through external assistance' (Duffield 2001, p. 164). The inability of a state to control its own market economy domestically, its exclusion from the processes of the global market economy, and the impact of these factors on both its domestic revenue and the provision of political goods gave rise to situations of predatory corruption, privatisation of violence and, in extreme cases, the criminalisation of the state. According to Kaldor (2001, p. 9), these sources of finance are sustained through violence, as a 'war logic is built into the functioning of the economy.'

Globalisation also created economic incentives in civil wars owing to larger pools of opportunity for legal and illegal trans-border trade (Newman 2004, p. 177). Although the regional nature of warfare is hardly a new phenomenon, scholars within this tradition argue

that the trade and monetary incentives generated by globalisation often fuelled violent conflicts and the direct or indirect involvement of neighbouring countries in internal and/or intrastate conflicts. These conditions termed 'regional conflict complexes' by Wallensteen and Sollenberg (1998) refer to situations in which ethnic groups are found on either side of an international border and/or (in)-direct military, political and/or economic support is provided. At the same time, the direct effects of conflicts themselves found in the human cost and the cross-border movement of refugees can have important impacts on the proliferation of conflict. The socio-economic environment of the weakening of states was compounded by social factors typical of societies in which violent conflicts prevail. These factors include demographic pressures, population growth, forced displacement, enmity across ethnic, religious, linguistic, or inter-communal lines, and disputes over land and resources, as well as economic factors such as globalisation, a decline in gross domestic product (GDP), growing debt, uneven distribution of wealth and the development of hidden economies and black markets (Newman 2004, p. 175; Kaldor 2006, p. 5; Fund for Peace 2009). Thus, the challenges and often violent repercussions of the changing nature of international economic and political relations on the viability of states in poor countries is considered in the literature to be a 'new' phenomenon, exclusive to conflicts most notably in Eastern Europe and Africa in the 1990s.

1.4. Neo-Patrimonialism and the Failed State

At the heart of this interpretation (and many competing approaches to understanding the context and dynamics of political change in Africa) has been influential theories of patrimonialism/neo-patrimonialism and state criminalisation, which have steadily fashioned debates underlying the so-called new political economy or public choice approaches. There are many definitions of neo-patrimonialism, invariably incorporating a diverse range of sub-concepts: clientelism, ethnicity, tradition, tribalism, nepotism, or rent seeking. Notwithstanding the various guises and forms in which they appear, most share Clapham's (1985, p. 48) concise definition of neo-patrimonialism as:

'a form of organisation in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines. Officials hold positions in bureaucratic organisations with powers which are formally defined, but exercise those powers . . . as a form . . . of private property.'

The issue to contend with here is not the term per se, but what the term has come to encompass. Erdmann and Engel (2006) clarify that when first used by Eisendasdt (1973), it was employed to distinguish between patrimonialism in traditional and modern contexts. In this earlier incarnation, it was not about the corruption or weakness of the state. Rather, it was simply one form of exercising power which incorporated Weberian forms of patrimonialism and rational-legal authority. Within this, Eisenstadt (1973) argued that 'patrimonialism' explicitly constituted a 'critical attitude to some of the assumptions of the first studies of modernisation and political development' where, rather than an assumption of its efficacy in goal attainment, neo-patrimonialism was better understood as a form of 'social capital' within the different stages of development (in Erdmann & Engel 2006, p. 8).

However, with a view of accounting for the lack of 'modernisation' or 'development' on the continent, different notions of patrimonialism, clientelism and patronage began to emerge and, in turn, developed new meanings as African economies entered a period of crisis in the 1980s. Since then, the literature concerned with the drawbacks of democratic transitions in the 1990s or the emergence of 'hybrid regimes' has also interpreted Africa's economic malaise through the lens of neo-patrimonialism. Rather than its traditional understanding as a stage in economic development or in terms of social capital explaining political cohesion in African societies, neo-patrimonialism was transformed into a causation for economic malaise on the continent and in which the relationship between 'traditional' and modern' came to be regarded as a functional threat to the peaceful political development of African states and the development of societies in general (Mkandawire 2013; Olokushi 2005; Engel 2006). For these theories, it was insufficient simply to measure the degree of statehood along a continuum as had been done in the state failure thesis; rather, it served as more useful to examine how elites in such political systems legitimate rule, accumulate capital and maintain relative degrees of political stability (Wai 2012). This analysis gave rise to a broad spectrum of opinions forming the two camps of Afro-optimism and Afro-pessimism regarding the prospects for change and transformation of African politics. Despite diverging opinions with respect to the socio-economic context of political change, the literature was united in locating its focus on the rent -seeking behaviour of African political actors faced with neo-patrimonial pressures as both the cause and effect of political malaise and crisis on the continent.

In a reading of the main literatures, rent seeking is to be found at both society levels and state levels. In the former, it is presented as integral to the very nature of African culture

and/or society. Within the latter, the 'developmental' state in Africa and the very nature of its economics is responsible for and contributed to neo-patrimonial opportunities which political elites (as the self-conscious producers of niches of opportunity) exploited, ultimately discouraging the emergence of market-driven regimes. The society-centric approach, best illustrated by Bayart's *The Politics of the Belly* (2009), generally defines African politics as the predatory pursuit of wealth and power as a mode of governance that must be understood within the specific historical, cultural and political experience of the state and how political power is organised. For Bayart (2009), the practices and norms in African societies that prevent the embrace and sustained application of 'rational' policy options capable of promoting economic development and political liberalisation are responsible for the criminalisation of the state. Here, the criminalisation of the state and the associated corruption at *all* levels are less signs of state failure than in themselves mechanisms of social organisation found within African society (Bayart 2009). On the other hand, the state-centric approach widely popularised by William Reno (1995) asserts that ineffective state institutions created opportunities for various 'strongmen' to emerge who consolidated their power through control of shadow economies rather than of state resources. Rebel forces or personalistic rulers thus maximised the use of violence and transformed political power into an effective means of controlling markets without the prior reliance on formal state institutions (Reno: 1995).

From this perspective, the state that emerges is one governed by corrupt tyrannical and authoritarian 'big men' whose insatiable appetite for wealth and power results in pervasive rent-seeking behaviour and a politics of patronage. Rather than leading to the development of a fully-fledged modern rational bureaucratic state coupled with a functioning capitalist economy, these are said to have instead given rise to an all-pervasive, all-encompassing feature of African polities: the criminalisation of the state (Bayart 2009; Reno 1998). Neo-patrimonial pressures are thus held to have led to layers of patron-client networks that penetrate the entire socio-economic and political fabric, consequently obstructing any opportunity for Africa's successful economic development and political transition. According to Reno (1998, p. 1), African 'rulers *reject* the pursuit of a broader project of creating a state that serves the collective good or even creating institutions that are capable of developing independent perspectives and acting on behalf of interests distinct from their rulers' personal exercise of power.' As a result, Africa's political 'big men' are described as having turned functioning states bequeathed to them at independence into dysfunctional entities through personal patron/client relationships and informal political-economic networks. From here, the processes and practices concerned

with the personalisation, criminalisation and weakening of state institutions are then considered to have created or accelerated the conditions of fragility and weakness, ultimately contributing to the failed/collapsed state (Wai 2013). This theory is presented by Afro-pessimists as all-pervasive, with no way out of the dead end. For the Afro-optimists seeking to overcome the pessimism of this perspective, it was suggested that this be accepted as the way Africa *really* works (Chabal and Daloz 1999).[1]

1.5. Pitfalls of the Dominant Interpretations

'A theory is a picture, mentally formed, of a bounded realm or domain of activity. A theory is a depiction of the organisation of the domain and of the connections among its parts…In reality everything is related to everything else, and one domain cannot be separated from others. Theory isolates one realm in order to deal with it intellectually…the question, as ever with theories, is not whether the isolation of a realm is realistic, but whether it is useful.'

(Waltz 1979, p. 8)

Waltz's point on judging theories not by their realism but by their usefulness seems a reasonable place to begin. Brown (2006) guides us further and suggests that perhaps when asking about usefulness, this can be equated to whether the abstractions on which a theory is built generate useful insights, whether it is a coherent formulation, whether the assumptions on which it is based are reasonable, whether it can explain significant issues, and whether it generates interesting hypotheses for future research (Brown 2006, p. 124). On this premise, the dominant frameworks on the failure of the state, which account for most of the efforts at interpreting political change in Africa, have indeed offered important insights into the problems of political reform and transition on the continent. The literature has in fact been relevant in drawing our attention to the very real challenges faced by many states in poorer parts of the world to uphold law and order, deliver public goods and address development problems. Yet the real question remains regarding the extent to which these concepts further our understanding of the ongoing resilience, stability and potential for African statehood. The

[1] Chabal and Daloz (1999) refer to a process by which political actors in Africa sought to maximise their returns on the state of uncertainty, confusion and chaos, which to them is characteristic of most African polities. Here, they argue, legitimacy of rule depends more on accommodating powerful elite factions than on delivering rapid economic growth and employment. 'Africa works' simply on its own logic of disorder.

answer is not much. The literature is replete with weaknesses and gross overgeneralisations that greatly limit its utility in capturing the nuances of change.

For one, neo-patrimonialism has been deployed to serve as a universally valid explanation for the continent's political realities that in the end has posited the rent-seeking behaviour of political actors and their pursuit of power and wealth through patron/client relationships and informal networks as both the *cause* and *effect* of weakness and failure (Mkandawire 2013). If African economies are in crisis, it is because of neo-patrimonialism (Olukoshi 2004). If African politics experiences instability, it is because of the same neo-patrimonial pressures. While this is clearly problematic, it is perhaps not surprising given that a single conceptual framework has been employed to understand and explain everything from, 'the form of the state to the nature of politics and the behaviour of the political classes, through to economic performance, processes of accumulation and economic rent distribution as well as development practices and failures, to civil strife, political unrest, armed conflicts and so-called state failure' (Wai 2012, p. 30). The consequence of this is a macro-picture of transition the does not facilitate understandings of the nuances of change and the bearers of this change since everything is reduced or refined to appear consistent with a neo-patrimonial logic. What emerges from this is a contradictory and often confusing explanation of the relationship between state and society. For instance, the state is represented as simultaneously too strong and too weak; it is suspended mid-air over society and does not sufficiently penetrate it, yet it also over-penetrates society and over-burdens it. At the same time, it is so permeated by society that it is utterly weighed down by the insatiable and unrelenting demands of the neo-patrimonial logic, thus becoming the 'lame leviathan' (Wai 2012; Mkandawire 2013). The question then arises: which is it?[2]

Moreover, the idea that neo-patrimonial politics is necessarily anti-developmental as presented in the literature is ahistorical. In trying to come to terms with why Africa has not experienced the same degree of modernity or development as its counterparts in Asia and Latin America, proponents have concluded that it is not neo-patrimonialism per se that is the problem, but rather the African strain that is particularly virulent and pathological. Mkandawire (2013) problematises four propositions that have been put forward to this effect.

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[2] In trying to explain everything, Mkandawire (2013) contends that it fails to adequately explain anything, therefore losing its analytical value and precision and rendering it a 'blunt instrument'.

The first relates to the normalcy of corruption in Africa; in other words, its 'economics of affection' (Hyden: 2012, p. 334-335). The second advances the pervasiveness, ubiquity and popular acceptance of it in the practice of politics. Here Bratton and van de Walle (1997) state that 'although neo-patrimonial practices can be found in all polities, it is the core feature of politics in Africa and in a small number of other states' (cited in Chabal and Daloz 1999, p. 44). For Sardan (1999), the problem is that 'corruption finds, in contemporary Africa, such a favourable ground for its extension and generalisation, in short for its banalisation' (cited in Chabal and Daloz 1999, p. 26). The third, as advanced by Booth (2006), is society having an inappropriate deference to authority that results not only in the rise of the 'big man' syndrome but also in the subordination of people inextricably linked to the clientelist relationship, rendering them complicit in their own victimisation and exploitation. Fourth relates to the nature of the African 'big man', characterised by an insatiable greed where all manner of stereotypes of his 'lasciviousness, excessive conviviality, ostentatiousness and sexual appetite' are evoked in pursuit of his own self-interest over that of society (Bayart 2009; Mkandawire 2013, p. 13). In the end, African culture is considered obstructive to development.

At a very basic level, conflating a variety of cultures found on the continent to account for political and social practices raises serious questions on subjectivity and the selective choice of the elements of culture to be considered. It also raises important questions about the comparative regional context in which it is being placed, as studies on comparative research show no evidence of cross-regional differences to support assertions of African exceptionalism. In fact, corruption permissiveness at citizen level in Africa is found to be lower than in other regions (Mkandawire 2013). Considering how leaders pursue their self-interest in a context in which the majority are driven by affection, superstition or tradition is to effectively deny agency to the already observable evidence of rural and local politics of resistance in determining the domain of rational behaviour and its restrictions on the pursuit of self-interest (Boone 2003). Omissions like this raise more questions than the theory can explain. For example, what guarantees a leader loyalty once patronage has been distributed? How do clients know that their support will be rewarded? The assumption of leaders as having predatory or distributional aims as opposed to developmental ones is also short sighted and fails to explain questions such as why capital accumulation requires state breakdown in some cases and not in others, or why leaders change their preferences from predatory to developmental in some cases and not in others such as in post-war Mozambique or Uganda. A greater analytical challenge the theory faces but fails to explain is why some countries within African have been able to

achieve high growth rates despite this logic, while others have not. Why too, have some countries achieved growth rates approximating or exceeding those in East Asia and Latin America in the period 1960-1980, several of which continue to do so now?

The fact is that neo-patrimonial politics is a general characteristic of *all* developing (and developed) countries undergoing processes of accumulation and associated political corruption. It is not exceptional to Africa. While culture does matter, it is indeterminate to questions of economic development (Mkandawire 2013). Rather than sparking a genuine discussion about what parsimony the logic of patronage may provide, how collective action problems can be overcome, or even how political processes may contribute to understandings of how leaders appropriate power, the analysis relies on essentialist and deeply reductionist assumptions of African culture and sweeping generalisations of a singular African politics. Understanding the continent through one type of lens and displacing the complexity of both contemporary and historical *political* processes has also been the charge against the 'new wars' literature. Indeed, what does the *new* refer to? Indeed, as Newman (2004) argues, 'all the factors that characterise new wars have been present, to varying degrees, throughout the last 100 years' (Newman 2004, p. 185). The idea that contemporary conflicts are apolitical is thoroughly unfounded as many current civil wars start with clearly identifiable political grievances. Like that of neo-patrimonialism, the theory fails to explain variation and why countries such as Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana and Ghana, which have been exposed to similar forces under the new patterns of globalisation, have not succumbed to political instability, collapse or political violence. Or why countries such as Mozambique, that have experience war or prolonged political violence, continue to function relatively well in spite of this. The regional complex of 'bad neighbourhoods' also fails to explain why some countries in these neighbourhoods fail to unravel while others do. Evidently, functionalist and 'new wars' theories are guilty of flattening the African political and economic landscape, rendering monolithic the great variety of African experiences, and the diverse interests, ideologies and motivations of social actors. By doing so, these theories have oversimplified the many contradictions, thus presenting an impoverished understanding of the continent.

Part of the problem lies in the conception of the state that is upheld in these theories. In this regard, critique has been directed towards the normative foundations of the discourse that continues to privilege the Weberian ideal-typical state as the modern normative model against which state rationality and performance can be 'modelled, analysed, inferred,

referenced, compared and contrasted' (Wai 2012). For example, as Reno (1998) explicitly states, 'My definition of state borrows from Max Weber's observation that states vary in their degree of resemblance to an ideal type in which they enforce regulations backed up with a monopoly of violence', further stating that all the case studies he examines 'represent nearly the *opposite* of the Weberian ideal' (cited in Wai 2012, p. 35). In fact, one would be hard pressed to find any analysis in the literature that does not privilege the Weberian ideal type of state. From this perspective, Africa has been understood in relation to what it *ought* to be, rather than what it *actually is*, with scholars scurrilously emphasising what is absent and/or lacking and prescribing ambitious programmes to address these deficiencies. Conceptually, then, a common theme in the literature has been to characterise the African state as pathological, a deviant, a lame leviathan that exists on the verge of death. Yet what the discourse fails to mention in its analysis is the fact that no modern state, either conceptually or empirically, has ever met the criteria of the Weberian ideal type. Weber himself considers the ideal type an abstract methodological construction intended to bring out meanings that humans give action to, rather than a description of an empirically grounded reality. Despite this, proponents of this discourse uncritically apply its conceptual parameters to African states assuming that all states should ultimately converge to the European model of statehood (Wai 2012, p. 36). Even those who claim to be laying bare the intrinsic realities of Africa are complicit in reproducing a discourse that embodies a racialised imagination entrenched in European histories of state development.

While this may appear to be a problem associated with the functionalist and new wars frameworks, it is in fact symptomatic of a more fundamental problem with the very condition of Africanist knowledge. Facing what Mamdani (1996) terms a 'paralysis of perspective' in being unable to come to terms with the specificity of the African context and its historical experience, the literature resorts to a persistent reading of African reality as little more than a replay of a similar phase in a much earlier period of European history.[3] By the same logic, Africa's future is determined and thus can only make sense when modelled along the lines of European institutional development. Even those who claim to be laying bare the intrinsic realities of Africa are complicit in reproducing a discourse that embodies a racialised imagination intrinsically entrenched in European histories of state development. This 'history by analogy', one that privileges the European experience as 'its touchstone, as the historical

[3] A study by LSE's own Broadberry and Garnder (2014) determined that Sub Saharan Africa is comparable to medieval Europe.

expression of the universal, contemporary unilinear evolutionism', is essentially and appropriately Eurocentrism at is best (Mamdani 1996, p. 12). Mamdani (1996, p. 12) contends that analogy-seeking substitutes itself for theory formation and illustrates this by showing the Africanist as 'akin to those learning a foreign language who must translate every new word back to their mother tongue, in the process missing precisely what is new in a new experience.' Herein lies the crux of the matter: in failing to assess African politics, societies and economies on their own terms and as distinct from those of others, the unilinear evolutionism has served as an instrument, knowingly or unknowingly, for uniformity and conformity, disregarding diversity and the challenges for creativity and originality that they present. Consequently, the narrative produced of Africa when set up against the universalism of the European experience is one that continues to reinforce the image of the continent as inadequate and even absurd, occurring only in the shadow of that which has already been.

1.6. Moving Beyond Imaginaries of Failure

What if, as Comaroff and Comaroff (2014, p. 1) suggest in their book *Theory From the South*, 'we invert the order of things? What if we subvert the epistemic scaffolding on which it is erected? What if we posit that, in this present moment, it is Africa which affords a privileged insight into the *workings* of the world at large? What would this mean for the nature of the explanation?' To propose this is to suggest two things. The first is that, contrary to a popular imagination that continues to employ a 'Heart of Darkness' style rhetoric, Africa's story goes beyond the single lens to reveal a multi-dimensional space and place that continues to construct creative and original responses to its political, economic and social environments. Thus, while some have associated the politics of change at the end of the post-colonial model of development as a confirmation that African democracies are still 'somehow on the road to democracy and that they have simply been stalled or temporarily delayed' (Herbst 2001, p. 358-359), or that democracy is in fact inherently a destabilising system of political governance resulting in a 'tribal end game', others see opportunity where more flexible, more viable, and yet complex systems of governance are developing as alternatives. Better understood as the search for a new model, but one whose emergence in many parts of Africa has been both tortured and conflict-ridden and, in some parts, unimaginably violent, the processes instead indicate a new social equilibrium in the making. Thus, the danger of a single story as the novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche reminds us, 'is that it creates stereotypes and the problem

with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story' (Adiche 2009). The challenge then is to recover the space for multiple stories – in this case, African stories.

This brings us to the second point, which contends with the notable absence of African scholars from the discussion on the crisis of the state in Africa. While much of this absence has been attributed to the unequal power relations experienced in the academic world, it has also been further accentuated by the context of the severe weakening of institutions of advanced research in Africa. The impact of these dynamics cannot to be underestimated as they have led to the production of knowledge on Africa as defined and provided by bilateral and multilateral development relations of aid and its related policies (Mkadawire 2011; see also Olukoshi 2006; Mama 2007). These too has been blamed for giving rise to unhealthy practices whereby African research is ignored in the formulation of international policies allowing external Africanists to assume the function of interpreting the world to Africa and vice versa. The ensuing 'political division of intellectual labour' has only served to reinforce the existing asymmetries in capacity and influence, particularly over the all-important question as to who may legitimately speak for Africa (Olukoshi 2006; Mama 2007). Lodging itself within the intricacies of this ongoing debate, this thesis aims to contribute to this conversation, albeit through a different approach. Having first explored the well-founded debates on and criticism of the neglect of the continent and thus the applicability of IR theory (in this case), it seeks to instead ask what contributions from Africa (through experiences of Africa and scholarship generated by Africans) could potentially enrich an understanding of the state in IR. In other words, what can stories formed within the context of African scholarship tell us about the state in Africa and, indeed, the state in the international?

This of course touches on questions of location, belonging, knowledge production and representation. Yet by doing so, it carefully rejects the view that African knowledge is necessarily 'different', as this would amount to essentialising the continent once again. Instead, it puts forward the perspective that multiple worldviews and lived experiences themselves can serve to enrich understanding through both their differences and similarities. At the heart of its motivation lies the central concern that the focus on institutions and procedures within the study of African states in IR and political science do not tell the whole story. It therefore seeks to explore how to account for and better understand the changing patterns of politics and the state in Africa without resorting to stereotypes, despair and malaise. Part of the answer lies in

addressing the notable ambivalence towards and ambiguities surrounding the issues of slavery, colonialism and post-colonial/neo-colonial relations when it comes to the study of the state in Africa within IR. But it also requires that we recover the ideas and imaginaries of those who live and experience the state in the everyday. Indeed, too often we talk about the state as if it is something which simply happens to people rather than something that is made up of their hopes, dreams and ambitions. This is especially true of a literature that continues to define the question of African agency as that of predatory pursuit on the one hand, and hapless and helpless victims of the same machinations on the other. And yet, if we look at the historical processes of a people in struggle through the eras of anti-colonial, pan-African and nationalist struggles for freedom through to the contemporary era of globalisation, we will find within these processes a people's search for a more just and inclusive political order.

For this reason, this study turns its attention to the vast and multidisciplinary scholarship of a critical intellectual tradition within African political thought. This, according to Mama (2007), is defined as a critical tradition for being premised on an ethic of freedom that it holds itself integral to the struggle for freedom and holds itself accountable, not to a particular institution, regime, class, or gender, but to the imagination, aspirations and interests of ordinary people. It is a tradition, Mama (2007) adds, that some would call radical, as it seeks to be socially and politically responsible in more than a neutral or liberal sense. Being so, it is guided by an ethic that requires scholars to be identified with and grounded in the broad landscape of Africa's liberation and democracy movements. To do so, it looks beyond academic scholarship and towards literature and the arts. The idea of an interdisciplinary approach is not necessarily novel and is already used widely in other disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology and political science. In African studies, the acknowledgement of African political thought (such as Negritude and African Socialism), the philosophies of the founding fathers such as Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Sekou Toure and Julius Nyerere, and the political statements of writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiongo and Wole Soyinka are widely recognised. Where academic scholarship and institutions of higher learning on the continent have suffered from significant lack and/or depletion of resources, owing to both domestic and international factors, popular culture can step in as an already-recognised vehicle for political statements that can, in turn, offer useful perspectives and crucial insights that conventional IR frameworks overlook because they do not recognise them. For example, music, the arts and new forms of media have opened new avenues and opportunities for expression and storytelling.

This goes right to the heart of *what* it means to study Africa and the international. It involves complex epistemological and methodological questions, especially in relation to *who* gets to do this in its name. To engage, however, this study begins with a more careful historically grounded approach to the state in Africa, one which is able to contextualise the continent's colonial legacy within the broader and complex interplay of the local, national and international factors, as well as the formal and informal. In so doing, it draws out the processes common to all of Africa that have been critical in provoking alterations to the contemporary political terrain of the post-colonial state. This approach is not new and has in fact been put forward by African scholars in their studies of state and political authority in Africa. Yet owing to the dominant and privileged position of the Weberian conception of the state, knowledge and practices from elsewhere (particularly those from Africa) have not been extended to the field of IR. What emerges from this interrogation is that it is not so much that the state is failing as it is an understanding of the state itself. Through an approach that considers the state as an open-ended process, unfinished and incomplete as a model, and one which is being reproduced in ways that defies preconceived western approaches, one is able to see that what is happening is not the absence of politics on the continent, but rather its practice in complex and original ways. In this way, the experiences of Africa and the scholarship generated by Africans potentially set out new ways of conceptualising the state, thus enriching and contributing to a greater understanding of the state in IR.

1.7. Road Map of the Journey Ahead

Chapter Two seeks to address the normative limitations of discourse and its ideas of state failure as rooted in the Weberian model of an ideal state. Instead, it contextualises Africa's own experience within the historical contingencies and social relations that give context and meaning to politics in Africa and which propel the processes of change. This sets the stage from which to consider expanding the idea of the state which has otherwise been assumed to be a fixed and unproblematised given within the discipline of IR. It brings to fore the dynamics of the dramatic, if not significant, changes currently taking place on the African continent and takes to task the failure of the discipline to account for the global politics of state formation and, subsequently, its claims to study the international. It concludes with a call for

truth-telling within IR and proposes an engagement with the question of what it means to study Africa and the international, let alone who gets to do this in its name.

Following on from this, Chapter Three situates itself within recent debates concerning Africa's place in the international. Yet more than just a question of 'adding Africa into the mix' of IR, it suggests that we engage with the politics of a discipline and its claims to study the international. Already, the past decade has seen a number of studies call into question the applicability of existing IR theory to the developing world, and Africa in particular, which is often neglected in IR theory-making. For example, IR has been characterised as an 'American social science' (Hoffman 1977); 'not so international' (Waever 1998); a 'hegemonic discipline' (Smith 2009); a 'disjunctive empire' (Yew 2003); and a 'colonial household' (Agathangelou & Ling 2004). This study moves beyond these well-founded criticisms as it asks, instead, what experiences from Africa could potentially contribute to our understanding of the state in Africa and the state in IR. This discussion thus positions the thesis in the context of accumulated IR scholarship while also setting out its aims and anticipated contributions.

In this spirit, Chapter Four begins with a reinterpretation of an old story on decolonisation and independence in IR, this time through the visions and imaginaries of its founding fathers and their pan-African ideas. Placing the state within the founding narratives of its advent, it contends with the question of the African state at a critical juncture as nationalist leaders and intellectual circles widely deliberated and consulted on the most focal issues of the time: those of self-government and the construction of the nation state. While views were naturally diverse given the specific historical experiences of colonialism in shaping particular conceptions of liberation and reconstructing options for political action, there was considerable consensus on the part of nationalist leaders in their anti-colonial and anti-imperial commitment against colonial rule and in their assertion of African unity as a path from which to overcome the legacy of colonial state in Africa but also, in the process, to reclaim Africa's place as an active player on the international stage. This sets a standard against which to measure the crisis of the state in Africa by holding nationalists accountable, not to an imported vision of the state, but to their own. It concludes with a discussion on the ongoing politics of decolonisation and transformation and its legacies towards the unfinished business of a people's search for a more just and inclusive political order.

Chapter Five follows in the same tradition, but seeks to place the state in Africa within the context of its advent; namely, the Cold War, global capitalism and the determination of the

former colonial powers to maintain their hegemonic positions within both. This, in turn, accomplishes two things. The first is that it places the crisis of the state within the historical conditions of its colonial imposition and function. By doing so, it offers an important counter-narrative as it reconstructs the concept of failure as rooted in the very concept of the state itself rather than as something external to it. The second is that it initiates a more intriguing conversation as to the nature of decolonisation, a concept far wider than the 'winning of independence' or the 'transfer of power'. What, for example, did the nationalists wish to do after independence? Did they achieve their goal? If not, has decolonisation been achieved? How did the former colonial powers intend to relate to their former colonies after the transfer of power? Have they realised their vision? If so, has decolonisation been compromised? In so doing, it aligns with the overall aims of this thesis, which seeks to explore preliminary issues in the representation of the African continent in order to understand some of the ideologies and interests that influence such *maps*. As such, it tells the story of the state in a different language and demonstrates how global, national and local politics of struggle would shape the politics of the continent for decades to come.

Chapter Six provides a contemporary understanding of the immediate context of change currently taking place on the African continent. Situated within the context of the global economic crisis of the 1970s and the betrayal of the hopes and dreams of the independence generation, this chapter brings the story of the state into the current context of crisis and the discussion of the mainstream literatures concerning the failure of the state in Africa. This time however, it sets the stage for a discussion of a society's own experience of the state and the crisis of the state in Africa (Olonisakin & Muteru, p. 2014) and, in so doing, recovers the existence of political community in Africa that is characterised by diversity, contestation, sacrifice, and visions of a better society (Olukoshi 2004). As such, it brings to the fore the politics of critical tradition within African political thought and its engagement as part of a continent's public sphere. It further complements this with an example of the politics of popular culture in providing debate and analysis of the crisis of the state, as seen through music of Nigerian musician and founder of 'Afrobeats', Fela Kuti.

Chapter Seven builds on the idea of popular culture as an arena in which ordinary people come together to debate issues and matters of concern. Its aim, again, is to engage with the voices of a critical intellectual tradition within African political thought through the eras of anti-colonial, pan-African and nationalist struggles for freedom into the era of globalisation. It

uses three case studies to reconstruct the story of the state in Africa as told through the experiences of those who live it in the everyday. The first is that of Somalia, read through the music and poetry of the '*Dusty Foot Philosopher'*, K'naan. Through his music, one is invited to travel with the poet through a recounting of the stories of war, displacement and alienation. Second is the novel *Dust* by Kenyan author Yvonne Owuor, which brings us to a reckoning with a country's own struggle with its recent past. Focusing on the 2007/8 election crisis, Owuor shatters the carefully constructed image of a 'bastion of democracy in a region of instability', showing instead the historical roots behind the crisis of the nation. Both Owuor's novel and K'naans poetry offer an alternative reading of the complexities and dynamics of the crisis of the state. Finally, the case of the Twittersphere brings to us the humour, resistance and rebellion of a people in search of belonging. Moving beyond the single story of a voiceless continent, we find here a cacophony of voices building within a 're-membering' of nation and belonging. For IR, popular culture offers an alternative tool from which to engage with the scholarship of the 'everyday'.

Chapter Eight draws on the scope and breadth of the lessons drawn from this study by way of a conclusion. On the one hand, this brings us back to the opening discussion of the mainstream disciplinary narratives of the state in Africa. Having already acknowledged the narrow and narrowing parameters it draws on the lessons learned from the analysis of the historical contingencies and social relations that give context and meaning to politics in Africa and which propel the process of change. In so doing, it offers its analysis of the implications of this within the understanding of the state in Africa, but also of the state in IR more generally. It situates core contributions within the narration of the historical processes of a people in struggle. This struggle did not begin with the post-Cold War introduction of multi-party systems as put forward in the more popular discussions on the state and the state of democracy in Africa, but rather with the independence and liberation struggles which were in and of themselves a struggle for democracy. Thus, it aligns itself with the overall aims of the thesis and in so doing, presents its learnings and contributions to the field.

CHAPTER TWO

RETHINKING APPROACHES TO THE STATE IN AFRICA

'You are not a country, Africa,

You are a concept,

Fashioned in our minds, each to each,

To hide our separate fears,

To dream our separate dreams.'

– Davidson Abiosch Nicol

Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, this study introduced the dominant discourses on the state in Africa by way of a literature review. Engaging in a critical interrogation of the core assumptions and ideas upon which the scholarship is inscribed, it considered the practical political implications on the continent by demonstrating their ineffective approach to understanding the African state. In particular, it drew attention to the assumption of a Western liberal state as the expression of the universal, but which in turn denies the historical specificity of Africa's own experience with regards to state formation. In order to address the normative shortcomings of this literature and its conceptions of the crisis, this chapter offer a more careful historically grounded interpretation of the changes currently taking place on the African continent. In so doing, it provides a foundation from which to engage with a discipline which so far has failed to take seriously the character and legacy of colonialism and the consequences of ongoing practices of international accumulation and intervention. It concludes with a means by which to do so.

2.1. Introduction

The varied changes over the past decade-and-a-half of Africa's recent history have captured the world's imagination, as seen through the *Economist*'s cautious reinterpretation of the 'Hopeless Continent' (2000) to the 'Hopeful Continent' (2013) and through ideas centred around an 'Africa Rising' (2011) narrative. In its 2010 report 'Lions on the Move', the McKinsey Group named Africa as the third-fastest-growing economic region in the world and boldly stated that given its collective GDP of 4.9 per cent (equivalent to that of Brazil or Russia), Africa was likely to play an increasing role in the global economy (McKinsey 2010). Undeniably, the excitement over Africa's economic growth prospects has reached nearly fever pitch in strong contrast to the characterisation of Africa as a region beset by 'chronic instability, poverty and marginal importance to the global economy' (ISS Africa Report 2013). Much of this is owed to several positive developments, including the decline in violent conflict; the steady increase in the number of democracies; the growth of South-South trade, particularly with China; improvements in the capacity of African governments; and progress with conflict-related management capabilities of regional organisations such as the African Union. These developments have no doubt provided the basis on which important gains in human development have been made, thus changing the continent's development trajectory. At the same time, however, the continent continues to face significant challenges as seen through the recent disintegration into violence and conflict of countries including South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. These simultaneous developments clearly demonstrate the two endpoints of the continuum of transformation in African states between extreme tragedy and seemingly peaceful transitions to democratic majority rule. *Seemingly* suggests that, in the meantime, 'everything in the middle' has occurred. African regimes have exhibited responses to the pressures for political change that span the spectrum from adamant resistance to reform to dramatic democratic transformations, with consequences for states ranging from disintegration to profound reconfiguration.

The constantly shifting academic debates on how best to approach the dramatic yet significant shifts in the political terrain have led to all sorts of interpretations of state and politics in Africa, indicative themselves of the very complexity of the changes, if not of crisis, in theory towards the study of the state in IR. Changes that inspire hope and other cause despair have pitted scholarly and policy communities into Afro-optimist and Afro-pessimist camps,

which despite their insights into the very real challenges faced by many states to uphold law and order, deliver public goods and address development problems, have remained too simplistic as lenses through which to interpret the multi-dimensional realities of the continent. As the previous chapter demonstrated, the focus on institutions owing to their obvious visible and measurable advantages has produced a abundance of literature that has focused on the deviant and aberrant nature of the 'failed' African state. Emanating from a normative and teleological bias that is steeped in Western universalism, its usefulness in capturing the nuances of change occurring on the African continent has been limited, if not questionable, for having resorted to tautology and caricature in the understanding of the African state. Far from new, however, this discourse is part of a long history in the social sciences and in policymaking circles that has reinforced a representation of the postcolonial African state as one without any meaningful politics, an object to be acted upon and at best another section of 'the globe's backward backyard' (Dunn 2001, p. 1). Yet given the fact that the continent will soon begin to occupy the centre of many paradigms that will take the spotlight in the Twenty-First Century, how do we account for and better understand the changing patterns of politics and the state in Africa without resorting to stereotypes, despair and malaise?

This study suggests that taking a closer look at the context within which the changes are occurring, together with the processes that underpin formal institutions and their procedures – including the actions of the players who give life to the political system – may hold the key (Olokushi 2005). As such, the need to address the prevalent analytical gaps in the literature necessitates a discussion of the context within which political change is being experienced on the continent in order to illuminate how and why political processes matter. This paper seeks to contextualise the continent's colonial legacy within the broader and complex interplay of local, national and international factors and in so doing, draw out the common processes to all of Africa that have been critical in provoking alterations to the contemporary political terrain of the post-colonial state. This approach is not new and has in fact been put forward by African scholars in their studies of state and political authority in Africa. Yet owing to the dominant and privileged position of the Weberian conception of the state, knowledge and practices from elsewhere (particularly those from Africa) have not been extended to the field of IR. What emerges from this interrogation is that it is not the African state that is failing, but rather the understanding of the concept of the state itself which is in crisis. As such, this chapter begins with an overview of the colonial genesis of the state in Africa and the challenges it faces with

regards to the same. This opens up a discussion from which to consider the legacy and consequences of international intervention and accumulation and contends with a literature in IR which has failed to do the same. It concludes with a way forward and sets out its agenda from which to negotiate the impasse between Africa and IR. Through an approach that considers the state as an open-ended process, unfinished and incomplete as a model and one which is being reproduced in ways that defy preconceived Western approaches, one is able to see that what is happening is not the absence of politics on the continent, but rather its practice in complex and original ways. In this way, the experiences of Africa and the scholarship generated by Africans potentially set out new ways of conceptualising the state, thus enriching and contributing to a greater understanding of the state in IR.

2.2. Dimensions of Change in Historical Context

The concept of the state in Africa cannot be separated from its colonial baggage and from the persistent question of its legitimacy. Lasting less than a century, a mere moment in historical time, the colonial state in Africa totally reordered political space, societal hierarchies and cleavages, and modes of economic production. The environment of conquest was not always the same; African states differed in their scope of political organisation and their interstate relations at the moment of intrusion (Young 1994, p. 79). Yet the territorial stamp etched out at the Conference of Berlin in 1884-5 by European powers was to eventually determine the states that got sovereignty, forming the present-day system of African polities (Young 1994, p. 10). The artificiality of the African state is not in doubt. Groups of people were arbitrarily sandwiched into territorial units, which then formed the geographical entity called the state. Induced through conquest, there was no identification with the state as a symbol of the people or a political community. For those who found themselves within the state, there was no sharing of common values, beliefs, and attitudes from which to create a political culture or a sense of belonging. In other words, the state preceded the nation (Kizerbo & Mazrui 2003, p. 439). Young has argued that the colonial state was not a 'state' as such because it lacked three crucial elements of statehood: *sovereignty*, which was emphatically denied with ultimate power vested in the state; *nationhood,* vigorously disputed by the propriety owners until the eve of independence; and the ability to act externally (Young 1994, p. 43-4). The African colonial experience was also markedly unique when compared to its

counterparts in other regions – not only for its late arrival in the age of imperialism and for its speed but also, for its sheer 'absolutism and arbitrariness' from which was forged the *decentralised despotism* that became the hallmark of the colonial state in Africa (Mamdani 1996, p. 10).

Tasked with a mandate to consolidate basic hegemony and realise its goals of exploitation and civilisation, the state relied on the rapid creation of a resource base for its very survival. Far from transforming state and society relations, systems and structures were created to sustain systemic economic and political underdevelopment (Ake 1996, p. 3). While doing so, the paradox of colonialism is that it transferred to the colonies the most modern system of political and economic domination and control in the form of a bureaucratic administrative structure. Far from the ideals envisioned in the Weberian ideal type, of a system of checks and balances, open representative democracy and the rule of law that is ultimately guided by the principle of 'equality under the law', the structures that were imposed served to exploit, dominate and control the state's subjects. This became the fulcrum of colonial occupation, in which bureaucratic administration facilitated exploitation in the interest and protection of a small group of colonisers and the relegation of the economy to a market for foreign surplus commodities. To effect this predation, the bureaucratic system was used as an instrument for class and racial domination (Mamdani 1996). Here, colonial authorities reified two types of difference – race and tribe – which distinguished those who were subject to civil law (Europeans and other immigrants as racial outsiders) from those who were subject to customary law (Africans and tribal natives). Institutionally, the former was organised along the principle of differentiation, and the latter on the basis of the fusion of power in order to create a dependent but autonomous system that contained Africans within a multiplicity of mutually exclusive tribal categories, each with its own distinct traditions and territories (Mamdani 1996, p. 1-2). Divide and rule in this way became 'define and rule'.

The colonial state that emerged was a 'quintessentially modern' mode of governance that sought 'not just to acknowledge difference but also to shape it' (Mamdani 1996, p. 1-2). Absolute and arbitrary, it simultaneously created agencies of rule and invented extractive devices whilst imposing on the subordinate societies the cost of the unsolicited governance proposed for them (Young 1994, p. 78). Through the control of every aspect of the colonial economy, it induced the break-up of traditional social relations of production, the atomisation

of society and the process of proletarianisation (Ake 1996, p. 2). With violence and brute force at its core, it was all-powerful and despite its rationale of low-cost domination, its overpowering image of strength and authority meant it sustained its hegemony with relative ease. Yet given its arbitrariness, it could not engender any legitimacy even though it propagated values and made rules and laws profusely. Consequently, its authority became the focus of challenge by nationalist movements agitating for greater autonomy and eventually independence. The struggle for power, particularly by colonial subjects seeking to advance their interests, was not concerned with conforming to legality or legitimacy norms. Rather, colonial politics came to be defined by opposing forces, both driven by the pursuit of power and where, for everyone in the political arena, survival and security lay in the accumulation of power. The type of politics that emerged, the determination of two exclusive claims to rulership, was essentially a zero-sum game, a quest for survival that made no room for moderation or compromise. The result was an unprecedented drive for power sought by any means which eventually, owing to both domestic and international forces, gave way to the decolonisation process and to the independence of colonies.

2.3. Post-Colonial Politics and the State in Africa

In keeping with Kwame Nkrumah's bold assertion to, 'Seek ye first the political kingdom, and all things shall be added unto you,' nationalist leaders were convinced that political independence (and the primacy of politics in human affairs as opposed to economic determinism) was the key to all other improvements in the African condition (Mazrui 1993, p. 105).[4] To this end, post-independence politics in Africa was fashioned within the framework of the anti-colonial struggle that gathered pace in the period after the Second World War. It was a framework that placed the state at the frontline of all key socio-economic and political processes of the polity and that was organic to the social contract upon which the nationalist anti-colonial coalition was constructed (Olokushi 2004). The project of national unity in which governments invested heavily was visible from the very outset in the mottoes, anthems and flags adopted by the newly independent states. Invoking collectivist values such as 'Unity, Peace and Development' (Senegal), 'Union, Discipline and Work' (Côte d'Ivoire) and

[4] Socialist countries such as Tanzania were the exception.

'Freedom and Justice' (Ghana), the slogans and anthems exalted collective struggle, unity and universal African brotherhood recalling the honour of the ancestors (Mazrui 1993, p. 106). Indeed, the colours of flags and national arms were full of symbolism that conjured up the high optimism of hope, resources in plenty, and the heroism of struggles for independence. The ideological underpinnings of post-independence politics (in which the state-led or state-interventionist postcolonial model of accumulation retained a central role) were critical to the intensive restructuring of social relations and politics, which in turn included the acceleration of processes of class formation and differentiation (Olokushi 2004). In this way, rather than breaking down the oppressive, extractive and authoritative nature of the colonial state at independence, the core elements of this state as well as the artificial boundaries of colonial state ideology were passed intact to its successor (Young 1994, p. 29).

As the new leaders were soon to discover, the inherited model of accumulation came with its own structure of incentives (both rewards and penalties), by which decision-making units were overloaded with demands and expectations but with few capabilities and resources to meet these (Mazrui 1993, p. 490). Neither did the parliamentary system make for the smooth sailing that it had for its predecessor: the new systems of checks and balances as well as the separation of powers did not make it easy for those schooled in the authoritarian culture of colonial politics. For the new leaders, consolidating power and securing a material base was thus given priority, and maintaining the status quo provided relative predictability and stability for this. As noted by Gellar (1972):

> *'Since the control over the colonial territorial centre and its resources was the main prize of pre-independence politics, there was little desire to diminish this prize. On the contrary, the main goal for inheritance elites after independence was precisely the consolidation and expansion of state authority.'* (cited in Mazrui 1993, p. 447)

African governments therefore sought rapid expansion of their mission and scope to expand their market base, acting simultaneously as surrogate capitalists and as the chosen engine for state development. Across the continent, a two-front assault on external economic dominance took shape: the nationalisation of colonial corporations and the indigenisation of state enterprises (Young 2004). Having inherited highly fragmented societies characterised by

ethnic or regional cleavages,[5] it was strongly argued that political competition opened the door for ethnic entrepreneurs to engage in divisive mobilisation of communal partisans. As a result, the dual imperatives of state and nation building called for the centralisation of power and the creation of a political monopoly, for which the single party was the ordained instrument (Young 2004).

How the state legitimated and maintained its power and authority was thus crucial to the formation and consolidation of the state. Given the growing centrifugal tendencies and political competition arising from the mutual alienation of the coalition partners, more value was placed on the capture of political power for fear of the consequences of losing out (Olokushi 2004; Ake 1996). With such a premium placed on it, the command state could not operate based on ultimate impersonal authority and coercive force alone; indispensable to its survival were supplementary mechanisms translating state rule into personalised linkages with intermediaries and their ramifying networks of clientele. The ruler's ascendancy was ensured and upheld by patrimonial networks comprising webs of personalised distribution and reciprocated loyalty from their clientele. (Young 1994).

In turn, clienteles exerted great pressure for access to government structures and resources as state power provided the key source of accumulation. At the same time, to establish political control, rulers had to limit access to state structures and state resources and thus the process of overcoming social fragmentation involved a 'system of multiple veto players' and consequently 'institutionalised suspicion' (Bardhan 2001, p. 258, cited in Lindemann 2008, p. 18). As a result, two ideal types of patrimonial networks were established on the continent. In the first, dominant groups managed to build and maintain a broad coalition of elites by providing inclusive access to state patronage, successfully overcoming social fragmentations and thereby reducing incentives for violence. In the second, dominant groups established exclusionary access to state patronage, therefore failing to overcome state fragmentation and increasing the probability for conflict (Khan 2010; Lindemann 2008, p. 19).

This had far-reaching implications for processes of state formation and consolidation across sub-Saharan Africa. African leaders had to find ways to create political organisations

[5] This being the result of the bifurcated state, from where as a result of indirect rule, traditional authorities consolidated their power and further sharpened ethno-regional cleavages. 'Native' authorities themselves were also 'subject' to this rule.

that could integrate the multitude of social constituencies, consolidating state structures and fostering economic development (Lindermann 2008, p. 18). In order to do so, all political parties relied heavily on the use of patronage politics. This sought to build and maintain political coalitions by providing existing social constituencies – and particularly their elite representatives – with access to public resources along neo-patrimonial lines. However, with the rise of the unitary state, the decline of electoral competition, and the weak material base of the new leaders, the struggle for political power intensified. Political power was everything. According to Ake (1996, p. 3), 'it was not only access to wealth but also the means to security and the only guarantor of general well-being' – again echoing Gellar's earlier statement of its capture as the ultimate prize. In this struggle, everything else including nation-building and development was marginalised. Those who were out of power constantly worried about their exposure to every kind of assault by a state that was subject to little constitutional restraint and, as such, strove constantly to put together a credible force to challenge it. Those in power were already so besieged by the multitude of hostile forces and authoritarian practices that they had engendered and in their own struggle for survival could not address the question of development. In the end, power was sought and maintained by all means. This included mobilising, manipulating and politicising the increasing competition and conflict among national, ethnic, communal and religious groups (Ake 1996, p. 5). In the end, not only were strong divisions created within elite ranks, but strong antipathies and exclusivity were reinforced vertically too in society, thus weakening the solidarity of the people at great cost.

At the same time, however, the project could not be abandoned since it was the justification for the rallying call behind the leadership, for criminalising political dissent and for institutionalising the one-party structure. To abandon it would undermine the power strategy of the elite and the legitimacy of its leadership. The elite responded to this dilemma by making token gestures towards development in order to divert demands for redistribution and for structural transformation of the colonial economy (Ake 1996, p. 4-7). The nationalist ideology of self-government was soon replaced with an ideology for development in the hope of once again reigniting a common purpose. This was to be achieved through changes in the vertical relations between Africa and the wealthier countries: a greater flow of technical assistance, more loans, more foreign investment, better prices for commodities; in other words, through greater dependency. This shift coincided with the apogee of the Cold War at independence, whose geopolitics was crucial in shaping post-colonial statehood. At the heart

of the bipolar conflict between the East and the West, the major blocs engaged in a strategic competition to either secure the affiliation of African states or adopt a cautious approach to avoid pre-empting their alignment. The currency for competition was economic and military aid (Young 2004). In many cases, the convention of negative sovereignty – that is, states holding formal sovereignty but being unable or unwilling to discharge basic functions – was applied during the Cold War as part of the containment politics for the purpose of global security. In their role as buffer states, African states were afforded protection, financial aid and military support by either of the superpowers without any concern for their internal functioning and legitimacy.

All this was to change as external shocks from the volatile global commodity markets disrupted the flow of foreign exchange, deeply exposing the disjointed structures of underdeveloped economies still operating along colonial lines (Chinweizu 1993). The worsening situation was further accelerated by drought, crippling debt repayments and the mismanagement of bloated and weak bureaucracies, triggering the collapse of the postcolonial framework of accumulation as systemic crises began to appear. Economies plummeted to levels worse than those inherited at independence; education systems deteriorated, roads disintegrated, railways rusted, telephones went silent, and infrastructure decayed (Mazrui 1993). The continent began witnessing the growth of a diaspora, as many of its most gifted were scattered across the four corners of the globe in search of opportunities. An array of novels such as *The Beautyful Ones are Not Yet Born* and *Petals of the Blood* began to reflect the grave disillusionment and disappointment, as new terms such as predatory, parasitic and venal state seeped into everyday vocabulary. Once a champion of the nationalist movement, Okot p'Bitek (1982) lamented in his final work that 'the walls of hopelessness surround me completely,' with 'no windows to let in the air of hope'. In fact, as Mazrui (1993) quipped, Nkurumah's pursuit of the political kingdom was better fashioned along the lines of, 'seek ye first the political kingdom and all else will be subtracted from it' (Mazrui 1993, p. 105). In the increasing economic disarray, the postcolonial state also found itself faced with a suddenly more hostile international climate arising from a paradigm shift in development economics. The Washington Consensus that was forming within international financial institutions (IFIs), championed by the conservative administrations of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, touted the supremacy of the market and the return of neoclassical economics to intellectual

hegemony. This meant that for African governments seeking assistance for recovery, reform demands were encountered and informed by what became known as neoliberalism.

Towards the end of the century, facing a less favourable international climate as global superpowers lost the political incentive to support repressive regimes and with worsening economic crises, state authorities lost their capacity to accumulate and redistribute resources to clients, deeply exposing fatal shortcomings in the nature of the state. The ending of reflexive support for African states by key Cold War protagonists removed a huge barrier to the political transformation for the state. Almost overnight, many African regimes lost their automatic clientele relationships with Cold War hegemons. Overwhelmed by unsustainable debts, facing negative trends in primary commodity markets, and shunned by international capital, the neo-patrimonial state was slowly breaking down as it lost its relevance and effectiveness as the core of resource allocation. 'State crises' began to seep into everyday characterisations of the post-colonial polity as governments were forced to take on loans from the IFIs, commonly known as structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). In the ensuing vacuum, political settlements rooted in exclusionary bargains collapsed as long-suppressed demands exploded into the open. Nowhere was this vulnerability more visible than in countries such as then-Zaire, Ethiopia, Angola and Liberia. Growing political movements of oppositionists, professionals, students, the press and trade unions sought to capture central power, invoking the language of reform with vows to 'unshackle' the state. These upheavals came to be grouped under the heading of democratisation, although some analysts feared another false start (see Clapham 1996).

2.4. Transition Politics and the State in Africa

The immediate context of change within Africa today is seen in the collapse of the post-colonial framework of accumulation in the 1970s and early-1980s and its replacement with a free-market framework which served as the basis on which various players within the polity constituted themselves or were reconstructed (Olukoshi 2004). The very collapse of the framework that ushered in the nationalist anti-colonial coalition and which constituted the legitimacy of the state produced a rupture that called for a redefinition of state-society relations. According to Boone (1998), the erosion of the old political order and current challenges from within and below were met with a series of political manoeuvrings and radical alternatives that

sought to ensure the continued survival of the state. Strategies ranging from the reconfiguration of domestic alliances, the mobilisation of internal constituencies, the building of new institutions to channel and control participation, and the implementation of new repressive tactics emerged as methods of crisis management and institutional innovation on the part of regimes attempting to remain in power. The relative successes of regimes in employing such strategies to gain advantage over internal opponents and to counter centrifugal political forces, as well as in manoeuvring under new pressures from external patrons and backers, were central to ensuring their survival. In other words, a regime's ability to forge a political settlement based on an inclusive elite bargain that ensured the distribution of power was central, if not critical, to ensuring the coalition's survival and the state's stability amid upheaval and transition. As such, the decisions that African states were forced to make under intense external and internal pressures, combined with variations in the strategies employed by elites to survive, led some states to disintegrate and others to reconfigure.

The quest for an encompassing definition of relations tied to competition for repositioning by various contending interests was also marked by a context of critical stock taking as manifested by (sovereign) national conferences, constitutional review processes and truth and reconciliation exercises that were launched. External events compelled leaders to concede to demands in return for assistance. By the 1990s, impelled by the prolonged and deepening economic crisis, the growing burden of the parastatal sector on the state, and a low morale within society itself, Africans began demanding not only a return to liberal democratic values but to the values embodied by and symbolised in their national mottoes, anthems and flags – in other words, the legitimating ideology of the liberation struggles (Mazrui 2003, p. 492). National conferences in Francophone Africa and similar activities elsewhere were important in providing a public platform for discontent and grievances to be laid bare. The authoritarian political systems of single party, military rule, and/or military-civilian diarchy established by the old order began to be abandoned in favour of democratic rule with its associated multiparty system and competitive elections, human rights protections, free market and decentralisation economics (Olukoshi 2004). Nearly all regimes felt compelled to make some gestures towards political opening and multiparty regimes were introduced almost as a complement to the economic liberalisation exercises of the SAPs at the onset of the crisis.

As this wave of democratisation swept across Africa at the end of the Cold War, much

attention was placed on the role of elections as one of the most important variables in the reconstitution of political order. Elections were thought to be an appropriate benchmark as they not only came to symbolise the end of the centralised authoritarian regimes, but also led in many cases to leadership changes. However, far from the hopes that electoral competition would result in the liberalisation of the repressive structures of one-party rule and usher in the ideals of 'good governance' and 'order', democratic transitions were instead characterised by a 'winner-takes-all' zero-sum game between competing political elites. In a classic demonstration of the dialectics of change and continuity, yesterday's single-party barons and military oligarchs became part of the movement for political pluralism and the expansion of public space through new political parties, non-governmental organisations and numerous religious, ethno-regional associations. As aptly summed up by Olukoshi (2004), 'if the crisis of the post-colonial model of accumulation translated into a crisis for the established political order in most African countries, the struggle for preservation of interests became an important feature of the transition from political authoritarianism to political liberalisation', particularly in the context of prolonged economic crisis and SAPs that underpinned the transition. Most significantly, institutions overseeing the 'rules of the game' and checks and balances on the executive, judiciary and legislature were deliberately weakened to serve the interests of the ruling elites in maintaining the status quo. Perhaps the most significant of these was the excessive centralisation of power within the presidency which meant that, as before, competition for political control was also competition for control of the resources that can be used to reward supporters, provide for group members and create barriers for entry into political and economic markets.

This purposeful weakening of the state and the centralisation of power and authority also gave rise to a perception on the part of the public that everything flows not from laws, but from the president's power and personal decisions. This is an important point to highlight, because the centralisation of power around the presidency entrenched the belief among the citizenry that a person from one's own group (ethno-regional/religious) must be in power in order to secure the entitlements stemming from the control of the state's resources. The dilemma, having its origins in the colonial political legacy and its notion of rights – who belongs, who is entitled, who is a citizen – continued to be reproduced through the institutions of the state translating the colonial race branding project into the postcolonial nation-building project (Mamdani 1996; see also Mamdani 2009, p. 15). More than ever, the politics of 'it is

our turn to eat' (Wrong 2009) formed the language of the continent's political landscape. Indeed, the almost total abandonment of the rule of law and independent institutional checks on the executive paved the way for gross corruption and the venal predation of the state witnessed through the scandalous reign of leaders such as then-Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko and Côte d'Ivoire's Houphouet-Boigny, among others. In turn, owing to the patron-client nature of the political system, the acquisition of presidential power and therefore access to the 'national cake' by the governing elite and the citizenry came to be viewed largely as a do-or-die, zero-sum game where the use of violence and displacement became instrumental in securing benefits and entitlements for one's ethnic group. As Langer argues, 'excluded elites not only have strong incentives to mobilise their supporters for violent conflict along ethnic lines but are also likely to gain support among their ethnic constituencies more easily' (Langer 2004, p. 10). Rather than being engines of peace, stability and inclusive participation, elections came to be understood as drivers of conflict on the African continent as the state continued to be the ultimate prize in post-colonial politics.

2.5. The Global Politics of the Postcolonial State in Africa

The notion that the failings of the post-colonial order are to be squarely grounded in the corruption of public institutions and the unscrupulousness of African leaders tends to obscure the nature of international relations and questions surrounding sovereignty, state and intervention. Indeed, while decolonisation expanded the spheres of freedom and the expression of the sovereign will of Africans, the extent to which African leaders were able to shape their own destinies and those of their populations was significantly limited by the geopolitics of the Cold War terrain in which the postcolonial state emerged (Grovogui 2012). While Nkrumah's call to 'seek ye first the political kingdom' was noble, African leaders were no doubt mistaken about their ability to meet the expectations of their citizens, given their states' weak institutional and economic capacities as well as entrenched ethnic and class divisions. However, this alone did not seal the fate of African leaders. Cold War proxy conflicts and manifest neocolonial interference played roles in the overthrow (and assassination) of democratically elected, but 'disagreeable', leaders including Patrice Lumumba (1961), Sylvanius Olympia (1963), Kwame Nkrumah (1972) himself and Thomas Sankara (1987). These coups were executed by multi-national alliances that included locals, yet as Grovogui

(2012) rightly contends, 'the mechanism of implementation and structures of legitimation were all commodities of global politics way before independence' (Grovogui 2012, p. 123). These neocolonial events would not have taken place with the assent of segments of postcolonial elites. The assassination of Lumumba alone was to trigger an era of Western-backed military coups and rule after which Africa became a stage for global contests on which African leaders entered Cold War alliances as a means of securing their survival. Indeed, many of those now considered tyrants, autocrats, dictators or worse, were those enabled in their actions through alliances with external powers (states) or forces (non-state actors). The likes of Mobutu Sese Seko (then-Zaire), Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor (Liberia), Siad Barre (Somalia), Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire) and many others responsible for some of the worst crises seen on the continent, were all Cold War allies of the West, shedding light on the extent to which postcolonial elites were enabled, burdened or constrained by regulatory and constitutive dimensions of Cold War politics, its institutions and regimes of legitimacy (Grovogui 2012).

At the same time, political decolonisation and formal independence in Africa did not mean the end of imperialism in Africa, but rather a change in the guise of imperialism (Chiweizu 1993, p. 769). Instead, empire and colonialism have outlived decolonisation in the form of economic colonisation. Multilateral economic organisations such as the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, European Economic Community (EEC), Organization for Economic Cooperation (OECD) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) among others were at the apex of a structure of rules and laws, customs and organisations which together determined the workings of the capitalist world into which African states emerged from colonialism (Chiweizu 1993, p. 772). Co-opted or obliged by various open and covert sections of the instruments transferring political power at independence to retain economic, diplomatic or cultural agreements, African states not only found themselves subordinated to the apex institutions, but also tied by a thousand cables to the inner working structures of the global capitalist system. This subordination meant that the colonial trading pattern of Western Europe as the principal trading partner and Africa as supplier of raw materials to the West and as a market for Western manufacturing goods remained intact. Internally, therefore, African economies retained their colonial character, as little effort was made to change but they continued to produce what the West, through the world market, demanded of them rather than what the citizens within these economies needed. Nowhere are the consequences of this subordination and the ongoing colonial relationship more

visible than in the defence pacts and system of 'compulsory solidarity' in Francophone Africa.[6] Thus, rather than drifting away from the West, Africa remained tied to the capitalist world system in the traditional colonial manner and by the very structures it had sought to change and/or escape. Slavery had ended, old-style traditional empires had ended, but neo-colonialism and economic imperialism remained triumphant.

These colonial regimes of property have found new applications in a global economy in which the position of Africa as the provider of raw materials has been further entrenched in neoliberal arrangements. Beyond being subjected to an extraordinary degree of foreign tutelage on how to run a country and being treated as a foreign laboratory for new forms of Western domination through the SAP programmes of the IFIs, the loss of autonomy and sovereignty on the part of African states (many of which became accountable to international aid agencies rather than to domestic electorates) ensured a brutal reversal in the balance of social forces to the benefit of capital (Amin 2002). The devastating results of these policies are well known. Yet in their weakened state, recognition of the constitution of property as a function of the state by neoliberal schemes legitimised deals and the transfer of ownership of land and industry to foreign firms and creditors. Sovereignty became a legal façade, serving as a means for non-state actors and foreign firms to simplify questions regarding the legitimacy of contracts and adherence to laws in their home countries (Dunn 2001, p. 51). The power of economic interests to shape politics and international relations should not be underestimated. On the one hand, foreign corporations emerged as a strong resource base for domestic actors and on the other, they responded by performing functions and providing services typically relegated to the state. The legitimising practice of this relationship has been devastating to economies. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) estimates, for example, that illicit financial outflows from Africa average USD50-billion per year, double the official development assistance that Africa receives and of which multinationals account for 60 per cent (UNECA 2015). In the tradition of Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,* these practices demonstrate the ongoing and exclusive constitution of Africa as a provider of labour and raw materials for Europe initially predicated on the idea that Africans

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[6] The colonial pact obliged African states to put 65 per cent of their foreign currency reserves into the French Treasury, plus another 20 per cent for financial liabilities. This meant that up to today, 14 African countries only ever have access to 15 per cent of their own money and if they need more, they have to borrow at French commercial rates (Pigeaud, F. and Sylla: 2021, p. 116).

populations lack the faculty to constitute and claim property (Grovogui 2012).

While the strictures of the global political economy and the power politics at play exhibit the external signs of neo-colonial webs of power, a closer look reveals the regimes of morality, law and order that undergird and legitimise them in the postcolonial era. For Grovogui (2012), the most pervasive and enduring ideological undercurrents to African Studies in the post-Second World War era have been liberalism and rationalism, which made their entry through theories of development, modernisation and the rule of law or good governance (Grovogui 2012, p. 125). The theory of modernisation put forward in Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* paved the way for the study of postcolonial states as traditional and non-modern as compared to the liberal democracies of the West. These ideas validated and embedded the liberalism of the post-war global reform agenda by granting legitimacy to development aid and the agenda of liberalisation of trade and investment abroad (Grovogui 2012, p. 124). At the same time, they constituted the agenda of both private and government-funded foundations which supported research and academic exchange that fused together the ideas of modernisation, liberalism and national interest. This was not without consequence. For Grovogui (2012), the ensuing confrontation between liberals and Marxists (as well as other so called 'radicals' of structuralism), in which the latter was vilified, served to:

> '*…inhibit critical inquiry into the relationship between modernity, capitalism and the state. It also served to repress questions over the use of state coercion in advancing particular interests in the global economy. Finally, it discouraged analyses of domestic resources, state coercion and social violence.*' (Grovogui 2012, p. 126)

The result was the acceptance of capitalism and liberalism as the key to post-colonial salvation and to which the role of the continent was to catch up with the West. Far from questioning the effects and failures of the reform agenda, particularly that of adjustment, proponents and scholars simply turned their gaze to the functions and/or dysfunctions of local institutions, culture and behaviour in explaining corruption and violence on the continent.

Contextualised in this way, it comes as little surprise that the study of the African state within IR has thus come under sharp criticism for its ambivalence towards a history of slavery, colonialism and postcolonial/neo-colonial relations upon which the state is founded and, in

many ways, continues to operate. Far from being marginal and a continent that is only *acted upon*, the experiences and events of imperialism, colonialism and postcolonial relations have shaped the existence of the conquerors or hegemons and the conquered and subordinated alike. In this way, while analysts have viewed 'native' Africans as the agents and victims of state failure, corruption and conflict, the structural and normative contexts themselves are hardly African. Moreover, while some regimes were vapid and predatory, they cannot be understood outside their contexts, the omission of which mistakenly conflates the representation of the state with the ruling elites and the events with the enabling processes and structures (Grovogui 2012; Olokushi 2004; Mamdani 1996). Perhaps more surprising is that connections between the past and present and between colonial legacies and post-war politics do not require a stretch of the imagination yet they have persistently been neglected in favour of a view of the continent as problematic and crumbling under the weight of its tradition and incompetence. Take the case of Congo, for example; one of the most brutalised colonies in Africa, where unimaginable cruelties were imposed as mechanisms for social control. It was also the site over which the United States and the Soviet Union came into direct conflict; where the first freely elected African head of government was assassinated; where the United States backed the most corrupt ruler in all of Africa's history, and where the scramble for the country's mineral wealth has contributed to one of the deadliest wars since the Second World War. To deny the role played by foreign interference is tantamount to censorship and a rewriting of history itself.

Considering this, truth-seeking as a primary function of scientific pursuit needs to be brought back into the study of the African state, global politics and the promotion of justice, peace, order and security (Grovogui 2009). Part of this enterprise necessarily begins with questioning the West's authorship of IR theory, whose hegemonic practice closes out other readings and/or writings of global politics. As argued by Dunne (2001), 'As a product of modernity, Western IR theory rests on the necessary marginalisation of Africa and other non-Western sites of knowledge' (Dunn 2001, p. 3). For Grovogui (2013, p. 117-138), this 'theoretical fundamentalism' that finds comfort in the illusion that other thought systems are 'wrong, inferior and impractical' must be confronted. To begin with, the limitations of the sovereign nation-state as the primary unit of analysis and the distinction of a domestic/international dichotomy that is central to traditional IR needs to be problematised. Questioning the analytical primacy of the state has been controversial for many Africanists such as Young and Villalon (2008) who argue for the state as the central focus in explaining

and understanding political transformation (cited in Dunn 2001, p. 50). Yet as this paper has demonstrated, the actors, agents and subjects at various levels of the local, national and international illustrate ways in which the production of sovereignty and statehood are complex and varied. As argued by Ferguson (2006), it is impossible to understand Africa outside of the global, particularly the social relations that constitute global society as well as the rights and obligations that flow from such relations. Focusing solely on sovereign power and bureaucratic administration misses out on the many ways in which African experiences and their politics are confronting and interacting with the ever-changing global environment. Take the issues of climate change, migration, human security, information and communication technology, and economic development, for example. These are all raising new questions over African agency and its central place in the face of globalisation which traditional IR cannot answer.

Clearly, the causes of Africa's weakness have not been exclusive to the domain of the internal and the failure of its institutions. Instead, the continent is enmeshed in a complex web of global relations that challenge the idea of the state as the primary unit of analysis, showing Africa's politics to be, at one and the same time, global politics. Yet a focus on structure without a more detailed consideration of agency binds Africa's international relations into a narrow and predetermined position as the recipient of international affairs, rather than as an active player. Indeed, while agency has been constrained and has operated in tight areas, African actors are not and have never been passive. Thus, the challenge is to uncover stories of such agency. These are stories of human initiative in thought and action as part of the vital substance of which history is made. They are the stories of ordinary people standing up to – and in some cases changing – powerful structures of inequality. Or even simpler, they are the stories of the everyday experience as resistance itself. These stories do not have to be fabricated; they already exist. They exist in African scholarship. While at first glance they may not be recognisable to IR, they nevertheless hold the potential for new insights into the understanding this field of study. Take, for example, the pronouncements and insights of political leaders and others whose thoughts have been documented. In African Studies, the acknowledgement of African political thought (such as Negritude and African Socialism), the philosophies of the founding fathers such as Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Sekou Toure and Julius Nyerere, and the political statements of writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiongo and Wole Soyinka, are already widely recognised. New forms of media have also opened novel opportunities for storytelling; popular culture has always been a vehicle for

political statements and has more recently found innovative new avenues of expression, such as the Internet. These and other stories within African scholarship are what make the whole complete.

To uncover them would be to move beyond the disciplinary boundaries of IR and beyond the often aggressively guarded notion of what constitutes the field. This presents its own array of epistemological and methodological challenges; however, such an endeavour could valuably contribute more open and inclusive understandings of the dramatic shifts occurring within the continent's political terrain. Indeed, the past two decades have proved to be critical in the evolution of African statehood, during which the centrality of debates on democratisation and concomitant constitution-making processes are the most apparent indication of the proliferation of significant political changes occurring on the African continent. At the core of these debates has been how state power is organised, shared and exercised. In other words, the constitution of the state – the sum of its power and authority – is what lies at the heart of the crisis of the modern African state (Mutua 2008). Similarly, the focus of conflict and social ferment in Africa has been a struggle over the nature of the state rather than simply the weakening of its structures as put forward in the discourse. Thus, while many have associated the politics of change at the end of the postcolonial model of development as a confirmation that African democracies are still 'somehow on the road to democracy and that they have simply been stalled or temporarily delayed' (Herbst 2001, p. 358-359), or that democracy is inherently a destabilising system of political governance resulting in a 'tribal end game', others see opportunity where more flexible, more viable, yet more complex systems of governance are developing as alternatives. Better understood as the search for a new model, but one whose emergence in many parts of Africa has been both tortured and conflict-ridden, the processes instead indicate a new social equilibrium in the making.

This approach allows us to consider some of the dramatic shifts on the continent's political terrain more openly and inclusively. As Olokushi suggests (2004), part of the reason for the admixture between processes of disintegration and reconfiguration, was the high level of uncertainty thrown up by a transition process of political liberalisation occurring in a context of the most prolonged and deep-seated socio-economic crisis in the contemporary history of the continent. This had contradictory effects where, on the one hand, the transitional process

was marked by a severe loss of confidence in the public institutions of government, compounded further by the fact that the state, which once played a pivotal role, was now reduced to a shadow of its former self given the anti-statist rhetoric of SAPs (Olukoshi 2004). Yet on the other hand, even in its weakened form, it remained an important point of focus in the articulation of livelihood strategies, the (re)definition of interests, and the promotion of alternative social projects for a cross-section of groups, including emerging new interests emerging from the market reform process. This was not surprising given its continued role in the reproduction of politicised group identities, whose origins lie in the colonial state, but which were exaggerated by the postcolonial state, allowing the state to stand up to time (Mamdani 1996, p. 6). In parallel with the weakening of the postcolonial state in Africa, 'new forms of power and authority' also sprang up across the continent. Here, transition politics in Africa were occurring at a time in which new interests were emerging within the expansion of boundaries of informalisation.

Indeed, Africa's informal institutions, boosted by the decline and decay of the formal institutions of state due to prolonged economic crisis, led to the adoption of multiple modes of livelihoods by the working poor and the middle class (Olukoshi 2004). Blurring the formerly recognised conceptual boundaries between the formal and informal by expanding beyond peripheral sectors and cultural institutions to penetrate the heart of modern economic and political organisation, the informal sector significantly impacted the reshuffling of social relations. Through employment generation, service provision, resource management, local governance and conflict resolution, informal economies played an important role in holding economies and societies together despite economic, political and environmental challenges (Meagher 2007). At the same time, in many instances the prolonged absence of central government authority provided space for societal political orders and local power centres to emerge 'beside the state'. Be they non-governmental organisations or community-based organisations in Kenya, Somali returnees from the diaspora, neo-traditional political leaders in Ghana or the Gambia, or elders shaping the autonomous government of Somaliland, forms of political organisation and leadership developed alongside the state, either sustaining its apparatus and policies or appropriating its sovereignty by processes of informal privatisation. While these examples do not necessarily point to the end of the state, the realities of non-state political orders functioning in parallel or independently of the national power centre challenges the idea that state 'failure' equates to anarchy and disorder.

At the same time, a less visible but extremely powerful constituent was emerging – the youth. With over half of the continent's population classified as children and youth, unaffected by the experience of colonialism and not directly involved in the nationalist anti-colonial movement, the generational shift has significantly impacted the agenda of politics in Africa. This impact has been the result both of their emergence into positions of leadership (politically and economically) and of youth alienation and disaffection often connected to prolonged economic crisis that challenged the very stability of the state (as was experienced in the cases of the Sierra Leone and Liberia conflicts, for example). As with these demographic shifts, rapid rates of urbanisation have challenged the very assumptions and structures on which postcolonial governance was built and have brought to the fore, through the contestation of constitution, rights and citizenship, the politics of representation and the very legitimacy of government and state. According to Olukoshi (2004):

> '*In addition to the obvious rural-urban reconfiguration that is occurring, there is also the growing politics of* settlers *and* natives*, the revival of competing ethno-regional/socio-cultural networks, the proliferation of urban gangs/armed militias/neighbourhood vigilante groups, the spread of intolerance and xenophobia which also finds expression in policies that are hostile to* non-natives*, the increased challenges of social inclusion and service delivery for a rapidly growing urban population, the massive expansion of the boundaries of the informal sector and informal networks, and the spread of a new religiosity that ranges from the syncretic to the puritanical.*'

This suggests that new configurations of power, as centred on the reconstitution of the state, are unfolding and represent, in turn, a renegotiation of the terms and conditions of political citizenship.

2.6. Conclusions

This chapter sought to account for the nature of the changing politics of the state in Africa. Situating the state within the context of its emergence – its colonial constitution – it sought to show that the state as it evolved in the postcolonial or, perhaps more accurately, neo-colonial era is an historically specific product of its colonial legacy and of often contradictory

interests interacting at the local, national and global levels (Moe 2011, p. 93). Its aim was to contend with the concept of the state and its assumption of a Weberian ideal as a universal standard against which the state in Africa has been read as a failure. What emerges from an approach that situates the state within the historical contingencies and social relations that give context and meaning to the African condition is that it is not so much that the state has failed in Africa than has our understanding of the state. African perspectives point to ongoing processes of contestation, negotiation and bricolage as centred on the reconfiguration of the state in Africa; that is, the reconfiguration of the colonial state which, in its conception, took no account of the imaginaries of life, politics and society of domestic constituents. In the postcolonial moment, this reality has fashioned ongoing struggles for the state as the focus of conflict and social ferment. Makau argues that this struggle has been over the nature of the state rather than the weakening of its institutions as put forward in the literature. This suggests that what appears as a loss of central power may in fact be its reconfiguration.

Taking note of the historical specificity of the state in Africa also draws our attention to the nature of its constitution within the international system. As we see, not only did its colonial constitution endure within the postcolonial structure and system, but so too, did the structures and relations that rendered it as a space of domination and exploitation. Among the most enduring of these is that African economies retained their colonial character and continued to produce what the West, through the world market, demanded of them rather than what the citizens within these economies needed. This disconnect between sovereignty as political independence and sovereignty as economic independence raises significant questions regarding the nature of decolonisation as seen through the ongoing drama of domination. How these played out in the postcolonial context also served to shape the nature of state formation. For while decolonisation had expanded the spheres of freedom and expression of the sovereign will of Africans, the extent to which African leaders were able to shape their own destinies and those of their populations was significantly limited by the geopolitics of the Cold War terrain in which they emerged (Grovogui 2012). More so, in the context of endemic economic crises, the imposition of SAPs served to render the state at the service of IFIs rather than its domestic constituents. Scholars have attributed the collapse of the postcolonial framework, which was integral to the social contract, to the involvement of external actors. As such, the question of the state can only be understood as the outcome of world historical processes and social relations, reproduced by globally structured relations.

Understood in this way, decolonisation did not lead to a clean break with the illegitimate and centralised rule introduced during colonial times, just as the pattern of self-serving international intervention to establish certain social and political orders did not end with the advent of independence (Moe 2011, p. 92). Yet, a focus on structure without a more detailed consideration of agency binds Africa's international relations into a narrow pre-determined position as the recipient of international affairs rather than an active player. For while agency has been constrained and operated in tight areas, African actors are not and have never been passive. The challenge is to uncover stories of such agency. These are stories of human initiative in thought and action as part of the vital substance of which history is made. They are the stories of ordinary people standing up to powerful structures of inequality, and in some cases changing them. They are also the stories of the everyday experience as resistance itself. These stories do not have to be fabricated; they already exist in African scholarship. While at first glance, they may not be recognisable to IR, they nevertheless hold the potential for new insights into the field. These and other stories within African scholarship are what make the whole complete. To uncover them would be to move beyond the disciplinary boundaries of IR, and beyond the often aggressively guarded notion of what constitutes the field. In so doing, the following chapter picks up on the important insights and perspectives gained on the historical specificity of the state in Africa as it seeks to bring these into a question of the recovery of African political agency in both thought and practice.

CHAPTER THREE

RECENTERING AFRICA, SEEING THE WORLD: A RESEARCH NOTE

'If you are born on the margins, on the frontier of power, you have a chance of seeing things better than if you are inside the mainstream, in power. But only if you are self-aware and if you know how to use it.'

– Lucrecia Martel

Chapter Overview

The previous chapter introduced the historical contingencies and social relations that give context and meaning to significant dimensions of change currently taking place on the African continent. It drew attention to the legacy of despotic tule in Africa as a legacy of the colonial genesis of the state and the effects and consequences of international intervention and accumulation as central to understanding the historical production of the crisis of the state in Africa. This chapter contends with a discipline which has so far failed to give voice and place to a continent's own experience of state formation processes when thinking about the challenges facing the continent and its people. As such, it considers the dominant disciplinary approach to IR, paying particular attention to the primary focus of IR scholarship and, more importantly, to those aspects and subjects that IR tends to overlook. In so doing, it considers the potential advantages and/or disadvantages of starting with an alternative set of questions. This discussion positions the thesis in the context of accumulated IR scholarship while also setting out its aims and anticipated contributions.

3.1. Introduction

In his brutally satirical piece *How to Write About Africa*, Kenyan writer Binyavanga Wainaina (2008) skilfully eviscerates clichés of Africa and preconceptions dear to Western writers and readers. In drawing attention to the inherent contradictions found in the Western imagination of the 'Dark Continent' or that of the 'Lion King', Wainaina (2008) playfully captures a more serious condition that is founded on the necessary marginalisation of Africa and other non-Western sites of knowledge. Africa's place within the study of IR has been no different. On the one hand, Africa has been pushed to the margins of mainstream approaches owing to the discipline's dominant focus on 'great powers', which according to Waltz (1979 p. 72-3), are 'the states that make the most difference.' In much of this, Africa has been held up as 'a politically empty space' with no history to speak of before the Second World War, seemingly unable to contribute any meaningful politics and therefore said to exist only to the extent that it is acted *upon* (Morgenthau 1973, p. 369). Consequently, the continent has been represented as lacking in history, hegemony and agency. Simultaneously, however, Africa remains the core geographical space in which much that is important to IR has played out: from slavery to colonial rule, from the Cold War to what has been termed the 'new' scramble for Africa. It is currently the site of enormous social change and uprising as centred on the reconstitution of the state. Despite this wealth of empirical detail, Africa endures as the periphery to the core, at best a case study to explore IR and at worst a representative of whatever disease, dysfunction or delinquency is being considered by the analyst (Cornelissen et al. 2011).

Nowhere are the consequences of this marginalisation more apparent than in the discipline's approach to African state forms and political realities. As Chapter One sought to show, notions of 'state failure' and 'neopatrimonialism' found at the core of contemporary international discourse have routinely been used to characterise the continent's postcolonial socio-political realities. Not only have they been used to describe all that is wrong on the continent, but the conceptual vocabulary and methodological vision associated with these terms have been entrenched in the public imagination more broadly and continue to be reproduced in academic analysis despite well-founded critique (Gruffydd-Jones 2013; Wai 2012). Perhaps more salient in its reproduction is the silent confirmation of deeply entrenched notions of conflict and anarchy in Western imagination and, more generally, of Africa's inability to

develop, rule or be peaceful (Gruffydd-Jones 2013, p. 49). This is not to deny that these concepts have been the subject of much debate and criticism. In fact, critics have decried their very Western origins, seeing them as effectively reductionist, lacking in definitional and analytical precision and therefore ineffective methodologically as an explanatory approach (Newman 2009; Call 2008). However, upon closer inspection and despite their intentions, these same critiques have been rooted in the very conception of the state as a fixed and unproblematised unit of analysis within IR (see Chapter Two). In accepting the validity and analytical primacy of the state, they have offered no real significant conceptual or theoretical alternative to understanding social and political crisis on the continent.

What would it mean, therefore, to account for and better understand the changing patterns of politics and the state in Africa without resorting to stereotype, despair and malaise? This paper suggests that an inversion, or even a subversion, of the 'starting point' provides a way out of the impasse. Already, the past decade has seen several studies call into question the applicability of existing IR theory to the developing world and Africa in particular, and lamenting the neglect of Africa in IR theory. For example, IR has been characterised as an 'American social science' (Hoffman 1977), 'not so international' (Waever 1998), a 'hegemonic discipline' (Smith 2009), a 'disjunctive empire' (Yew 2003), and a 'colonial household' (Agathangelou & Ling 2004). What if, as Comaroff and Comaroff (2015) suggest, 'we invert the order of things? What if we subvert the epistemic scaffolding on which it is erected? What if we posit that, in this present moment, it is a global south that affords a privileged insight into the workings of the world at large?' Such a question proposes a radical rethinking of Africa from occupying a position as the globe's backyard to being at the forefront of the changes taking place in the world. By virtue of this, Africa stands as an agent of IR knowledge rather than an object of IR study. A more useful question for the discipline therefore asks what contributions from Africa could potentially enrich our understanding of IR. As such, this chapter begins with a review of the dominant disciplinary approach to IR, paying particular attention to those aspects and/or subjects that IR tends to emphasise and considers what the potential advantages for IR's understanding might be if we began with an alternative set of questions. This discussion thus positions the thesis in the context of accumulated IR scholarship while also setting out its aims and anticipated contributions.

3.2. Thinking Africa in IR: A Notable Absence

Africa's place in the international has become a topic of increasing importance and academic interest. Emerging from the growing diversity and plurality within IR, several studies published within the past decade challenge the dominance of Western thought in the discipline and, with it, the neglect of the of the non-Western world (and particularly Africa).[7] Indeed, the complexities of the relationship between the study of Africa and IR have not always sat comfortably together in a frame of study. This is because, for the most part, IR theory has tended to overlook the role of Africa and Africans in the international system.[8] Traditionally, this is found in the dominant perspectives' dismissal of Africa as weak and marginal to the making and practice of international relations. For example, in one of Classical Realism's foundation texts, *Politics Among Nations,* Hans Morgenthau (1973, p. 369) shockingly asserts that Africa was a 'politically empty space' and did not have any political history before the Second World War. To contextualise the statement, Morgenthau (1973) was accounting for the changing nature of the balance of power in the late-Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Centuries, suggesting that the 'great powers' were able to carve up the continent without risking war by expanding into the empty spaces of Africa without fear of reprisal from local authorities, whom he depicted as 'passive bystanders.' Another key figure in shaping IR as a modern discipline, Kenneth Waltz (1986, p. 72) similarly states that the examination of the global relations of 'minor' powers for theoretical insight into IR would be 'ridiculous'; the assertion being that major theories of international politics were to be based on 'great powers' for they were the ones that made the greatest difference.[9] The African continent has thus rarely been considered as worthy of comment by IR's most prominent and influential theorists, who rendered it somewhat inconsequential to the processes of IR theorising.

While this may appear as a symptom drawn of realist writing of IR theory, the great antagonists of the realist school – the liberals – have also been accused of a similarly narrow focus on 'great powers' politics. In proposing an alternative to the realist understanding of

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[7] For instructive examples, see Dunn & Shaw (2001); Cornelissen et al. (2012); Gruffydd-Jones (2006).

[8] Traditionally, the dominant perspectives have dismissed Africa as a weak and marginal continent, a battleground for great-power rivalries and one littered with failed states and the vestiges of pre-modern societies.

[9] In this regard, Waltz states that power is a key concept in realist theories of international politics as we live in a world of anarchy where states seek to maximise their power relative to others for their survival (Waltz, 1986: 333).

international politics as formed of power, neoliberals demonstrate how states become integrated socially and economically through processes of cooperation (Keohane 1986, p. 24). Offering a useful approach to the understanding of power through the ideas of collective security and co-operation, theirs is a reinterpretation of the principles of sovereignty through a challenge to statism (Baldwin 1993, p. 2).[10] Yet even in their explanations of how peaceful competition and common marketisation can lead to all-round peace, along with international rules and institutions, liberal theorists have generally overlooked the continent in favour of the 'great powers' as the leading players in the development of such norms. When Africa has been considered, it is often based on the view that it lacks hegemonic power. Take, for example, Fukuyama's observation that 'sub-Saharan Africa has so many problems that its lack of political and economic developments seems overdetermined (Fukuyama, 1999, p. 19).' Herein lies the characterisation of the continent as so burdened by suffering that it must be unable to imagine other experiences such as those of wellbeing.[11] While Marxist and neo-Marxist thinkers of the so-called dependency and World System theories have paid attention to Africa - and Latin America – in exposing the historical specificity and the exploitative nature, of the modern Westphalian system, they too however, have inadvertently reaffirmed the very bias of an agency-less continent. That is, a continent lying on the margins of the global periphery, and which exists only to the extent which it is acted upon. Thus, within the discipline's canon, Africa has been rendered marginal to IR, a recipient of international affairs rather than an active player.

At first sight, the situation in the early Twenty-First Century seems quite different. Inspired by the rise of constructivist thought within IR and by foundational revaluations of Africa's historical experience which were produced in the 1990s and 2000s, a vibrant and multidisciplinary literature on 'African agency' in the international is emerging. These studies have focused their attention on the different ways that African states (either individually or collectively) have leveraged their assumed strategic value to major powers on the international stage in order to secure resources, influence and favour which may otherwise have been unavailable to them. Assessments of African agency have been made, for example, on how African states deployed their strategic value within the 'East/West' geopolitical conflict of the

[10] This is contrary to the realist depiction of state concern as based on military power.
[11] As such, this approach has led to the development of theories that have served to reproduce Western economic, political and cultural ideals.

Cold War; how they continued to leverage such positions as ‘allies’ in the context of aid agendas and, more recently, in the counter-terrorism efforts led by Western counterparts (Schmidt 2013). They have also paid attention to the agency of African states in challenging and redefining the analytical underpinnings of Western states’ rationale for engaging with them (Brown 2013). This has been especially prevalent in the reshaping of donor understandings of concepts such as state building, conflict and fragility. Particularly interesting are new and emerging literatures on Africa’s international relations as distinct from the international politics of so-called ‘great powers’ (Tieku 2012). Grounding themselves in the assessments of the various ways in which African actors have secured room for manoeuvre within the global institutions whose rules they played no role in setting, these literatures have illuminated the power of the ‘solidarity’ principle, as a mechanism for collective action on the international stage. From this perspective, these ideas have been central in putting the continent on the discipline’s map, highlighting African contributions on matters such as the environment and climate change, health and HIV/AIDS, gender, conflict and security (Harman & Brown 2013).

While these have served a valuable function in adding African cases and empirical examples to IR, still missing is a consideration of the many ways in which African citizens and communities have fundamentally and proactively changed the rules of the game. This is because much of the contemporary analysis on African agency has focused on the role and influence of Africa states and, as such, remains constrained by the limits of a ‘state-centric’ approach. State-centrism is a phenomenon of thinking about popular politics as spatial, bounded, and localised in a particular territory, and is born of a specifically prototypical European experience of state formation. Subsequently, the ‘Westphalian narrative’ or ‘Westphalianism’ as it is commonly known, refers to the principle that each state has exclusive sovereignty over its territory. The principle developed from the treaties ending the Thirty Years’ War and the replacement of the permeable and overlapping boundaries of Medieval regimes with defined borders and mutual recognition of sovereignty. Gone were the poorly defined, fluid political alignments of the Middle Ages; in their place arose the modern, sovereign nation-state. To use Falk’s (2002, p. 311-52) compact phrase, the Westphalian ideal is a ‘state-centric, sovereignty-orientated, territorially bounded global order’. It is this ideal which has come to inform the systemic explanation of international politics in traditionally mainstream IR theories. Accordingly, Waltz (1979) has argued that so long as the major states are the major actors, the structure of international politics is defined in terms of them. Perhaps

to their benefit, liberal schools have succeeded in providing the most convincing challenge to neorealist thinking by highlighting the importance of other forces such as international regimes, interdependent trade, or societal rules and norms in IR. However, they too maintain a view of the state as the key actor in the international system, just not the only one.

This mode of thinking is further complicated by the fact that IR is rarely told from the 'periphery'. Rather, the study of IR has been presented as though the West has an historical monopoly over both theory and practice. Thus, when students of IR read standard texts in the discipline, rarely do they find mentions of Africa.[12] When Africa is encountered in text, it is furnished with examples of malign influences on international politics such as failed states, civil wars, regional security complexes, shadow economies, and illicit transactions. This is, of course, in contrast to benign influences such as positive norms, peaceful coexistence, security communities, supranational entities, free trade areas, and others which are almost always portrayed as Western or, these days, Asian. If Europe and North America are at the end of a chain of knowledge production, Asia is at the beginning and Africa remains a 'political empty space' situated in its nothingness. As a result, Africa has been derided as a place of no meaningful politics. As the periphery to the core, it becomes only visible as the space upon which the 'great powers' act. Given the nature of this dysfunctional relation, Africa has remained the ever-present and necessary counterpart that makes the dominant theories complete. As postcolonial scholars such as Homi Bhaba, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak have noted, Africa provides the mirror through which the West defines itself. It is the Other for the construction of a mythical 'Western Self'. Within IR, it is this 'Western Self' that remains both the author of and authority over the discipline and, as a result, Africa is the voiceless space upon and into which the West can write and act in IR theory. Thus, according to Dunn (2001), the assumption of the West's authorship of IR theory becomes a hegemonic practice that closes out other possible readings and/pr writings of world politics. As a product of modernity itself, Western IR theory rests on the necessary marginalisation of Africa and other non-Western sites of knowledge.

In this regard, the past decade has seen several studies calling for a decentred IR. Given the discipline's focus on the great powers that make most difference the discipline has drawn

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[12] For example, in Scott Burchill *Theories of International Relations* (2005, p. 56), Africa is only mentioned once in passing: 'It is an argument that has been strengthened by recent transitions to democracy in Africa, East Asia, and Latin America.'

criticism from all corners for being accused of not being 'international' enough. That the field is indifferent to – even dismissive of – scholarly practices and policy issues outside the core, and that its primary conceptual tools, analytical categories and concepts are ill-equipped for understanding many of today's issues, is a challenge that has been increasingly taken up by IR as it become aware of its shortcomings and parochialism (Ticker & Blaney 2011, p. 1). Thus, perhaps unsurprisingly, the discipline has also become the site of much debate and discussion about how to 'think' the international 'differently' (Ticker & Blaney 2011), to do IR better and to consider within (Smith 2017; Abrahamsen 2019), 'who or what is still missing' from the discussion (Odoom & Andrews 2017). Scholarly discussions have also sought to read Africa's international relations from an African perspective. For example, Dunn and Shaw (2001, p. 12), have argued that 'the dominant theories are not adequate in explaining what is actually happening on the African continent'. Cornelison, Cheru and Shaw (2012) have similarly taken their point of departure from 'the inadequacy of the analytical equipment provided by established IR theory in capturing and explaining shifting processes on the continent' and 'set out to challenge conventional IR precepts of authority, politics and society – which have proven so inept in fully explaining African processes' (Cornelison et al. 2012, p. 4). These contributions have been invaluable to the field, especially as the realities of an academy whose politics are deeply embedded in a long history of domination, exploitation and oppression have certainly not gone unnoticed. Take for example, Mureithi's (2013, p. 1) observation that:

'*Africa's international relations have often been defined and orientate by the dominant international and geopolitical agendas of the day. As such Africa has more often than not been the subject of international relations dictated by external actors. As a direct consequence of this fact, the chronicles of Africa's international relations are also dominated by the perspectives of those who have invaded, enslaved, colonised and exploited the continent'.*

However, as most of the authors have been clear to point out, their aim is not to 'construct a "better" universal theory' or to construct 'an autonomous IR theory' but rather, 'to disrupt existing ways of reading IR by exposing the limitations and fissures of their denotive interpretations' (Dunn & Shaw 2001).

There is, of course, a risk within this that the idea of an African perspective can be taken to mean the replacement of one parochialism with another. As Rita Abrahamsen (2017) notes,

an 'African IR could end up becoming just another provincial IR, a substitute or evil twin of a Western IR'. Indeed, such a development would serve to undermine one of the chief aims of the critics to challenge the continent's marginalisation within the discipline. Here, William Brown (2012) points out that the argument for an African perspective on IR based on a specific historicity of the African experience as different from that of its European counterpart could imply, 'not the further development of IR theory per se, but the development of IR theories for Africa because it is Africa, not Europe or North America'. This could be problematic in that the total dismissal of the relevance of existing IR theories in Africa, while implicitly accepting their applicability to the developed world, risks demarcating the continent into relativist isolation. On another note, Amy Niang (2016, p. 453-456) argues quite convincingly that the desire to study the periphery for what it might contribute to the core as seen in through the attempts to 'bring Africa in from the margins' (Harman & Brown 2013), may be 'dangerously inhibiting' for it assumes 'that Western knowledge is not only established but that it is also inherently inadequate and that non-Western knowledge is to an extent defective, submerging and inaccessible thus requiring at the least an effort of improvement, translation, and adjustment'. For these and other reasons, considering Africa in IR is not simply a question of adding Africa 'into' the mix. Rather, it is a complex epistemological and methodological concern that goes right to the heart of *what* it means to study 'Africa' and the 'international' and *who* gets to do this in its name (Smith 2017; Abrahamsen 2019). What is therefore required is an inclusive frame of reference that allows the study of the continent in a manner that facilitates theorising the international or global – wherever it may be located. This requires challenging the deeper assumptions behind who and what constitutes the 'international'.

3.3. Thinking Africa in the World: A Connected History

How do we go about assessing the state in Africa on its own terms? How do we move beyond the Eurocentrism of a discipline that has rendered a continent of over a billion people inconsequential in the making and shaping of international theory and practice? How do we do this without recreating an Africa that is different simply because it is Africa? The first and most obvious step lies in taking Africa as the starting point. By name alone, Africa draws scholars into an exploration of a continent rooted in a multiplicity of times, trajectories, and

rationalities that – although particular and sometimes local – cannot be conceptualised outside a world that is globalised (Mazrui 2003).[13] This is because since the Fifteenth Century there is no longer a 'distinctive historicity' of these societies which is not embedded in times and rhythms heavily conditioned by European domination (Mbembe 2001; Gatsheni 2013). The first epoch was the mercantile period (1500-1800), which was marked by the slave trade and which provoked the emergence of black racial nationalism within the diaspora and inaugurated Pan-Africanism. This period also marked the beginning of violent primitive accumulation that included the objectification of black people as commodities. The second was industrial monopoly capitalism (1800-1945) as seen through imperial encroachment, colonisation(s) and African resistance(s). It was in this period that the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 formed African colonies as territories of European conquest and settlement. Third was the epoch of the Cold War (1945-1989), during which Africa became a central site of struggle in the ideological battle between the East and the West. This era was also marked by processes of decolonisation. And fourth is the current epoch, which is underpinned by the Washington Consensus and neoliberalism – an age that is defined by globalisation. To the degree that European modernity has been a world-historical process, it can as well be narrated from its 'periphery' as it can from its self-proclaimed centres (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012).

This idea of narrative is particularly important when we consider how Africans were historically characterised as being unable to speak for themselves. Take, for example, the writings of British merchant John Locke who, having sailed to West Africa in 1561, wrote of black Africans as 'beasts who have no houses' and 'people without heads, having their mouth and eyes in the breasts'. This tradition of portraying Africa as the strange and the grotesque, was followed through in the popular writings of the Victorian novella as found in Joseph's Conrad's (1899) characterisation of his protagonists first encounter with the African 'unearthly monster':

'We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were – No, they

[13] The ways in which Africa has been defined have been a product of its interactions with other civilizations. In the search for meaning, Ali Mazrui traces the name 'African' to three possible sources: one of Berber origin, one of Greco-Roman ancestry and one from the Semite (Phoenicians). Here are the origins of the name Africa as rooted in the possibility of historical dialogue and complex interactions both within and without.

were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it – this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity – like yours – the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly.' (p. 51)

The characterisation of beastly characters was a rhetorical manoeuvre constructed to offset the humanity of the African as a thinking subject. This was not simply a matter of the wild imaginations of a Victorian literature, but also the foundations of disciplinary epistemologies such as philosophy and history. Take, for example, enlightenment philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who wrote of Africa being an 'unhistorical; undeveloped spirit' trapped in the conditions of mere nature; devoid of morality, religions and political constitution (Hegel 1899, p. 93-99). Hegel's point here was to argue that 'the African has not reached the level of realising his own being; he has not yet realised his person'. From here, he would suggest that 'we' leave Africa, 'not to mention it again'. For as he was to argue, 'it is not a historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit.'

These narratives and their dehumanising discourses of a place and a people without humanity was to construct the basis of a crusade of violence and genocide in the name of the 'The White Man's Burden' – a moral duty of Western civilisation captured best in Rudyard Kipling's 1899 poem of the same title. The production, circulation and repetition of Africa as an unclaimed space untouched by human enterprise and as unorganised by societies and economies served to justify European claims to it. For in them was the implication that colonial subjects were too backward to govern themselves and that they had to be 'uplifted'. 'Our vocation in the world,' wrote Lord Hugh Cecil, 'is to undertake the government of vast, uncivilised populations and to raise them gradually to a higher level of life' (cited in Kumar 2003, p. 191). This path to progress – of being or becoming European – was to justify the terror, slaughter, genocide, imprisonment, torture, confiscation of land and property, forced labour, destruction of societies and cultures, violent suppression of expressions of discontent and dissent, restrictions on movement, and the establishment of 'tribal reserves' imposed on Africans. To effect its predation, the colonial state – through its use of violence as a symbol of domination – was established to exercise control by imposing taxes, enforcing compulsory crops, introducing forced labour, excluding Africans from particular jobs, removing them from the most fertile regions, and establishing native authorities consisting of collaborators. In the

process, Europe was treated to the spectacle of European enterprise and power as a modernising force for those who were held in the grip of unimaginable darkness. As a source of national pride, colonialism was effectively repackaged as a great work of nation building to which European identity was intricately tied (Coombes 1994; Sebe 2015; Kumar 2003).

Yet Africans were not and have never been passive. From the Mande 'Hunters' Oath' and the idea of a politics centred on the universality of humanity in the struggle to resist Arab slavery, to the slave revolutionary movements in what was then Saint-Domingue and their demands for a politics of liberty, equality and independence that culminated in the Haitian Revolution and the establishment of the first free colony, African agency has always been alive in both thought and practice. These experiences and their legacy in the production of a common experience of exploitation and oppression of black people across the world nurtured the ideas and imaginaries of an anticolonial movement and the galvanisation of large numbers in the popular emancipatory upsurge of the independence era. As Archie Mafeje (1992, p. 3) writes of the period:

'It was the historical experience of racial humiliation, economic exploitation, political oppression, and cultural domination under European and American slavery, colonialism, and imperialism that gave rise to theories of "African personality" and "Negritude." At the centre of these theories was the question of the liberation of the Black man – his identity or the meaning of "being-Black-in-the-world." It was a philosophical or moral justification for action, for a rebellion which gave rise to African nationalism and to independence. The latter was the greatest political achievement by Africans. It was an unprecedented collective fulfilment.'

This was indeed an unprecedented collective fulfilment, especially in the transformation of the ideational structure of international society from a domain of *imperial relations* into what we have now come to know as *international relations*. This was a transformation born specifically of the resistance of ordinary people – 'the wretched of the earth' in the words of Franz Fanon (1961) – through whom the official end of colonial rule would be realised, leading to one of the greatest revolutions of the Twentieth Century.

This is missing from the literature and the discipline of IR simply because it assumes that the modern state system, being a legacy of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, is a

methodological given. This view is supported by the notion that though the agency of European powers and decolonisation, a Westphalia-derived morality of states gradually became the basis for the international system or community of states (Bull 1997; Watson 1992). As such, the processes of decolonisation and independence were treated in IR through the prism of existing conceptual frameworks, methods of analysis and underlying assumptions, and generally accommodated in terms of 'the expansion of international society'. As the rest of the world was simply added on, an analytical separation between the 'domestic' and 'international' was assumed and the state defined as a methodological given. This is despite the fact that, for most of the world, colonialism and imperialism were and are the defining forms of international relations, its structure and historical experience. As the previous chapter showed, the concept of the state in Africa cannot be separated from its colonial baggage, which raises the question of its legitimacy. Thus, to the extent that the Westphalian economy of knowledge – the 'Westphalian common sense', as Grovogui (2002, p. 315-338) puts it – exists, it translates into a perception of normative lack when thinking about postcolonial state in Africa. Here one finds in the literature an almost endless pathologisation of the state in Africa, from states threatened by 'collapse' (Zartman 1995), 'failure' (Rotberg 2004), 'fragility' (Stewart & Brown 2009) and 'weakness' (Jackson & Rosberg 1982). Such descriptions emerge as states retreat into 'shadow' (Reno 2000), or 'quasi' vampire-like states (Jackson 1990; Clapham 1993), in which they remain void of political legitimacy and administration. Rather than use the African experience as empirical evidence that undermines the thesis of a uniform international order, theorists often construe deviations as a sign of Africa's inability to live up to the requirements of positive sovereignty (Jackson 1994; Clapham 1996).

The implications of this are not to be underestimated, especially as they have led to a narrative and norm of intervention centred on the idea of saving Africa's failing state. Evolving from questions over race, biology and skin colour is the argument that the 'ontology of difference' in its modern colonial form is presented in the legitimising practices of domination and dispossession, embedded in the structuring logic of hierarchy framed within a state's capacity to govern – from weak, to failing to collapsed. Rather than 'uncivilised' and 'barbaric', African states are portrayed as 'incapable' or even 'unwilling' to replicate the political, economic, social and cultural conditions of Western states which has resulted in their failure (Gruffydd-Jones 2013). Even those states not described as failed are still considered as inauthentic and undeserving of statehood since they did not meet the prerequisite conditions

and capabilities of statehood prior to independence; rather, statehood was bestowed upon them (Jackson 1990; Clapham 1996). Today, this is seen nowhere better than in the legitimising language of modernisation that has sanctioned the intervention of Western governments and international actors in providing 'technical assistance' and 'policy advice' on a variety of economic, political and social matters. The new vocabulary of 'state failure' or 'good governance' has disguised and transformed continuities of the colonial relationship. For Gruffydd-Jones (2013, p. 50), these terms 'convey a neutral, technocratic approach characterised by empirical precision and measurement of objective, universal phenomena…assumed to characterise the authority of science and expert knowledge.' More so, the norms and practices of an intervention are centred on a humanitarian discourse of the White Man's Burden and his 'responsibility to protect' using the instruments of international law from which to so.

The main point is that the different effects of colonial governance, the role of external actors and the complex interactions between the domestic and international contexts are not just disregarded in the discourse but, worse still, normalised in the rewriting of the historical constitutive relationship between the continent's historical experiences with Europe, while privileging the West (Wai 2012). The inability of the state failure literature to identify historically specific social forms and their global relations – as opposed to gross generalisations about African politics, solutions to which bear semblance to the colonisers of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries – has rendered the state failure literature deeply flawed. The implications of this and the ensuing impulse to 'save' failing states or reverse the fate of those already failed has been to silence the complacency/agency of the West in the most violent of histories of domination and exploitation in its quest for capital accumulation as seen through the slave trade, colonialism and the neo-colonial tag of foreign aid and development. It has also served to obfuscate the role played by the West in propping up some of the world's most ruthless authoritarian leaders from Mobutu Sese Seko to Said Barre and its role in some of the world's most deadly conflicts. The consequences of this vindication and location of causation of state failure as internal has in turn lent itself to the global imagination of an Africa that is different, backward, violent, and failed as compared to the West. In this way the concepts of 'state failure' and 'neo-patrimonialism' and their associated terminology found at the core of contemporary international discourse on African states have failed to explain the production of conditions of crisis. Instead, they have resorted to tautology and caricature, rendering them

ineffective as explanatory methodological tools of inquiry.

3.4. Negotiating the Impasse: A Narrative Inquiry

How do we go about telling a different story of the state in Africa and, indeed, the state in IR? Karen Smith (2015) suggests that the answer lies in reclaiming the space for storytelling, especially African stories. Narrative offers a new and novel method of capturing the African experience. Perhaps the term 'African' first requires some clarity. The African continent is, of course, marked by extreme diversity. The fifty-three countries that make up Africa's Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Central regions draw the scholar into a maelstrom of vivid living histories, political debates, and urban and rural social dynamics that define yet defy simple explanation of their complex realities. Indeed, as it has often been noted, or rather protested, Africa is not a country. Yet the justification for using the term 'African experience' or 'African insight', is based on the two ideas. The first, as asserted by Abiola Irele (1990, p.7), is that the operative concept of Africa as an ideological construction has assumed the significance of objective fact: there is today a sense of an African belonging that commands the vision of an entire people regarding their place in the world. The second is that the adjective 'African' reflects commonalities between different African experiences, in that they are all regarded as peripheral to, and largely excluded from, the core of IR (Smith 2017). Since marginalised states are indelibly touched by the consequences of the choices, values, and priorities of the media, geopolitical and academic core, perhaps one of the most important contributions of any collection of writing on the African continent is thus the deliberate presentation of frameworks for validating and rendering visible the multiple, sociocultural, intellectual, political, transnational, and other prosaic realities that are typically delegitimised by the global core (Soyinka-Airewele & Edozie 2010).

In this way, narrative as an inclusive frame of reference emerges as a means by which to capture African voices otherwise made invisible by concepts that are core to IR. Specifically, the relatively new qualitative methodology of narrative inquiry, which is the study of experience understood narratively, offers a way of thinking about, and studying, experience. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2006, p. 375):

'Narrative is a ubiquitous practice in that, human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities. What feels new is the emergence of narrative methodologies in the field of social science research.'

In economics, psychology, sociology, political science, and even management theory, narrative has been embraced as a fundamental research tool. What accounts for the contemporary fascination with stories? In the social sciences, Bamberg (2012) puts it down to a desire to capture the local and textured character of experience against the simplifying abstractions of behaviourist theorising. More broadly, the rise of personal storytelling is seen as conterminous with the union of self-psychology and self-help in an enterprise that see performance of the self as a route to happiness. Postmodernists argue instead that when the old master narratives of progress, faith, and rationality became suspect, stories were all that people could trust. While there has also been an extensive debate between historians and postmodernists about the extent to which historical narratives are fictional creations, both groups share a preference for the telling of local and particularised stories rather than grand narratives of human and social development.

In their book, Reismann and Speedy (2007) point out that 'narrative inquiry in the human sciences is a Twentieth-Century development; has "realist", "postmodern", and "constructionist" strands, and scholars and practitioners disagree on origin and precise definition.' There is, however, some degree of agreement on the following definition by Connelly and Clandinin (2006: 375):

'People shape their daily lives by stories of who they are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative Inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adapt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study.'

Sociolinguist William Labov's (2013) definition of narrative has the virtue of simplicity. For Labov, a narrative is an account of the sequence of events in the order in which they occurred to make a point. The aim of this storytelling is to not only explain the action in question but also to enhance and extend understanding, comprehension, and experiences. As with all stories, there is a beginning, a middle, and an end (sequence rather than haphazard organisation). There is a plot, the ordering of the incidents as the means by which what would otherwise be mere occurrences are made into moments in the unfolding story. There are also characters in the story, who enact the plot and who then come second to the story. These are the heroes and the villains of the story, towards whom the audience usually feels some sense of empathy. Indeed, they elicit the emotion of the underlying plot, which is usually familiar to an audience from stories they have heard before. Finally, events in a story project a desirable or undesirable future; they make a normative point.

In the context of the study of IR, there has always been strong narrative content, especially if history itself is conceived of as a narrative discipline. From founding texts of IR such as E. H. Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939) and Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* (1948) to more contemporary equivalents such as Graham Allison's *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1971), narrative has always been part and form of the discipline. Within the intellectual tradition of the English School, the efforts of theorists such as Martin Wight (1991), Hedley Bull (1977) and Adam Watson (1992) have rested on the construction of a general and comparative historical narrative account of the formation of International Society. In the work of historical sociologists, the central concern for a materialist account of long-term structural change has invariably been presented in the form of narrative (Lawson 2006). Finally, narrative is also present in the constructivist challenge to realism. The main constructivist theme is the impact of ideas and discourses on social action, with the end result being socially constructed realities, including those constructed internationally. As a social construct, the idea of the fiction of the state has assumed the most important identity in IR. When states are discussed as actors or persons, they are often given human characteristics, such as rationality, identity, interests and beliefs. Alexander Wendt (2004) argues that the 'state as persons' is real because states are intentional purposeful actors. In this tradition, scholars such as Dunn (2001) argue that states should be seen as discursive constructions. Made up of the discourses which construct the reality of the subject, the state

as a discursive construction allows for the study of the state at the abstract level, but also through the actions and practices that make the abstraction complete.

More recently, the discipline of comparative politics has become the site of cultural inquiry of all kinds – novels, poetry, film, music, video games, and comic books all find their place as prisms for understanding and upsetting political norms, structures, and discourses. Critical methodological and narrative developments in IR have seen the adoption of new approaches such as auto-ethnography and narrative writing, which involve storytelling, the explicit use of the 'I' as a narrating subject, and deep exploration of the interface between writers and their subject matter. In 2004, a lecture given by IR scholar Roxanne Lynn Doty at the Centre for International and Security Studies at York University was to kick off what has been heralded as a new narrative turn in IR. In the lecture '*Maladies of Our Souls: Voices and the Writing of Academic International Relations*', Doty (2004) explored the profound disconnect between the sanitised writing characteristic of IR and the subjects of research that this writing attempts to comprehend and understand. Since this lecture, narrative approaches have enjoyed a slow but steady growth in IR. In an award-winning 2010 essay, Roland Breiker and Morgan Brigg present the case for an engaged form of auto-ethnographic scholarship. Here, the authors reject the standard view of the IR scholar as a messenger whose role is to identify information in a discrete and unaffected way, arguing that this encounter formed the starting point for a deeper analysis between scholars and the worlds they both create and explore. Others such as Naeem Inyatullah and Elizabeth Dauhphinee (2010) have built on the case for auto-ethnography in their introduction to *Autobiographical International Relations*. They argue that narrative approaches are a purpose (though not the only one) in and of themselves, encouraging a 'process of discovery' rather than directing readers towards a foregone conclusion. Accordingly, they argue that this process of discovery is a critical part of the knowledge journey.

Three commonplaces of narrative inquiry – temporality, sociality and place – specify dimensions of inquiry that serve as a conceptual framework from which to analyse the case studies proposed. Temporality refers to the understanding that the 'events under study and in temporal transition' (Clandinin and Connelly (2006, p. 377). As a fluid space, temporality allows the inquirer to traverse the multiple spaces of the past, present, and future of people, places, things and events under study. In so doing, narrative allows for the interrogation of the

state as an open, incomplete and unfinished business. By its very nature, it falls on the idea that 'we are composing and constantly revising our autobiographies as we go along' (Clandinin and Connelly (2006, p. 377). Sociality speaks both to the personal condition and to social conditions. These are the conditions under which experiences and events are unfolding. In other words, context, which is understood in terms of cultural, social, institutional and linguistic narratives. Additionally, the sociality of a commonplace attends to the relationship between the researcher and the object or area of inquiry. Here it is argued that narrative inquirers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship. Consequently, my 'lived experience' – the heritage of my birth in Kenya, the stories of my grandparents and mother as anti-colonial Mau Mau fighters, and the experiences of cyclical violence since the introduction of multi-party elections in the early-1990s in my hometown Nakuru – very much conditions the ways in which I approach my area of study. The third commonplace that narrative attends to is place. This is the 'concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences where the inquiry and events takes place (Clandinin and Connelly (2006, p. 375). Attending to experience in this way provides for a study of the complex relational composition of people's lived experiences both inside and outside of an inquiry as well as for imagining future possibilities of these lives.

As one of the most utilised and ubiquitous forms of discourse in human communication, narrative is different from other modes of discourse and other modes of organising experience in that it requires agency (Patterson & Monroe 1998). It involves human beings as characters or actors who have a place or a role to play in the making of that story. At the same time, the multidisciplinary nature of narrative analysis as one grounded in various theoretical schools – such as hermeneutics, phenomenology, ethnography and literary analysis – means that it is more flexible than other approaches and does not require that the researcher follow a strict method of data analysis. Rather, the very concept and approach of narrative analysis emphasises 'doing what is necessary to capture the lived experience of people in terms of their own meaning-making and to theorise about it in insightful ways' (Josselson 2011, p. 225). Thus, the emphasis on the agency of the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis centres on the idea of a 'doctrine of reflexivity' (Josselson 2011, p. 225). A holistic view invites a collection and reflection through telling, hearing and understating the stories that shape a shared reality. The narrative form of inquiry is flexible, innovative, unpredictable and full of rich details. While efforts to organise and classify

narratives maybe useful to describe the pieces and the parts, no standard techniques or agreements of protocol have been reached because narrative thinking is not aligned with abstract scientific thinking. Employing narrative analysis as both an approach and a tool of inquiry, this study conforms to certain rigours of qualitative research design but does not follow a scientific model for defining or seeking qualitative truth. The study pursues stories within a critical tradition of African political thought using models of historical research and narrative inquiry.

3.5. Seeing Africa, Seeing the World: Stories from the Continent

What then, can experiences from Africa and scholarship generated by Africans contribute to our understanding of the state in Africa and indeed, the state in IR? To this question, Karen Smith (2015) proposes four key stories that offer a framework from which inquire into potential contributions that could come out of such an inquiry. The first is a reinterpretation of old stories; these are stories that speak of similarities as opposed to differences and from which IR theories are adapted to become appropriate for understanding the particularities of region. An example given here is that of the adaptation of existing IR theories in Latin America, where dominant discourses from the United States have been adjusted to fit the conditions of the region. This has formed a conceptual bridge between dependency theory and mainstream IR theory. The second is telling stories in a different language. By language, Smith refers to the concepts used in stories. Given that concepts used in IR have been inappropriate to or do not fit the African condition, the solution may lie in an Africa reconstruction of these concepts. Such a reconstruction could be aimed at terms such as violence and conflict, which would invariably benefit from an emphasis of locally grounded knowledge. Specific to the case of this study, it could be beneficial to 'open' up the state by considering Africa's own experience of state formation in theorising about the current challenges facing the continent and people. Similarly, the African critique of liberalism could serve to enhance the breadth and depth of theoretical and operational understandings of the concept. The third is that of telling stories with new main characters. This idea has gained ground in recent scholarship with the recognition of new actors and players on the African continent. Whether these actors are the IFIs of the Bretton Woods systems, extractive corporations, regional strongmen, or non-state military corporations, the advantage is that an

account of the multiplicity of actors in the African context is made possible. The fourth is telling stories about existing characters but with a new plot. A good example of this is the notion of a solidarity norm in explaining the behaviour of African states.

Following in this tradition, this study seeks to recover within, a different story on the state in Africa; one that views the unfinished business of decolonisation and independence as central to the understanding of the challenges facing the continent and its people. Such an approach can offer a *re-interpretation of an old story* on the state in Africa, born of the revolt of the colonialised, the desire to democratise the international, and the search for domestic constitutions which are more responsive to the needs of their citizenries. Here we find concepts and ideas such as Pan-Africanism and African nationalism as central to an understanding of the story of the African state at a critical juncture. A critical juncture analysis, itself a tool of historical institutionalism, affords us a better understanding of the choices made and actions taken in considering the legacy and consequences of the colonial state in Africa. *Telling stories in a different language* recovers the question of African political agency as central to the making and shaping of the state in Africa. It situates the crisis within the context in which the newly independence states emerged: the Cold War, global capitalism, and the determination of the former powers to retain their position in both. This offers a more expansive view of the global politics of the African state at a critical juncture and brings into view *new main characters* by foregrounding the interplay of global, national and local actors in the shaping and making of the state in Africa. Indeed, the African state at critical juncture gives context and meaning to the divisions between nationalist leaders and Africa's critical intellectual tradition, highlighting within a renewed struggle for the heart and soul of a nation and the liberatory dreams of a post-colonial order yet to be realised. Herein lies the offer to *tell the story with existing characters but with a new plot*: that of a people's search for a more just and inclusive political order.

For this reason, this study turns its attention to the vast and multidisciplinary scholarship of a critical intellectual tradition within African Studies. This, according to Amina Mama (2007), is defined as a critical tradition by being premised on an ethic of liberation that holds itself integral to the struggle for freedom and holds itself accountable, not to a particular institution, regime, class, or gender, but to the imagination, aspirations and interests of ordinary

people. It is a tradition, Mama adds (2007), that some would call radical, as it seeks to be socially and politically responsible in more than a neutral or liberal sense.

As such, it is guided by an ethic that requires scholars to be identified with and grounded in the broad landscape of Africa's liberation and democracy movements. This for example, includes the acknowledgement of African political thought (such as Negritude and African Socialism), the philosophies of the founding fathers such as Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Sekou Toure and Julius Nyerere, and the political statements of writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiongo and Wole Soyinka as part and form a critical tradition in both thought and practice. These are read against already established understandings of African political thought such as Guy Martin's (2012) *African Political Thought* and Boele van Hensbroek's (1999) *Political Discourses in African Thought: 1860 to the Present*. I read these against books of history such as Basil Davidson's (1993 & 1994) *The Search for Africa: A History in the Making, The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation Sta*te and UNESCO's (1998) *A History of Africa* to contexualise these writings in a wider understanding of the history of their nations. Also particularly instructive are books written by theoreticians and political writers such as Cheikh-Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral. These are also captured in a history of the present through the works of a critical tradition within African scholarship. Today, The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is one such example, which African social scientists founded in 1973 as part of a mission to develop scientific capacities and tools that further the cohesion, wellbeing and development of African societies. The founding visionaries of the organisation were very conscious that CODESRIA would be meaningful only if a deliberate effort was made to foster a Pan-African community of intellectual workers active in and connected to the continent, with emphasis placed on the commitment to that connection.

Where academic scholarship and institutions of higher learning on the continent have unfortunately suffered from a severe depletion and/or lack of resources owing to both domestic and international factors, popular culture can step in as an already recognised vehicle for political statements that can in turn offer perspectives and crucial insights that conventional IR frameworks overlook simply because they do not recognise them. In this vein, Karen Barber (1987, p. 2) has argued that the most important attribute of popular culture in Africa is its power to communicate because, 'for the majority of Africans, the arts are the only channel of public

communication at their disposal'. As Barber (1987, p. 3) points out, this is especially so in a climate in which the ruling elite dominate public space:

'In Africa ordinary people tend to be invisible and inaudible. In most African states, numerically tiny elites not only consume a vastly disproportionate share of the national wealth, they also take up all the light. Newspapers, radio and television offer a magnified image of the class that controls them. Not only does the ruling elite make the news, it is the news – as endless verbatim reports of politicians' speeches, accounts of elite weddings and birthday parties, and the pages and pages of expensive obituaries testify.'

For example, today music, the arts and new forms of media have opened up new avenues and opportunities for expression and storytelling. Thus, I use three case studies as a means by which to exemplify this and to bring to the fore the political agency of ordinary Africans as agents of IR knowledge. The first is the poetry and music of the self-acclaimed 'Dusty Foot Philosopher', K'naan. A child of war in Somalia, K'naan and his family found refuge in Canada at the height of the conflict, where he began to trace and narrate the horrors of war and the experiences of extreme alienation that came with it. His debut album 'The Dusty Foot Philosopher' (2005) rose to the top of the Billboard Charts of 2006, grounding his claim to be able to speak for himself. I chose the medium of music for the reason that it remains a part of the historical documentation of a people's struggle for a more just and inclusive political order. Take, for example, Miriam Makeba (1988) who, in the context of apartheid South Africa, declared, 'In our struggle, songs are not simply entertainment for us. They are the way we communicate. The press, radio and TV are all censored by the government. We cannot believe what they say. So, we make up songs to tell us about events. Let something happen and the next day a song will be written about it.' Music thus becomes a medium through which to express the political sensibilities and voices of its authors; it carries the unmistakable weight of authorial intrusion in the narrative process.

The case of Kenya is explored through Yvonne Owuor's (2014) novel, *Dust*. Owuor brings to her audience the underlying and unresolved structural tensions that culminated in violent conflict in Kenya, a country often cited as a bastion of democracy in a region of instability. Indeed, the novel has proven to be a particularly fruitful modern medium for the expression of popular culture in Africa. Many writers have poignantly used fiction to depict vividly the conditions of African experience. Owuor's contribution to the memory of nation

is a poignant retelling of the country's struggle with its recent past and an unearthing of the underlying and unresolved structural tensions and historical grievances within Kenyan society. In so doing, it highlights how the consequent fracturing of the fragile notion of nationhood during the post-election violence of 2007/8 was not altogether surprising (Mueller, 2008). Finally, new forms of media have also opened up innovative new opportunities for telling stories. Indeed, the past decade or so has seen the upsurge of social media and its intersection with youth culture, politics, economics, governance and social issues in Africa. Africa is often described as the continent with the most expansive youth demographic, most of whom are under the age of thirty. It is this generation that is transforming the continent in what has been termed the cradle of the social media revolution (Adesanmi, 2018). The final case study thus explores the Twittersphere as a site of struggle in which competing narratives of the state are being weaved.

This is an important conversation to have. This is because, according to Mbembe (2012) an entirely different map of the continent is in the making with its own centres and nodes, its own languages and its own flows. The old Atlantic connections may still remain, but there increasingly being superseded by new cartographies, ones linking places like Johannesburg, Lagos, Kinshasa, Nairobi, Luanda and Dakar to places like Dubai, Singapore, Sao Paulo, Khartoum, Istanbul, Mumbai, Casa Blanca and Cairo. Then there is the Indian Ocean and the trans-Saharan networks (both old and new) that are being revitalised in the ongoing context and struggle to redefine Islam and what it means to be a Muslim in a world infatuated with difference and segregation. As Mbembe (2012) asks, does this mean Africa may be becoming its own centre? Today's Africa has nothing to do with the Africa of Hegel. It is more than a geographical occident and increasingly a project. As we enter the 21st Century something seems to be going on below the radar and it is being picked up paradoxically both by Africans themselves as well as the high world of finance. It is starting to dawn on the minds of many that what is going on in Africa will have a tremendous impact not only on the continent but on the planet as a whole. And to some extent the destiny of our planet is being played out in Africa. So, from a philosophical and cultural point of view this planetary turn of the African predicament is the biggest challenge that is yet to be understood (Mbembe 2012). Thinking of Africa beyond the state is also occurring at a time when language, memory and imagination (the very stuff of arts and literature) is being performed and transformed by the digital

manipulations of the information technology age. How are Africans thinking about and confronting these very real realities?

3.6. Data Analysis

The analysis of data involves the 'breaking up' of the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships in order to understand its various constitutive elements. The constitutive process involves an inspection of the relationships between concepts, constructs or variables, and to see whether there are any patterns or trends that can be identified or isolated to establish themes in the data. The researcher will therefore use the qualitative data analysis process as captured by Jorgensen (1989). His assertion is that the process itself sorts and sifts information, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes or wholes of the relevant data. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion. This has all to do with the analysis of qualitative information gathered through process tracing and narrative analysis. The study will apply a coding process to pull together and categorise a series of otherwise discrete events, statements and observations as a fundamental means of developing the analysis. The characteristics will be integrated into a theory that offers an accurate, and detailed, yet subtle interpretation of the research.

3.7. Conclusions

Africa's place in mainstream IR as it has been traditionally understood is one on the periphery, on the margins of a global sphere, inconsequential to the making and shaping of global politics. At least, this is what the founding thinkers of the discipline assumed it to be, especially for rendering it a continent without a history. Yet, as this chapter sought to show, Africa's place in IR has been significantly present. Its historical constitution in a long history of interconnection from the epoch of the mercantile period to contemporary processes of globalisation render it as part and process of global relations and, therefore, its politics. Addressing this, recent studies in IR have critiqued the discipline for its silencing of other sites of experience and knowledge production. Although critical self-reflection within IR has led to

increased intellectual pluralism, the field continues to be criticised for not being 'international' enough – in its rethinking of the concepts and methods by which it makes sense of the workings of the international. This chapter has sought to reconstitute Africa as being at the centre of world historical processes of colonialism and imperialism and, in the process, recover the revolt of the formerly colonialised and the desire to transform the international and the search for domestic constitutions. In doing so, it sought to open up the international as a social space co-constituted by others whose ideas about the international could potentially contribute to an understanding of the workings of the international. From this perspective, Africa appears as an agent of IR knowledge rather than the object of IR study, raising questions as to the experiences from Africa could contribute to our understanding of the state in Africa and the state in IR.

As such, it put forward a narrative inquiry from which to gather the stories that that give context and meaning to the African condition and which propel the processes of change. As such, it offered a historical sociological approach and more importantly, a narrative method as a means by which to inquire into the experiences of those who live the state in every day. Narrative, as it sought to show, is the study of experience understood narratively. It is a way of thinking about, and studying, experience. The chapter sought to highlight the advantages of narrative as an inclusive frame of reference emerges as a means by which to capture African voices otherwise made invisible by concepts that are core to IR. Combining historical research and narrative it served to offer a framework from which to enquire into the historical processes of a people in struggle for a more just and inclusive political order. The first, a reinterpretation of an old story of decolonisation and independece as told through the ideas and imaginaries of nationalist leaders and their pan-African leanings. The second, telling stories in a different language; that is, the story of the crisis of the state as rooted in the context in which the newly independent states were to emerge the Cold War, global capitalism and the determination of former powers to keep their position within both. The third, telling stories with new main characters, including that of the public sphere and politics of a critical tradition within African political thought as the space from which to 'think' the crisis. Finally, telling stories with existing characters in a new plot. Indeed, the place and space of popular culture as an arena of narrative inquiry unto which we can draw potential insights into a people's own experience of the crisis of the state in Africa and the potential for its stability. As such, this study set the stage from which to inquire into a people's search for a more and inclusive

political order as part of its aim to reclaim the politics of African agency in both thought and practice.

CHAPTER FOUR

PAN-AFRICANISM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR A NATION

Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, this study sought to contend with the notable absence of African within the discipline of IR. In so doing, it brought to the fore the failure of the discipline to account for the historical experiences of imperialism and colonialism in shaping the nature and politics of the international, including and especially that of the state in Africa. It proposed that we recover these processes through the experiences of those who live it in the everyday. As such, this chapter begins to do just this, as it seeks to interrogate the concept of the state through visions and imaginaries of its founding leaders and their Pan-African ideas. In doing so, it challenges pre-determined notions of the state as a fixed and unproblematised given as much as it reclaims the space for the historical processes of a people in struggle for a more just and inclusive political order. This sets it within the aims and objectives of the thesis, which seeks to offer a re-imagining of the state in Africa as a case of unfinished business.

4.1. Introduction

There is perhaps no greater place to begin an exploration of the visions and imaginaries of the state from within the African continent than to start with those of its founding fathers and their Pan-African ideas. Emerging as a response and resistance to the manifestation of the darker side of modernity, particularly the slave trade, Pan-African political thought birthed the beginnings of the modern nationalist opposition in Africa against colonial rule, shaping the formulation of national projects and policies for a post-colonial future. Arming themselves within the emancipatory projects of liberation, independence and self-determination, nationalist leaders sought to navigate the tasks of complete decolonisation of the continent and national sovereignty, nation building, economic and social development, democratisation and regional cooperation by embracing a range of Pan-African transcontinental relations and ideas that necessarily transcended territorial boundaries resulting in what Lockley Edmonson termed a true 'international relations phenomenon' (as cited in Gatsheni 2010, p. 58). How did they imagine and think through the question of decolonisation, sovereignty and the state? Was a continent containing more than fifty states each maintaining its own sovereignty the inevitable outcome of decolonisation? An interrogation of the Pan-African and nationalist vision reveals this not to be the case. Indeed, as the reality of independence appeared within reach, nationalist leaders and intellectual circles widely deliberated and consulted on the most focal issue of the time, that of self-government and the actual construction of the nation state. Arising from this were matters concerning the political system to be chosen for the nation state, the nature of its 'African' substance, the framing of Pan-African ambitions within an Africa consisting of national states and, perhaps most importantly, the achievement of true independence beyond that of 'flag' independence (Hensbroek 1994, p. 7).

While answers to these questions were naturally diverse given the specific historical experiences of colonialism in shaping conceptions of liberation and reconstructing options for political action, there was considerable consensus on the part of nationalist leaders in their Pan-African commitment against colonial rule and their assertion of African unity. Aware that the struggle for independence itself would take place within the confines of the territorial space drawn up by the colonialists, nationalists who adhered to Pan-Africanism anticipated the eventual integration of the independent state with other independent African states. This, however, could wait as a united and indivisible front was first necessary for the liberation of

that particular space. With independence, the boisterous ideological struggles over the question of the nation state and that of African unity were hotly contested between those like Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, who sought the immediate political and economic integration of the continent by way of a United States of Africa, and those like Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, who favoured a more gradualist approach to political integration in a distant future. Eventually, these debates settled on the recognition of the sovereignty of nation states and the inviolability of their colonially inherited borders as formally stipulated in the Organisation of African Union (OAU) founding's charter. Understood as the 'original sin' laying root to the ongoing crisis of the post-colonial state in Africa by way of being predicated on the imperial imagination of the Westphalian template, this division in approach was to inform future African trajectories, revealing within them the very complex vulnerabilities of nationalist thinkers in their navigation of the ideational directions of modernity.

For this reason, this stage in the construction of the post-colonial state provides a unique opportunity to interrogate the context within which nationalists were operating as well as a standard by which to measure the state, by holding nationalists accountable not against an imported vision of the state but by their own. Far from a score card on the pitfalls and failures of nationalist leaders as is so often the case in the literature, this chapter takes a closer look at the geopolitical environment as negotiated by nationalist leaders themselves in order to consider the opportunities available, how these shaped the choices made and the actions taken at the time. For IR, this has several implications. Firstly, while decolonisation expanded the spheres of freedom and the expression of sovereign will by Africans, a consideration of the context within which the transfer of power occurred – which has been glaringly negated – questions the extent to which leaders were really able to shape their own destinies and those of their populations. Placing post-colonial governance into the historical context of its advent – the Cold War, global capitalism and the determination of former colonial powers to maintain their hegemonic positions within both – no doubt provides valuable insights of African contributions to terms central in IR such as self-determination, sovereignty, domestic and/or international and that of state survival versus regime survival. Secondly, by doing so, it challenges the overwhelming disregard for African ideas and imaginaries of decolonisation and post-colonial freedom. In exploring the post-colonial state's constitutive relations to ideologies of liberation and to the geopolitical dynamics that place constraints on them, this chapter returns to the often neglected question of the colonial legacy and post-war politics and uses a

historical sociological approach to bring to the fore the connections of the past in the present when thinking about the post-colonial state today.

4.2. Pan-Africanism and the Birth of a Nation

In his 1903 literary masterpiece *The Souls of Black Folk,* W.E.B Du Bois (one of the fathers of Pan-Africanism) aptly captured the struggle of the Twentieth Century as one '…of the colour line – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and in the islands of the sea' (p. 10, 29). Indeed, by the turn of the century the ubiquity of race in the history of black oppression and exploitation, from slavery through to colonisation (which by now was well established across most of the African continent) and its justification within the international system, reinforced a sense of Pan-African solidarity amongst Africans in Africa and the diaspora against racial discrimination, economic exploitation, foreign domination and oppression.[14] Founded in its African American, African and Afro Caribbean diaspora around prominent intellectuals and activist leaders such as Silvester Williams, W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, George Padmore and Marcus Garvey, Pan-Africanism embodied an ideal and movement seeking the restoration of black people's consciousness and dignity that slavery and colonialism had degraded. Defying the pedagogy of traditional educational structures, these professional intellectuals began to grapple with the dismantling of the world-wide racial apparatus of racial oppression to rediscover their identity and redefine their position within their racist societies. This was no easy task, particularly against the weight of white opinion and its proclamations of its thought as universal and its political and military might as absolute. Yet as the circulation of new and liberating ideas amongst a people brought together by the common fate of their experience was to gather pace, a new set of ideas was to emerge which, for the first time, placed Africans as the key protagonists in the movement for African (or Afro-American) rights.

In so doing, Pan-Africanism was nothing short of a cultural endeavour. Turning to the pages of a glorious past and the rediscovery of the ancients – the empires of Western Sudan, the civilisations of Egypt and the struggles of Sundiata Keita of Mali or Askai of Songhai, these

[14] Guy Martin p57

emerging movements of cultural nationalism began with a reclamation of Africa as a place of culture and civilisation – age-old and fully alive – and which accounted for the modes of life and personality of its people. Far from new, these ideas were already part of the functional aspect of black experience and consciousness in America from where early communities of Africans transported across the continent had already begun to perceive the mother continent as an entity. An experience born of a detachment under the pressure of slavery from their original bonds and their differentiation in terms of races and social status from their oppressors, Africa became a powerful imagining of the primary bonds to the ancestral continent. It was to this extended meaning that the imaginative projections and intellectual efforts of black African writers were to construct Africa as an object of knowledge and attachment (Abiola 1981). Africa was conceived in reference to the 'motherland', she was the spiritual 'nation' of all black people across the world. She was also home to a harmonious working of rituals, laws and other worldly daily practices that gave meaning to the African being – or as Blyden (1887) was to call it, the 'African Personality'. Restoring a sense of pride and place to a people and their history, these discourses began to lay the foundations of an *imagined community*, derived of the shared lines of decent, cultural source, and histories of struggle, or conversely, a fictive and problematic notion of cultural and biological community.

At the same time, these discourses represented an act of contestation against the negative representations of the 'native' within imperial discourses in that they assumed from the very beginning an adversarial and even combative position that was to take the form of an ongoing principled dispute with the West over the terms of African/black existence and ultimately, of *being* (Abiola 1981). Articulated as an act of historical grievance, the discourses presented a critical assessment of the coloniser as both morally and spiritually wanting. Blyden (1887), for example, was to write in disgust about how the colonialists had fully vindicated the principle that 'in all imperial races there is an element of the wild beast' (as cited in Pawliková-Vilhanová 1998, 162). Representing a cult of cruelty and arrogance, of the parade of European achievements and the disparagement of African civilisation, the European had clearly displayed himself as driven by the 'forces of vigour, of violence, of brutality', as well as crude materialism and the cult of science (as cited in Pawliková-Vilhanová 1998, 162). Similarly, Aime Cesaire (1950) was to discount Europe and therefore its assumptions of its-*Self* as a civilisation of violence. In his essay, *Discourses on Colonialism*, the Martinican poet was to redefine colonialism as 'neither evangelisation, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a

desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law' (Cesaire 1950, p. 2). Rather, it represented a degrading enterprise of economic exploitation in its 'works to *decivilise* the coloniser, to *brutalise* him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race, hatred, and moral relativism' (Cesaire 1950, p. 2). In so doing, Cesaire was to declare European civilisation, 'morally and spiritually indefensible'.

In keeping with this, the idea of the African was redefined as a liberating experience of black people as part and form of humanity. This was best captured in Blyden's concept of the 'African Personality', which gradually formulated into the fundamental propositions of African cultural nationalism, Pawliková-Vilhanová (1998, p. 162) summarises the term as follows:

> *'(1) the Negro race has past achievements to its credit;*
>
> *(2) Africa is the continent where Africans and Negroes from the United States and the West Indies will revive their greatness;*
>
> *(3) Africa has unique social institutions, especially the community which is best suited to the distinctive features of the continent. Collective work and distribution of the produce according to the people's needs are communist ideals implemented by the community in the sphere of production. The extended family and polygamy offer the best solution of social problems – also within the framework of the community;*
>
> *(4) Africans have inherent abilities which distinguish them from all the other peoples, and which make up the "African personality".'*

In this concept came the fundamental redefinition of black identity and his being in the world. A declaration of the full consciousness of his potentialities, it was also a framework of ideas derived of his inner being that would hold meaning for the rest of the world (Abiola 1981, p. 101). No longer a victim, the black African was proclaimed within these discourses as an agent of his/her own liberation. Most importantly, this process of agency was constructed as part of a collective effort as found in the idea of African unity. That is, a model of the future

through which cultural emancipation was conceived as a weapon for the liberation of black people everywhere.

As such, the articulation of Pan-Africanism became a powerful projection of black power consolidation within the 'original' community and in which a new movement for the emancipation of black people was to find its central theme of cultural unity and a new demand for liberation and political independence. As in Martin Delany proclamation of 1861, 'Africa for the African race and for the black men to rule them' (Abiola 1981) or Blyden's (1887) 'Back to Africa' slogan which was later adopted by Marcus Garvey's (1983) 'Africa for the Africans' and his Universal Negro Improvement Association, Africa came to represent the generative common ground for the emergence of a global black community with important territorial consequences as in Liberia and Sierra Leone for example. In French-speaking quarters, the emergence of Negritude in the 1930s also marked a distinct contribution to cultural Pan-Africanism. A literary and ideological movement most popularly associated with Aime Cesaire, Leon Damas, Cheikh Hamidou Kane and, later, Leopold Senghor was to correspond to a certain form of Pan-Negro feeling and awareness. Together, these ideas conceived of culture as a weapon for the emancipation of black people everywhere. For Dubois, Pan-Africanism was racially and culturally conceived and therefore represented a vehicle for the equal racial treatment or citizenship of persons of African descent within the United States. For more radical activists such as Garvey, Pan-Africanism stood for a territorial home, a geographical space as articulated in his rallying call for a return to Africa and for the establishment of the United States of Africa.[15] Representing the 'two poles of nationalism in Pan Africanism' (Shivjii 2012, p. 104), the anti-imperialist ideas and activism of both Du Bois and Garvey were to contribute significantly to a new 'commerce of ideas'(Shivjii 2012, p. 104), across the ocean, watering those at the forefront of the decolonisation process on the continent.

[15] An inspired agitator from Jamaica who sought to exert a greater influence in Africa, Garvey brought together a massive but short-lived movement for African liberation based in New York through his Universal Negro Improvement Society (UNIA), with many branches including some in African countries that created self-help enterprises for the black race, such as a shipping line called the 'Black Star Line', an African church, a newspaper and armed forces.

4.3 Homecoming: Pan-Africanism and the Nationalist Awakening

It was the inaugural Pan-African Congress of 1900 organised by Silvester Williams and Du Bois in London that brought together for the first time those who were on the receiving end of racism and colonialism to discuss a variety of socio-political and economic issues affecting the condition of black people in Africa and the diaspora. Attended predominantly by Western-trained elites, these intellectuals from developing countries considered the means by which to turn the West's rhetorical ideas of justice and democracy into tools for liberation. Demands were centred primarily against the inherent inequalities of colonial rule in the name of certain principles such as racial equality, equal treatment and accommodation into existing structures via self-determination. Owing to its success, a number of Pan-African Congresses – each time organised to coincide with and petition major European events such as the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919 in Paris – were widely attended. Seeking to undermine colonial ideology and expose its hypocrisy, one of the more radical gatherings held in 1921 directly resulted in the Declaration to the World, also known as the London Manifesto, which stated boldly:

'England, with all her Pax Britannica, her courts of justice, established commerce, and a certain apparent recognition of Native laws and customs, has nevertheless systematically fostered ignorance among the Natives, has enslaved them, and is still enslaving them, has usually declined even to try to train black and brown men in real self-government, to recognise civilised black folk as civilised, or to grant to coloured colonies those rights of self government which it freely gives to white men.' (as cited in Fauset 1921, p. 5-10)

Encouraged further by the accounts and experiences of returning soldiers disillusioned by European wars, especially those from Francophone Africa and the declaration by United States president Woodrow Wilson of the right to self-determination, a new call for 'Africa for Africans' was to signal the beginnings of a new turn in the Pan-African movement.

This turning point was the 1945 Pan-African Congress held in Manchester and led by George Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah. There were ninety delegates in attendance, twenty-six of whom came from Africa and comprised scholars, intellectuals and political activists who would go to become influential leaders in African independence movements and the American civil rights movement. From the African continent, these included South Africa's Peter Abrahams, Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta, Malawi's Hastings Banda, Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah,

and both Obafemi Awolowo and Jaja Wachuku from Nigeria. The significance of this conference lay in the participation of African politicians from the continent in a movement that had previously been dominated by diaspora Africans. It also marked a radical shift from its more moderate position to a radical one calling for no less than an 'Africa for Africans' and the complete decolonisation of the continent and national sovereignty. Calling on colonised people to unite and assert their rights to reject colonialism, the movement focused the struggle for the emancipation of people of African descent from foreign rule on the homeland. In this way, the North American Pan-African movement gave birth to a more radical nationalism and linked up with the nationalist struggle for independence in Africa itself. Within a year, Kenyatta was back in Kenya as leader of the Kikuyu cultural association and the following year, Kwame Nkrumah was back in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) organising mass political action through his party the United Gold Coast Convention ((UGCC) and from 1949 afterwards his Convention People's Party (CPP) (Van Honsbroek (1999, p. 71). The nationalist movement had taken off and through its counter revolution against the global imperial order, 'Pan-Africanism moved from the realm of idealism and romanticism into that of practical politics' (Guy Martin 2012, p. 58, quoting Vincent Bakpetu Thompson).

While at a global level, Pan-Africanism allowed nationalist leaders to imagine socio-political forms of human solidarity and international order, at the national level it required mobilising solidarities in ways that situated independence as a means towards substantive freedom and emancipation. Already, resistance to colonial rule within the colonially constructed territories was a feature of African political life. From the galvanisation of the Temne and Mende of Sierra Leone against hut tax, the solidarity of Nama and Herero people in Namibia against German seizure of land and forced labour, and the resistance to forced labour in King Leopold's Congo resulting in the loss of limbs, 'primary resistance' in spontaneous and local uprisings had been a feature of colonial life. At the time, however, these were not militarily successful – for obvious reasons including the lack of a country-wide organisation base – and were brutally suppressed. With intensive exploitation after the Second World War – including land alienation and dispossession, forced labour and the imposition of new forms of taxation such as the gun tax and hut tax – peasant masses became less ready to tolerate their own humiliation. Formed within a conscious effort to capitalise on opportunities resulting from the unstable political climate after the war, nationalist leaders worked to bring together a tantalising mosaic of ethnic groups and cultures into a demand for national

independence. Organising themselves through associations, cooperative movements, independent churches and social welfare associations, the message of liberation spread across the continent, raising awareness of – along with moral and physical support for – the nationalist cause. With greater political consciousness came greater restlessness as upheavals, strikes, demonstrations and revolts revealed the character of the period, marking a sharp break from the lack of movement from the previous period (UNESCO, 1998 p. 75). It was the common identification of the colonial system as a general obstacle that made it possible for all classes of colonialised society to unite in a common struggle against colonialism.

As such, nationalist movements for independence were generally characterised by an astonishing degree of consensus in their struggle for self-determination and national sovereignty. On the one hand was the firmly held belief that the advancement towards the nation state was the only feasible route of escape from the colonial condition. As was aptly captured in Nkrumah's now famous phrase, 'Seek ye first the political kingdom and the rest shall be added unto you,' was the idea that once sovereignty was achieved, no matter under what conditions, the road to freedom and development would be theirs to follow (Davidson, 1993 p. 162). True liberation was thus imagined as a process rather than an event as nationalists were all too aware of the task ahead, let alone the 'divide' and 'rule' tactics of colonial powers reluctant to give up power. Indeed, what nationalism 'sought instead was the aggregation of the various manifestations of anti-colonialism for the liberation of that space – united and indivisible' (Mkandawire 2001, p. 13). For the time being, this required putting away all political and economic claims and incorporating a host of social, political and economic ideals and promises in order to bring all sections of society into the fold as a means to win the support of the masses. No doubt, this move would come back and seek its fulfilment at whatever cost in the post-colonial setting. However, with domestic support secured and the international community's recognition of the 'the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live' as stipulated in the Atlantic Charter (1941) and the Charter of the United Nations (1945), the push from anti-colonial forces both within and outside the continent intensified. Reeling from domestic financial and political constraints following the devastation and losses of both World Wars as well as growing international pressure from new international players such as the post-war United States and Soviet administrations, colonial powers began to buckle under the weight of nationalist resistance and preparations for the transfer of power to the colonies begun.

On 6 March 1957, Ghana followed in the steps of Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Tunisia and Morocco in gaining its independence from Britain. Ghana's independence was significant in that it became the focal point of the struggle for the decolonisation of the rest of continent and Nkrumah its standard bearer. Indeed, for Nkrumah, 'the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless linked to the total liberation of the continent,' and he worked relentlessly to set up Ghana's public diplomacy machinery as a means to foster links between other African activists and Accra (Gerits 2015, p. 956). In Paris, anti-imperialist radicalisation had already begun fairly early. The betrayal of the promise for assimilation rights in France making all men equal had exposed the hypocrisy of the democratic enunciations of French statesmen, further exposing colonialism and the oppression of people of colour everywhere as nothing but exploitation masked by ideology in terms of 'civilisation' and 'trusteeship'. Thus, driven by the task to restore the dignity and civilisation of black people, Francophone metropolitan movements combined their Pan-Negroist and Afro-centric ideas with anti-imperialism to gain back, 'by all honourable means, the national independence of negro peoples of the colonial territories'(Langley 1969). Building on this momentum, Nkrumah convened the All-African People's Congress in 1958, which was attended by anti-colonial forces from across the continent. Meanwhile, Ahmed Sékou Touré, a trade unionist who had assumed leadership of the Democratic Party of Guinea in 1952, persuaded his compatriots to vote for independence from France in a 1958 referendum organised by French president Charles de Gaulle in his attempt to diffuse the mounting international opposition to the French war in Algeria. Together, these processes would eventually bring about the transformation of *imperial relations* into *international relations* and mark the political agency of African leaders in the making and shaping of the international. This is worthy of pause and reflection in light of the politics of the state at a critical juncture.

4.4. The Case of a Divided House

Indeed, with independence at hand in nearly all of Africa,[16] no greater question was to occupy the minds of nationalist leaders than that of the meaning of nationalism and the framing

[16] South Africa and Zimbabwe were exceptions, but these were assumed to follow given the pace and scale of decolonisation that had already taken place.

of Pan-African ambitions within an Africa consisting of national states. Symbolising the earlier racial and territorial debates of Du Bois and Garvey, the main question was whether nationalism would now be understood as territorial nationalism premised on separate colonially created borders or Pan-African nationalism for Africans, thus raising the hotly contested issues surrounding the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, race and citizenship, identity and belonging. For radical Pan-Africanists such as Nkrumah (1963, xvii), and shared by many others, the task was undeniably one of political union:

If we are to remain free, if we are to enjoy the full benefits of Africa's rich resources, we must unite to plan for our total defence and the full exploitation of our material and human means, in the full interests of all our peoples. "To go it alone" will limit our horizons, curtail our expectations, and threaten our liberty.

Now that African states had fought for and won their independence, political integration was considered a necessary bulwark against neo-colonial encroachment by imperialists bent on keeping their 'stranglehold on Africa's resources for their own continued enrichment' (Nkrumah 1963, xvi). To this end, Nkrumah, Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria, Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, Ahmed Sekou Toure of Guinea, and Modiba Keita of Mali, proposed the immediate political and economic integration of the continent in the form of a 'United States of Africa' consisting of an African Common Market, African Monetary Union, African Military High Command, and a continent-wide Union Government as outlined in Nkrumah's (1963) *Africa Must Unite*. For Nkrumah, 'unless Africa is politically united under an All-African Union Government, there can be no solution to our political problems… we are Africans first and last, and as Africans our best interests can only be served by uniting within an African community' (Nkrumah 1963). Bolstered by hosting the Conference of Independent States in 1957, the All-Africa People's Conference in 1958 and the Positive Action Conference in 1960, Nkrumah's loud call for continental integration advocated an economic and political proposal of African unity as a necessary shield against neo-colonialism and an essential means to asserting Africa's power on the global stage (White 2003, p. 114).

Not all, however, were in favour of Nkrumah's vision and disagreement arose as to the route and pace from which to arrive at Pan-African unity, giving way to the formation of different groups on the continent. In December 1960, at a conference in Brazzaville, a group

of moderates favouring a gradual approach to continental unity formed what became known as the Brazzaville Group, comprising Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, the Malagasy Republic, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Niger and Dahomey. This sparked an immediate reaction. In January 1961, Morocco convened a conference in Casablanca, leading to the formation of the Casablanca Group, whose members were seen as representing the original thinking of the Pan-African movement and recommended the creation of an African political union. Including Morocco, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, the United Arab Republic, Libya and the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic, this group viewed independence and the overthrow of the colonial state as a means rather than an end to achieving liberation and freedom. Nkrumah led the way by promoting the West African Federation 'as an indispensable lever for the ultimate achievement of a United States of Africa' (Kanu 2013, p. 11-114). In fact, the constitution of the independent Ghana conferred on parliament 'the power to provide for the surrender of the whole or any part of the sovereignty of Ghana' to a union of African states and territories (as cited in Kanu 2013, p. 11-114). In May 1961, through the initiative of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast, William Tubman of Liberia and Leopold Senghor of Senegal, a larger grouping comprising the Brazzaville Group plus Liberia, Nigeria, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Togo, Ethiopia and Libya came together in the Liberian capital of Monrovia to discuss African unity. Known as the Monrovia Group, they also invited the Casablanca Group to the meeting. However, only Libya attended. Their stated goal was not the political integration of sovereign states, but the 'unity of aspirations and of action considered from the standpoint of the view of African social solidarity and political identity' (as cited in Kanu 2013, p. 11-114).

For Nyerere, widening tensions in the Pan-African movement emerged from the inevitable conflict between the call to build and nurture 'territorial nationalism' based on a sovereign independent state and the idea of dissolving national sovereignty in favour of continental unit (Shivjii 2004). In his famous 1966 address, Nyerere aptly captures the 'dilemma of the Pan-Africanist':

'I do not believe the answer is easy. Indeed, I believe that a real dilemma faces the Pan-Africanist. On the one hand is the fact that Pan-Africanism demands an African consciousness and an African loyalty; on the other hand, is the fact that each Pan-Africanist

must also concern himself with the freedom and development of one of the nations of Africa. These things can conflict. Let us be honest and admit that they have already conflicted.'

Recognising that no single African country was the same and that within them different ethnic groups, languages, disparities in ideological orientation and basic economic conceptions existed, and that Africa was divided by the 'nonsensical' arbitrary borders inherited from colonialism, gradualists adopted the view 'that in building a house one starts with a foundation, not a roof' (Olympio, 1961). As such, Nyerere arrived at continental unity through Tanganyika nationalism (Shivjii 2012). As head of state, he was supposed to build and nurture 'territorial nationalism', based on a sovereign independent state which Pan-Africanism required him to dissolve individual sovereignty and subsequently, the basis of 'territorial nationalism'. For Ivory Coast leader Félix Houphouët-Boigny, there was no advantage at all in any kind of political unity; common political institutions were seen as an unnecessary waste because Africa's real need was economic development and aid, something Pan-Africanism and continental unity could not supply. Nigeria made it clear that 'it could not afford to form union by government with any African state by surrendering its sovereignty' and warned against leaders who aspire to lead the continent to constitutional unity (Nyerere as cited in Smith n.d.). This remark was obviously aimed at Nkrumah, who had made himself available for this role during the first All-African Peoples' Conference in 1958. A clear show at that time that Africa's new leaders were clearly unwilling to sacrifice their newly attained political power to anybody(Smith n.d.).

Yet the 'dilemma' of imagining Africa's future either through continental integration or cooperation cannot be understood outside the context of the tumultuous geopolitical environment in which newly independent states found themselves. Many faced problems of stability and survival almost immediately but amongst the most traumatic was the impact of the Congo crisis. Emerging from one of the most brutal systems of forced labour and systematic terror under Belgium's King Leopold II resulting in millions of fatalities, Congo gained its independence from Belgium in 1959 under the leadership of its first elected Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba. Reputable for its enormous natural wealth in which various powers including the United State had come to stake their economic interests – ranging from rubber, timber, coltan, manganese and even the uranium used to manufacture the first atomic weapons, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs – the Congo was to quickly become a global

playground in the international struggle over strategic raw materials. On 17 January 1961, Lumumba was assassinated; a culmination of two interrelated assassination plots by American and Belgian governments, using Congolese accomplices and a Belgian execution squad to carry out the deed. Coming less than seven months after independence and on the heels of the death of the Cameroon's opposition leader Felix Moumie, who was poisoned in 1960,[17] Lumumba's assassination brutally shattered the ideals of national unity, economic independence and Pan-African solidarity and exposed the vulnerability of African states to the interests of foreign powers. Widely considered the 'most important assassination of the 20th Century' (Ndlovu 2013, p. 32-57), the historical importance of Lumumba's assassination lies in a multitude of factors, among the most pertinent of which was the global context in which it took place, the complicity of organisations such as the UN, its impact on Congolese politics thereafter, and Lumumba's legacy as a nationalist leader.

The impact of the Congo crisis on the newly independent states forever shaped the meaning and identity of the state in Africa. For those of the Brazzaville and Monrovia Groups, the shock of Katanga exposed the vulnerability of Africa's social pluralism to the 'divide and rule' tactics of the colonialists and neo-colonial forces that were bent on denying African independence. While the ultimate goal for Pan-African nationalists such as Nyerere (1963 cited in Nyerere 1967, p. 212) had to be 'nothing short of a United States of Africa', nationalist nervousness towards social pluralism served as the building block towards it:

> *'African unity is essential to the continent as a whole and to every part of it. Politically we have inherited boundaries which are either unclear or such ethnological and geographical nonsense that they are a fruitful source of disagreements. And such disagreements, if allowed to develop, would lead to a waste of scarce resources in the building up of national armies.'*

Faced with a first major threat to their unity, African states displayed disunity, despite maintaining the rhetoric of non-intervention and support for the United Nation operation in the Congo. A number of states in the Brazzaville Group supported Lumumba's rival, Joseph Kasavubu, even as they called for a mediated outcome. The Casablanca Group sided with Lumumba. Viewing the Congo Crisis through the lens of national self-determination, key

[17] He was poisoned in Paris by the French Secret Service, as he presented a threat to the French-backed Gabriel Léon M'ba.

states such as Ghana and Guinea regularly rearticulated Lumumba's narratives. The Afro-Asian bloc, though not a dominant force in the UN, was able to exert some degree of power, at times forcing key resolutions (and American acceptance of them) through the General Assembly. This bloc was particularly effective in countering Belgium's narrative of the crisis and hardening the UN's position against Tshombe. However, its influence did not travel far beyond the floor of the UN, illustrating the limitations of this discursive space. Nigeria, whose foreign minister had assumed the chairmanship of the UN Conciliation Commission for the Congo, demanded a central role in negotiating peace. The cracks in the Pan-Africa dream of unity had already begun to show and the assassination of Lumumba came to be a significant factor in the debates concerning the reproduction of the colonial state in Africa.

For leaders of the newly independent states, the manifestation of the bipolar conflict seen in the brazen scale of imperial interference and its willingness to overthrow governments considered 'disagreeable' to their interests was to force a rethink of Pan-African ambitions within the context of the Cold War. As stated by Nkrumah (1967):

'The time has come to speak plainly. The danger in the Congo is not so much the possibility of a civil war between Africans, but rather, a colonialist war in which the colonial and imperialist power hides behind African puppet regimes.'

The Congo crisis demonstrated not only the shared precarity of the newly independent states, as a result of both a militarised Cold War geopolitical system and a dominant capitalist neo-colonial one, but also unaccountable nature of the international sphere in respect of the sovereignty of African states and the Global South more widely. Indeed, determined to hold onto his democratically elected government against perceived Belgian occupation, Lumumba had turned to allies in the Pan-African movement and the UN to end Belgian occupation and restore order. Perhaps most telling was the undermining of Africa's support for the UN mission by UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, who 'interpreted the UN mandate in accordance with Western neo-colonialist interests and the US Cold War imperative of preventing Soviet expansion in the Third World' (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 95). Here, the UN dismissed Congolese accusations against the Belgians and instead described Katanga's secession as an internal political crisis in which the UN could not become involved. The UN's active disregard for the position of the Congolese against Belgium allowed the Belgians to politically destabilise

the Congo through their control of Katanga. Feeling let down by the non-interventionist stance of the Pan-African movement, and under considerable pressure from Western governments, Lumumba openly appealed for the Soviet Union's support, inaugurating precisely what Pan-African unity had laboured to avoid—the introduction of the Cold War to Africa.

Thus, as 32 African states came together to decide on the future of Pan-African unity in Addis Ababa in May 1963, Nkrumah delivered one his greatest speeches as he appealed and did everything he could to convince his colleagues to go the whole hog and create a strong continental union. There was no other option according to Nkrumah (1963) except the urgent creation of an African Union:

'A whole continent has imposed a mandate upon us to lay the foundation of our union at this conference. It is our responsibility to execute this mandate by creating here and now the formula upon which the requisite superstructure may be created.'(as cited in New Africa Magazine 2013)

His was a narration of a continent that had ran out of choices and whose only option was to 'unite or sink into the condition that has made Latin America the unwilling and distressed prey of imperialism after one-and-a-half centuries of independence' (Nkrumah 1963). Thus, appealing to the 'new and more involved struggle for the right to conduct our economic and social affairs; to construct our society according to our aspirations, unhampered by crushing and humiliating neo-colonial control and interference' it was a call to for a 'united act of a united Africa'. There could be no other objective, other than that of an 'African union now' (Nkrumah 1963). The day after Nkrumah's speech, the 32 independent African nations assembled in Addis Ababa failed to go the whole mile for a strong United States of Africa. Instead, they settled for a loose and weak Organisation of African Unity (OAU), whose charter was signed the same day, on 25 May 1963. The following year, meeting at the OAU summit in Cairo, Africa's newly appointed heads of state vowed to respect the borders inherited from colonialism. The ideological fight between the forces of unity and status quo during decolonisation was to see the territorial nation state emerge as the favoured unit for post-colonial order. This was to seal the fate of Africa's independence within the confines of the Western colonial imaginary.

4.5. Reflections on a Dream Deferred: Agency in Tight Corners

Reflecting on the fortieth anniversary of Ghana's independence, Nyerere (2012) outlined the two major objectives of the founding fathers of the OAU: 'the total liberation of the continent from colonialism and settler minorities, and the unity of Africa.' On the first objective, they had been successful with the eventual attainment of independence in South Africa in 1994. On the second, however, Nyerere termed the task of unification under the umbrella of a United States of Africa as a failure.[18] Specifically, he called the Summit itself a psychological failure resulting in what then came to be popularly known as the 'Organisation of Disunity'. But the problem went deeper than this for as he was to recall, the question of the leadership of the proposed union was in itself a thorn in the flesh. For as Nigeria made clear that 'it could not afford to form union by government with any African state by surrendering its sovereignty', it was also warning against leaders who aspire to lead the continent to constitutional unity (Legum 1965, p. 59). This remark was obviously aimed at Nkrumah, who had made himself available for this role during the first All-African Peoples' Conference in 1958. Nyerere was to state that Nkrumah has underestimated the degree of suspicion and animosity which his crusading passion had created among a substantial number of fellow 'heads of state' as a minor factor in the divisions which were to form (Nyerere 1997 as cited in Nyerere 2006). Beyond that, other leaders such as Ivory Coast leader Félix Houphouët-Boigny, were simply disinterested stating that there could be no advantage at all in any kind of political unity: common political institutions were seen as an unnecessary waste because Africa's real need was economic development and aid, something Pan-Africanism and continental unity could not supply. The point is that the divisions within were to crack open the fragile pact that was African nationalism.

[18]' In 1965, the OAU met in Accra, Ghana. That summit is not well remembered as the founding summit in 1963 or the Cairo Summit of 1964. The fact that Nkrumah did not last long as head of state of Ghana after that summit may have contributed to the comparative obscurity of that important summit. But I want to suggest that the reason that we do not talk much about the 1965 summit is probably psychological: it was a failure. That failure still haunts us today. The founding fathers of the OAU had set themselves two major objectives: the total liberation of our continent from colonialism and settler minorities, and the unity of Africa. The first objective was expressed through immediate establishment of the Liberation Committee by the founding summit of 1963. The second objective was expressed in the name of the organisation – the Organisation of African Unity.

Indeed, signalling the victory of the status quo, the OAU Charter of 1963 entrenched the idea of national sovereignty in its provision to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the member states This was later translated into the norm of non-intervention. Owing to the doctrine of non-intervention (and enabled further by the opening words of the OAU Charter, 'We the Heads of State and Government'), the OAU was perceived as a club of African heads of states, most of whom were not legitimately elected representatives of their own citizens but self-appointed dictators and oligarchs. Eventually, a culture of impunity and indifference became entrenched in the international relations of African countries during the era of the 'proxy' wars of the Cold War as the norm of non-interference prevailed. This negative perception informed people's attitudes towards the OAU. Condensed to a narrower pursuit of national sovereignty, it was viewed as an organisation that existed without having a genuine impact on the daily lives of Africans – remaining silent in the face of some of the worst atrocities committed in the contest of the Cold War. At the same time, those who did raise their voices in favour of Africa's self-determination were received by the onslaught of Cold War intervention which Nkrumah (cited in Batsa 1985, p. 30) has so passionately warned:

'If we do not come together, if we do not unite, we shall all be thrown out, all of us one by one – and I will also go…the OAU must face a choice now – we can either move forward to progress through our effective African Union or step backward into stagnation, instability and confusion – an easy prey for foreign intervention, interference and subversion.'

The effects of the assassination of Lumumba were felt all round as African leaders, including Nkrumah himself, became the target of Cold War machinations as the continent soon transformed into a theatre of hot conflicts, territories where absentee superpowers settled their claims to world domination.

In light of this, many African scholars have pointed to this period in Africa's political history as the nothing short of an 'original sin' for failing to transform the territorial map etched out at during the Berlin Conference of 1884-5, thus setting the stage for a neo-colonial politics of 'divide and rule' in the post-colonial moment. For Nzongola-Ntalaja (1987, p. 50), the reproduction of the political map of Africa of the 1960s represented a double failure: the failure of the pan-African ideal of a single nation under one continental state or several regional federations, and the failure to harness pre-colonial histories and cultures in nation-state

building. While Nzongola-Ntalaja (1987, p. 50) saw this failure in terms of a lack of well-organised class forces capable of championing these dreams, others such Julius Ihonvbere roundly blamed African founding fathers for numerous betrayals of the national project(s). These perceived betrayals included failure to restructure the state, to empower Africans, to challenge foreign domination and exploitation of black Africans, and to challenge the cultural bastardisation in the continent (Ihonvbere 1994, p. 5). Yet the question remains as to the choices that were available to African leaders. Indeed, even as Mamdani (2000) points out, the assault on nationalists assumes that there was a glorious pre-colonial past from which to return, without recognition that the maps and the politics of belonging had significantly changed and been shaped by the politics of colonial rule. These reflections retain the question of the African state at independence as a critical juncture and to which, the unresolved questions continue to shape the nature and legacy of colonial politics in Africa. Indeed, the acceptance of the colonial state and its borders shut down the alternative politics of solidarity and transformation of the international order. It condensed to a narrower pursuit of national sovereignty, as the Pan-African dream of continental unity and the possibility of an alternative movement for the transformation of the international order was dimmed by building interstate alliances and regional hegemonies, the effects of which continue to be felt today.

But this is not to say that African leaders had prepared and strategised for such a time as this. Neither is to say that the pan-spirit of a collective solidarity was gone. For in the aim to stay out of the conflict, theirs was the pursuit of a middle course of *non-alignment* and *non-involvement* in Cold War politics. Growing out of an expression of Afro-Asian solidarity firmly articulated at the Bandung Conference in 1955, its main goal was to align south-south geopolitics as an alternative to the 'clear and opposing power blocs' of the Cold War. Focusing primarily on the issues of world peace, anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, it sought to illuminate the 'cultivation of an enlightened, humanist, and morally and socially reforming modernity' based on a rejection of the two geopolitical giants (White 2003, p. 111). This marked a turning point in post-colonial geopolitics; it was a geopolitical vision that recognised the shared precarity of the new post-colonial states, seeing this precarity as the result of both a militarised Cold War geopolitical system and a dominant and manipulative capitalist neo-colonial one (Sharp 2013, p. 20-29). Far from being passive or merely neutral, it was as argued by Nyerere 1969 , 'or certainly ought to be, a policy of involvement in world affairs' (as cited in Sharp 2013, p. 20-29) in which African leaders were to be proactive in order to hold off the

manipulation of their vulnerabilities by external forces. Thinking it through, Nyerere (1969 cited in Nyerere 1974b, p. 43) remarked:

*'… every possible attempt is made to squeeze African events into the framework of the Cold War or other Big Power conflicts. The big question is always: 'Is this or that African country pro-East or pro-West?' These kinds of questions […] are based on a very fundamental mistake – and, I would add, an unwarranted degree of arrogance! They imply that Africa has no ideas of its own and no interests of its own. They assume the exclusive validity of the international conflicts which existed when we achieved nationhood. They are based on the belief that African actions must inevitably be determined by reference to either the Western liberal tradition or to communist theory or practice.' (*as cited in Sharp 2013, p. 20-29)

Enhancing Third World solidarity, the rationale behind non-alignment was to capture the spirit of Pan-Africanism by proposing an alternative vision. While it may not have effected a change in the military balance of power, Nyerere was right in stating that, 'just by the fact of meeting…the conference declared the existence of boundaries to the exercise of that military power' (Nyerere 1974).

If in the global and political realm the ideal of African unity had been severely tested, then in the cultural realm remained fully alive. For similar to the political forebearers of the Bandung Spirit, as Samir Amin (2015) was to call it, intellectuals from the Global South aimed to establish systems of cultural production and circulation that were not beholden to old imperial centres like Paris and London or to the new superpower hubs in Washington and Moscow. In 1957, the launch of *Black Orpheus* (by German expatriate Ulli Beier) was groundbreaking as the first African literary periodical on the continent. Beire was inspired by *Presence Africaine*, also a literary magazine which from 1947 onwards picked up from the previous developments of the Negritude movements as a platform for shaping the public sphere. Founded by Alioune Diop, a Senegalese literary intellectual based in Paris, the magazine reflected a collaboration across progressive French and black diasporic intellectuals making it the first cultural and institutional site of an African intellectual public sphere. Being such, it provided a space for African writers whose political commitment, protest, struggle had by then taken national and regional inflections along the lines of the boundaries drawn of

colonial containers.[19] Buoyed by its success, Rajat Neogy launched *Transition Magazine* in Uganda in 1961. Its literary focus was to emerge as a formidable space for political and social commentary. In 1962, the legendary African Writers of English Expression conference took place at Kampala's Makerere University. All the leading young Anglophone African writers were there: Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Neogy, Chinua Achebe, Ezekiel (later Es'kia) Mphahlele, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, to name a few. Other examples of gatherings included the 1966 First World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar, Senegal and its second iteration, Festac 1977 in Lagos. The spirit of a shared struggle to make meaning united a people across the spaces of national containers.

If in the narrow nationalism of territorial sovereignty, however, the ambition of the pan-African vision suffered its greatest disappointment, then perhaps one can still find a glimmer of hope in its success within the cultural realm. Specifically, the fact that the cultural element of Pan-Africanism remains a powerful force of African unity in the world. Indeed, united in the struggle for political liberation, the power of the arts and its conceptions of a people as being in and of the world, was to spark conversations across the oceans about the unfinished business of decolonisation and liberation. Starting with the World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar, Senegal in April 1966, was a cultural gathering of the black world through music, literature, music, dance, film and the visual arts. Refusing to shy away from the thorny issues of politics in a contemporary world of bipolar conflicts, Dakar was to set the stage for the more radical festivals in Algiers (1969) and Lagos (1977). It may not have been the first transnational black cultural gathering – the preceding decade had witnessed the celebrated Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris (1956) and in Rome (1959) and African writers gathered together for a congress at Makerere University in Uganda in 1962. In Dakar, particularly, was the representation of a festival celebrating black culture like never before. That such a grand event should take place in an Africa gradually liberating itself from a century of colonial rule was symbolic of a people's conversation for a better future.

[19] *Presence African* would go on to organise two highly successful international conference of negro writers and artists in Paris (1956) and Rome (1959). It is in this fulcrum of such intense cultural and artistic intellection that the first generation of African writers began to make some of the most articulate statements in terms of their perception of their roles and functions, and obligations to their societies.

Perhaps even in the disappointment of the OAU one can still find a glimmer of its success. On 21 July 1969, over 4,000 artists converged in Algiers for the first Pan-African Cultural Festival. Representing 31 nations from across the continent, musicians, dancers, horsemen, poets and painters, writers, filmmakers, scholars, and political leaders transformed the streets into meeting places of creative culture. Funded by the OAU, the Pan-African Cultural Festival of 1969 celebrated the achievements of a decade that had brought independence to Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Kenya, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Algeria, among others. For ten days, the energy, idealism and optimism of post-independence Africa transformed the Algerian capital to the space of sound, music and debate.[20] Beyond the display of Africa's rich culture, this event had a deeper purpose. Algeria's president, Houri Boumediene, a military leader during the war for independence from France, stated at the conference, 'The first Pan-African Festival is not a general diversion that distracts us from the daily fight…it is part of an immense effort at our emancipation' (Boumediene 1969 as cited in Sharples 2012). Going on to add that 'culture is a weapon in our struggle for liberation,' his opening remarks set the tone for what was to become an effervescent affirmation of black culture(Boumediene 1969 as cited in Sharples 2012).. Southern African freedom fighters and veteran guerillas from Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau at war with the Portuguese joined the delegations. So, too, did civil rights activists from the United States such as Stokely Carmichael and Negritude theorist Leopold Senghor. Joined by Miriam Makebe who was in exile from South Africa and Nina Simone, this was a gathering of a movement united in a new sense of shared purpose and a belief that, free from imperialism, at last, Africans together were a powerful force in shaping their own history.

4.6. Conclusions

Pan-Africanism and its realisation of the dream of decolonisation presented possibilities to reflect on the legacies of colonialism, respond to the emerging post-war

[20] Algeria was chosen to host and coordinate the event because of its unique place within the decolonisation process. This was the country that had fought the longest and bloodiest war of liberation, winning independence from France in 1962 after eight years of conflict and 132 years of colonial rule. This was the country, too, whose struggle had produced the prophet of the African revolution, Frantz Fanon (1925-61).

international order, and define the possibilities for transforming the unequal international order. Imperial conceptions of order and freedom had typically been patronising, exploitative and racist, and entrenched international inequality by failing to acknowledge fully the humanity of colonised people. In this context, Pan-Africanism and its complex mix of black racial expression worked to expose a history of oppression and exploitation of the 'black man in the world'. In the process, it provided both the philosophical and moral justification for rebellion, which served to bolster African nationalism with the dose of radicalism it needed for the fight for independence. The attainment of political independence was thus by far 'the greatest achievement by Africans…an unprecedented collective fulfilment' (Shivjii 2012). It marked one of the most dramatic transformations of the Twentieth Century and, subsequently, the transformation of the global order from *imperial relations* to a truly *international relations*. If in Pan-Africanism was the bold assertion of African agency, then in its expression was also the powerful articulation of what it meant to be human. Herein lay, the notion of an emancipatory politics that encapsulated the recovery of those who were most excluded – 'the wretched of the earth' to use Fanon's original term as being in and of the world. In pan-Africanism and its corollary African Nationalism was an original politics of dignity, through which ordinary people resisted colonialism and made history.

But it is perhaps in the conception of independence as only the first stage towards a renewed struggle for liberation that one gets the full picture yet to come. A case of unfinished business, so to speak. This was indeed the realisation as articulated through the concerns of its leading pioneer, Kwame Nkrumah, that the attainment of the political kingdom was but a necessary step towards a renewed struggle for the economic kingdom. Here, nationalist leaders understood very well that ideas surrounding notions such as state or sovereignty were far from guaranteed, and that the history of Africa's place in the world only meant that the question of independence was but a precarious position. The nationalist movement saw recognition of Africa's pluralism as succumbing to the 'divide and rule' tactics of colonial and neo-colonial forces that were bent on denying African independence, or wherever they accepted it, emptying it out of any meaning by nursing the fissiparous potential of Africa's social pluralism. In this way, nationalism was, as Issa Shivjii (2003, p. 29-31) puts it, a process of struggle, in the formation of nations. It was against something, rather than for something. Against imperialism, against denial, the denial of humanity. As such, its ultimate goal was not simply the removal of the coloniser (thus ending colonial occupation) and the establishment of an

independent nation, but rather the transformation of a violent and exploitative international system. Thus, the concept of African unity as part and process of the making of African nationalism and the making of nations spoke to a collective struggle for liberation and transformation as much wider than the attainment of the nation-state. Rather, it centred on the formation of an African community – a United States of Africa – as a means to secure non-domination.

Thus, political independence gave Africans the opportunity to dream of an alternative moral order. Yet far from the unity envisioned by the more radical Pan-Africanists, the beginnings of an African community were launched in a context of tensions and division between the forces of territorial nationalism with its proclivity for national sovereignty and those in favour of Pan-Africanism seeking the political union of African states. For some, this was considered inevitable given the realities of colonial inheritance, while for others, the possibilities therein were not limited to the confines of the nation-state. Whichever the route, gradualist or radical, the complex terrain of the geopolitical context in which nationalists were operating diluted dreams of Pan-African unity in the quest for regime survival. This went some way towards fragmenting the national and social transformational agendas that newly independent African states had hoped to realise. Entrusted with the fulfilment of popular expectations from within, and political turmoil from without that needed to be avoided, the move to maintain the status quo as the only hope for survival was not altogether surprising. For others however, it represented nothing less than a failure of imagination and perhaps within that, a failure to appreciate the enormous success of African nationalism in making nations out of a tantalising mosaic of ethnic groups and cultures into a demand for nationalist independence in the first place (Mkandawire 2005, p16). Could the galvanising quest of the Pan-African vision of unity, liberation, equality that gave rise to African nationalism have been used to achieve true independence beyond that of 'flag' independence through continental unity? The jury is still out on how this would have operated within the context of the Cold War.

Opening up the interrogation of the state in IR to the experiences of those otherwise excluded from the mainstream serves to show us that the state was not a primary unit of organising political community. It was a means to an end. A process of struggle in the formation of nations. But more than that, it draws our attention to the function of imperialism and the idea of the international as a highly uneven and exploitative international system –

insecure – for those whose claims to freedom and independence had just been heard. It is impossible to understand the state outside of this. Thus, paying attention to the story of African actors in this period brings our attention to the context in which the newly independent states were to emerge. We find here a better understanding of the international as a social space, but also as a social space co-constituted by others who also have ideas about the international. Pan-Africanism as one such idea and worldview played a major role in shaping the global order since the Nineteenth Century. Thus, for IR, this chapter contributes to making those stories visible as much as it contributes to locating the nature of the state and unfinished business. Indeed, the failure to go the final mile locked African countries into the colonially inherited borders. We find here a conception of failure as located in the emergence of the state at independence and the reproduction of the colonial order in the same. Failure, then, is a much older and wider concept – one which is constituted in the very question of the state in Africa as part and form of its colonial legacy. Having accepted the territorial sovereignty of the state in Africa as the social basis of political community, what did nationalist leaders wish to do with it? It is to this question that the next chapter follows in its objective to situate the historical contingencies and social relations that give context and meaning to the African condition and which propel the process of change.

CHAPTER FIVE

AFRICAN NATIONALISM AND THE MAKING OF A STATE IN AFRICA

'History will one day have its say; it will not be the history taught in the United Nations, Washington, Paris, or Brussels, but the history taught in the countries that have rid themselves of colonialism and its puppets. Africa will write its own history, and both north and south of the Sahara it will be a history full of glory and dignity.'

– Patrice Lumumba (1972, p. 422-423)

Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, this study sought to explore the ideas and imaginaries of African nationalism as born of the concept of African unity. It narrated how the dilemma of the Pan-Africanist stood for a choice between territorial nationalism and the reproduction of the territorial map etched out at the Berlin Conference and that of African unity, thus raising the hotly contested issues surrounding the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, race and citizenship, identity and belonging. In this chapter, this study seeks to contend with this further as it interrogates the choices made and actions taken within states to determine the politics of the African state at a critical juncture.

5.1. Introduction

The attainment of political independence in much of the African continent ushered in an era of renewed hope and optimism for a continent bursting to unshackle itself from the unjust exploitation and oppression of colonial rule. Founded within the proud and popular slogans of 'liberation' and 'freedom' from which African political struggles were fostered, the mottoes, anthems and flags of the newly independent states reproduced these fundamental collectivist values of struggle in their assertion of identity, a quest for development, the desire for unity and a call for freedom and social justice (Mazrui 1999, p. 479). From 'One People, One Hope, One Faith' (Senegal), 'Freedom and Justice' (Ghana), 'Union, Discipline, Work (Cote D'Ivoire) to the distinct colours of their flags – commonly, green for the resources and fertility of the land, red for the bloodshed or heroism of struggle, black for the people and white for peace and unity, state mottos, their emblems and symbols boldly announced the expectations and faith of African people in the postcolonial dream. Convinced that political sovereignty was the key to all improvements of the African condition as coined by Nkrumah's now famous phrase, 'Seek ye first the political kingdom, and the rest shall be added unto you', hopes for nothing short of radical and far-reaching social and economic changes along indigenous or African lines were promoted to advance the new nations from the fragile and provisional status of the early 1960s.

Less than a decade in, however, political independence was no longer a joyous novelty and the long period of transition began to fall into acute crisis as African leaders struggled to navigate their position within the strictures of the global system. Crisis crept into all corners as economies plundered to a position worse than that at the attainment of political sovereignty. Education systems deteriorated, roads disintegrated, railways rusted, telephone lines went silent and the rest of the infrastructure was in decay (Mazrui 1999, p. 128). At the same time, cracks began to form in the regimes formed by educated elites and protected by military regimes leading to a long and tumultuous period of coups, civil war and uncertainty in many African countries. Moreover, the 1980s saw a disturbing worsening of the situation accelerated by drought, which between 1983 and 1985 affected over 20 countries and some 35 million people (Niane & Kizerbo 1998, p. 304). Naturally, postcolonial expectations gave way to postcolonial frustration as hopes for freedom and socio-economic emancipation were instead turned on their heads by the lived conditions of poverty and structural violence experienced by

the masses. Overwhelmed by unsustainable debts, negative trends in many private commodity markets and shunned by international capital, African states had little option but to accept, at least formally, the economic SAPs advanced by the IFIs, ushering in one of the most disabling and dependent periods in postcolonial Africa.

It is in this context that the serious study of the postcolonial African state within African Studies began. From Jackson and Rosberg's (1982) paper on *Why Africa's Weak States Persist* to Migdal's (1988) *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World,* debates and discussions around the postcolonial African state sought to explain the causes of political, social and economic crises on the continent whether at the state level or the societal level 'from below'. According to the prevailing rhetoric, African states had fallen under the weight of their own cultures, traditions and politics as the norm of Westphalian sovereignty as the basis of international community had allowed Africa's dictators and authoritarian leaders to embezzle with impunity at the expense of their own populations. Quite rightly justified in their identification of a crisis of the state and the concern for African populations who bore the brunt of political dysfunction, the diagnosis was frequently wrong in being formed from the analysis of the symptoms of the crisis rather than the politics of the same. Placing postcolonial governance into the historical context of its advent of the Cold War and global capitalism (and the determination of former colonial powers to maintain their hegemonic positions within both) allows for these crises to be rooted in conflicts over Africa's identity and who had the authority to author that identity. Thus, accepting decolonisation as a concept far wider than the 'winning of independence' or 'transfer of power' opens up a more intriguing discussion into a period in which sovereignty and identity were rewritten by multiple discourses claiming authorship.

As such, this chapter aligns with the overall aims of this thesis, which seeks to explore the preliminary issues of representation of the African continent in order to understand some of the ideologies and interests that influence such maps. By doing so, it seeks to provide debated and alternative frameworks that take into account African ideas and imaginaries of decolonisation and post-colonial freedom.

5.2. Decolonisation and 'Our Man' in Power

On 30 February 1960, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan delivered a historically significant address to the Parliament of South Africa where he signalled very clearly that the Conservative-led British government intended to grant independence to many of its territories.[21] Declaring that 'a wind of change is blowing through this continent and, whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact, we must all accept it as fact' (Macmillan 1960), Macmillan sought to alert his audience to the realities of a changing geopolitical environment. The growth of nationalism across the empire, which Macmillan likened to 'the processes that gave birth to the nation states in Europe' meant that Europe could no longer justify the grounds for colonial rule (cited in Myers 2000, p. 564). Before World War II it was stated fairly that 'the sun never set on empire'. For decades this was true, as the Act of Berlin legalised the invasion, occupation, colonisation and annexation of African territory by European powers between 1881 and World War I in 1914. At the time, Europe was in the throes of the industrial revolution and the advent of the machine transformed the continent into the 'workshop of the world'.[22] This was the dawn of industrial-scale production, modern capitalist economies and mass international trade. Thus, as the unprecedented demand for resources grew, so too did the value of Africa – not only as a source of materials and strategic trade routes – but also as a market for the goods now produced in bulk. By the turn of the century, however, Europe was no longer able to hold onto too big an empire. Devastated by war – Britain was impoverished by war; France was humiliated in defeat, destroying the myth of France's own imperial invincibility; Belgium was also defeated and Italy was a country on the losing side thus forfeiting all her colonies – European empires were forced to consider withdrawing from some of their colonies (Davidson: 95-100).

On the international stage, threats to the colonial empire also came from their vulnerability to international scrutiny as conferences held by the Allied powers in Yalta, Potsdam and San Francisco had signalled loudly to colonial powers that they were no longer the leading players in the global order. The emerging global roles of the United States and the

[21] An earlier version of this speech was delivered earlier in Accra on 10 January 1960, but this is remembered as the defining moment as it made it clear that Macmillan included South Africa in his comment, signalling a shift in British policy with regards to apartheid.
[22] During the 19th Century, Britain was known as the "workshop of the world" primarily due to its contribution to the industrial revolution.

Soviet Union from World War II onwards began to overshadow that of imperial Europe. In different ways the new superpowers began to pressure the European colonial powers to dismantle their empires. While the United States was the most powerful force amongst the victorious allies, its leaders had no interest in helping to maintain the empire of its business rivals. Here the economic interests of big American companies and corporations operating in many different countries and in different colonial systems came up against old colonial empires, each guarding its own monopolies and thus obstructing the growing operations of the new multinational companies. Working to get rid of political controls, which safeguarded the old monopolies, American interests worked towards strengthening the position of African nationalists demanding political independence, with the aim of eventually bringing them into a new international world system under direct American leadership and in line with America's national interests (Davidson 1993, p. 100). Working within its own imagining as an idealised, ahistorical nation reaching beyond geographical boundaries to both define and protect Western values of freedom, democracy and the free market, America's entry into African affairs framed itself around the right to resolve international affairs, naturally coinciding with the birth and ideals of the United Nation in 1945. Leaning too on its Marxist-Leninist philosophy, the Soviet Union attacked colonialism because it represented the 'highest stages of capitalism' (Lenin 1916). Signalling what was the gradual yet significant shift from Europe to Washington (and later Moscow as well), empire felt the blow to its economic power and colonial position in the world which, in turn, accelerated the transfer of power.

That being said, while the changes in international relations brought about by the end of World War II, their impact should not be exaggerated as these alone prompted European powers to give up their colonies. As noted by the historian Anthony Low, 'international pressures on colonial powers could be irritants, but the ease with which the Portuguese and Smith regimes brushed them aside for so long serves to underline their ineffectiveness' (as cited in Cheikh 2010, p. 42). The resulting pressure was decisively strengthened by the rising tide of African nationalism which now made ever-stronger demands for progressive change. Tracing the beginning of the end of colonialism to the World Wars, the accounts and experiences of returning African soldiers disillusioned by European wars broke the 'empire of silence' in utterly discrediting the idea of European superiority and thus, setting in motion a search for non-European alternatives (Khapoya 2015, p. 150). In thoroughly undermining any justification for the existing colonial system and inverting the hypocrisy of colonial ideology

to show how it contradicted the very ideas and ideals of the freedom and the democracy it proclaimed, nationalist movements began to demand a greater say in the colonial systems of governance. While initially scattered, these expressions of disaffection and resistance eventually coalesced into mass movements during the two World Wars, especially as all resources were diverted to the war effort and Africans were forced to produce more to feed Europe, even as they were not producing enough to feed themselves. Exhausted by the war effort, peasant masses became less ready to tolerate their own humiliation. With greater political consciousness came greater restlessness, as resistance in the form of upheavals, strikes, demonstrations and revolts spread throughout the continent in a demand for social justice, equality and dignity.

Weakened though they were, colonial powers in 1945 still thought they had enough strength to keep some of their colonies for a long time ahead, meaning that little or no hard discussion had been had about the future and its possible alternatives. Assuming empire was generally 'forever', promises of political concessions and constitutional advances made in favour of African self-government were constructed as part of a strategy of delay rather than as a move towards independence (Davidson 1993, p. 177). As late as 1956, African self-rule was still a pipe dream for which European powers had been largely unprepared. As in the words of Sir Mitchell (cited in Davidson 1993, p. 179), the then-governor of Kenya:

'How primitive the state of these people is…and how deplorable the spiritual, moral and social chaos in which they are adrift are things which can perhaps only be fully realised by those who are in close personal touch with the realities of the situation.'

While colonial powers did foresee a time in the future in which they would be allowed to govern themselves, the time had not come. As Professor Guy Malengreau (1955, p. 356) stated with regards to the Congo, self-rule was considered a task for which the Congolese were declared incapable:

'In reality . . . the great mass of the Congo's inhabitants are incapable of governing themselves. This will be so for a long time to come . . . To enlarge the political rights of the colony's inhabitants would be in reality to abandon the fate of millions of natives to a handful of men whose interests are often in opposition to those of the bulk of the population for whom Belgium's guardianship is today the only protection.'

If colonial powers were still unable to envisage a time when it would be possible for governments to surrender their ultimate responsibilities in the colonies, then the mounting pressures of deepening socio-economic crisis, international pressure and most importantly nationalist agitation, made this process an inevitable fact.

In this climate, the task for Europe was to secure its economic interests while remaining relevant in international affairs (Davidson 1993, p. 177). As such, colonial specialists debated avenues for greater political concessions in favour of African self-government. Oscillating between greater political power for the invented 'traditional' authorities or devolution of power and development to the peripheries, the most influential argument came from those who believed colonial rule should now find ways of promoting a 'responsible middle class' to which political responsibility, sooner or later, could be safely transferred (Davidson 1993, p. 81). The argument held that any transfer of power would only succeed if the newly independent countries remained within the general power of the Western capitalist system. To do so, political concessions would have had to limit any far-reaching or revolutionary changes and thus build in limits to the amount of independence that Africans could win and use (Davidson 1993, p. 100). The result was liberal constitutions based on Westminster or Gaullist models, hammered out between the departing colonial powers and their African counterparts (Shivjii 2000). Herein lay, on the one hand, the programmatic origins of what was later on to be labelled neo-colonialism. This policy of modernising the relationship between colonial powers and their colonies was an attempt to deal with the colonial crisis, while at the same time protecting the substance of colonial interests in bringing it in line with the emerging multinational capitalism. It was in this climate that negotiations for independence took place and in which came the paradox of the whole colonial process: political independence on the one hand, but renewed and reinforced economic dependence on the other. The wheel had come full circle as the conquerors could legitimise the inevitable demise of their conquest on the grounds that it sought to prepare the colonial territories for self-government and ultimately, independence (Davidson 1993, p. 177).

While no one could have foreseen the full extent of this concession at that time, the acceptance of constitutional frameworks negotiated outside the purview of the domestic constituents for whom they were said to be designed was to set the foundation for what can only be deemed an ongoing struggle on the form of governance centred on the reconstitution

of the state in Africa. For Tanzanian scholar Shivjii (2000), the constitutional frameworks inherited at independence were structured on the twin pillars of limited government and individual rights on the one hand, and multiparty electoral process on the other. These too were marked by an absence of fundamental rights, an ethnically based judicial system, wide discretionary powers of the Executive and a virtual absence of judicial review. As such, the colonial legal order inherited by the independence regimes was by its very foundation a despotic legal order left behind by imperial powers and which was to have an enduring impact on states in Africa (Shivjii 2001). Particularly glaring in the whole process was the exclusion of the majority of citizens in both the drafting and adoption of postcolonial constitutions everywhere. This predicament was not lost on nationalist leaders who, like Nkrumah, acknowledged that 'there is great risk in accepting office under this new constitution which will make us half slaves and half free' (cited in Davidson 1993, p. 163), as nationalist leaders were under no illusion with regards to the constitutional bargains inherent in the grand compromises and concessions that afforded them the legitimacy to govern. Theirs, however, was, first and foremost, the quest for the political kingdom which was the firmly held belief that the advancement towards the nation state was the only feasible route of escape from the colonial condition. Thus, once sovereignty was achieved, no matter under what conditions, the road to freedom and development would follow (Davidson 1993, p. 162). Thus, the state in Africa at this point of critical juncture was in and of itself an unfinished business.[23]

5.3. Decolonisation and the National Question

Having fought for and captured state power, nationalist leaders were faced with the daunting task of building nations out of disparate religious, linguistic and cultural groups emerging out of the oppression and violence of colonial rule. For having been induced through conquest and maintained through a system of violent oppression, there was no identification with the state as a symbol of the people or a political community; and for those who found

[23] In other words, constitution-making processes were perceived as a means to an end and a set of tools and/or documents embodying independence and constituting state sovereignty and respectability in the international arena, rather than documents embodying national consensus (Okoth-Ogendo 1991; Shivji 2001)

themselves within, there was no sharing of common values, beliefs, and attitudes within which to create a political culture or a sense of belonging. In this sense, the state preceded the nation (Kizerbo & Mazrui 2003, p. 439). In fact, as Kizerbo and Mazrui point out, most groups came into contact with one another during the terminal phase of the colonial period as colonisers 'folded their political umbrellas and rolled up their flags' (Kizerbo & Mazrui 2003, p 439). At the same time, the newly independent states were in deep crisis. For contrary to imperialist propaganda that some progress had been made in developing the continent represented by Western symbols of technology and industry (hydroelectric dams, mining facilities, plantations, railroads, highways, primary schools and health facilities), the newly independent African states were burdened by massive urban unemployment, an implacable shift of population from rural to urban centres and the scourge of relentless poverty. This was nothing less than a crisis of social disintegration. According to Basil Davidson (1992), what the nationalists of the 1950s inherited in the 'transfer of power' was essentially a transfer of crisis marked by 'a coil of problems pregnant with serious (if yet unadmitted) crises of malfunction'. Given that there was no alternative, the state was the accepted agent for both nation-building and economic development, as well as unifier and organiser of society.

To this end, historical consciousness became a necessary tool for the construction of national identity. According to historians Bethwell Ogot and William Odhiambo (1995), this history had to be invented, assembled together and arranged around the metaphor of struggle that assumed the imagining of the past fifty years or so as a moral enterprise. It was a struggle against the injustice that is colonialism; against poverty, ignorance and disease; against the drudgeries of rural life; against the foreignisation of cultural ecology; against the intervention of ideas in the indigenous discourse of nation building; and most importantly it was an enterprise for the decolonisation of consciousness (Ogot & Ochieng 1995 p. 1). The struggle was one of a collective 'we' binding African people together in the acknowledgement of their sheer strength and willpower to survive and who with dignity, humanity, strength and unity had rightfully attained their right to freedom. Nowhere was the construction of a counter identity better displayed than in the two extremely different versions of the colonial project presented in 1959 at Congo's Independence Day ceremony by King Baudouin of Belgium and the newly elected Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba. The full speech unashamedly sought to romanticise and even erase the repression, exploitation and violence that Congolese people had suffered under the brutal colonial regime. Presenting an important counter narrative of

Congolese history and identity as one of collective struggle and victims of a brutal regime, Lumumba (1959 as cited in Merriam 196, p. 352-353) said:

'Our lot was eighty years of colonial rule; our wounds are still too fresh and painful to be driven from our memory. We have known tiring labour exacted in exchange for salary which did not allow us to satisfy our hunger, to clothe and lodge ourselves decently or to raise our children like loved beings. We have known ironies, insults, blows which we had to endure morning, noon, and night because we were "Negroes".'

The divergent interpretations of colonial history delivered on the same stage were crucial elements in the construction of identity, the effects of which were central to producing meaning to the crisis and conflict that followed independence.

Thus, whether independence was achieved through direct negotiation or the barrel of the gun, nationalist leaders recognised their shared precarity and that the re-inscribing the dignity and rights of African people was crucial to the foundation of a postcolonial order. For the first-generation leaders like Senghor, Bourguiba, Nkrumah, Touré, Nyerere or Kaunda, the ideals contained within African Socialism became the means by which to assert the notions of collective solidarity, equality and mutual respect inherent within the African personality. Far from being a concern for rival economic systems or modes of production, African Socialism instead symbolised a planned route for economic and social change in which assumedly traditional African forms of solidarity were to co-exist with open market structure and forced industrialisation.[24] Distinguished by its insistently moralising tone, it was an ethical commitment to the priority of transforming and/or democratising the colonial state in the fight against 'exploitation of man by man' and in the purpose of 'achieving a wider distribution of the benefits of economic growth' (Mboya 1963). The formal embodiment of this quest for social justice and humane living conditions was crystallised in the national projects. The Arusha Declaration in Tanzania under Julius Nyerere, the Mulungushi Declaration under Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia, Sekou Toure's National Development in Guinea, and the Common

[24] Tom Mboya (1963, p. 17-19) defined it in the following way: 'When I talk about "African socialism", I refer to those proven codes of conduct in the African societies which have, over the ages, conferred dignity on our people and afforded them security regardless of their situation in life. I refer to universal charity which characterised our societies and I refer to the African's thought processes, cosmological, ideas which regard man not as a social means, but as an end and entity in the society'.

Man's Charter in Uganda under Milton Obote to name a few, national projects emerged as the embodiment of nationalist-inspired imaginings of a post-colonial future centred on stimulating growth and development, towards attaining the true fruits of independence – or otherwise known in Swahili as *uhuru*. Carrying specific names such as *ujamaa* in Tanzania, *harambee* in Kenya and *humanism* in Zambia, they sought to connect the priorities of African national elites with the expectations and demands of the masses.

To implement their vision of a postcolonial future, nationalist leaders held that political unity under one political party was necessary to the programs of nation-building and national development. The argument held that if the nation identified with one party, the foundations of democracy would be much firmer than they could ever be with two or more parties each representing only a section of the community. As Kenya's Tom Mboya (1970 as cited in Speich 2009, p. 451) was to claim:

'Politically speaking it can be argued that we are in such a state of crisis that authoritarian rule is justified. It is said that opposition is a luxury we cannot afford, since it will divert us from the progress whose general direction is widely agreed within the nation.'

Justified by the real threats of fragmentation and instability, which had already manifested in many instances prior to independence (such as Congo/Leopoldville) or soon after (with the 1963 coup in Togo and the 1965-1969 Nigerian civil war), nationalist leaders called for a unified polity, shunning ethnic identity and any other political or economic claims based on identity. In the process, however, something else happened: it denied the very basis on which it had been formed and in so doing, effectively reproduced the despotism of colonial rule. The argument was that if the nation identified with one party, the foundations of democracy would be much firmer than they could ever be with two or more parties each representing only a section of the community. Employing a neo-traditionalist discourse, models of Western liberal democracies known for their conflictual and competitive nature were instead shunned for the values of fostering consent to achieve consensus held in African democracy (Edozie 2018). In their view, building the nation could not afford a critical public sphere in which alternative political perspectives could be discussed; rather in agreement, the nation was to move forward under one political umbrella. The representation of this unity was constructed around the 'father of the nation' and the notion of an extended 'family-hood' was promoted as

the basis of a modern African democratic system. As such, the centralised state emerged as the most effective instrument for distributing the spoils of national independence to the masses.

5.4. Decolonisation and the Crisis of the Nation

In the early years, the postcolonial project recorded some important gains in social welfare, notably in areas of public education and health, and particularly in countries like Ghana and Tanzania. However, this period of post-colonial history did not last long. The economic crisis of the 1970s robbed even well-meaning and sincere African leaders of their capacity to deliver on their promises. On the one hand, elite commitment to development waxed and waned as Africa's leaders resorted to a combination of repression and patronage to maintain their rule. The resort to a politics of despotic rule brought to the fore the politically tolerable but morally deficient dynamics of decolonisation. The extent of this betrayal would come to light in the context of economic collapse as Africa's leaders relied for survival on the utilities and instrumentalities of state violence for their survival. In the end, not only were strong divisions created within elite ranks, but vertically too, with strong antipathies and exclusivity in society weakening the solidarity of a people. In this climate, African writers, who were cut from the same cloth as the anti-colonial, Pan-African and nationalist struggles for freedom, began to modify their stance and renounce the system that sustained them. African fiction morphed into a critical voice of resistance to the state marking the shift in African writing from the 'Romanticism' of the decolonisation era as found in the earlier texts of Negritude to the 'New Realism' of the postcolonial condition. In the words of Chinua Achebe (1964 as cited in Ogungbesan 1974 p 43):

> '*I believe it's impossible to write anything in African without some form of political commitment, some kind of message, some kind of protest. In fact, I should say all our writers, whether they are aware of it or not, are committed writers. The whole pattern of life demands that you should protest, that you should put in a word for your history, your traditions, your religion and so on.*'

True to form, an array of novels began to reflect the grave disillusionment and disappointment of the period, as seen in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*, *Devil on the*

Cross and the *Petals of Blood*; Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*; Wole Soyinka's *Season of Anomy*; Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother*; Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones are Not Yet Born;* and Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* that would take to task a politics of betrayal and the failure of the anti-colonial ambition.

For these authors, independence had not brought any substantial changes to those that Frantz Fanon (1961)had described as the 'wretched of the earth'. In fact, the African bourgeoisie and political class had assumed the administrative and cultural positions once held by European colonisers, choosing to keep intact structures of governance, exploitation, punishment and knowledge. This critique flew in direct contrast to the more mainstream narratives of crisis as solely the function of the corruption of public institutions and the unscrupulousness of African leaders. Instead, this was constructed as a narrative formed of the failure to transform the colonial state and independence, thus reproducing the politics and governance of despotic rule by those who suffered and fought against it. None could have been more clear to this fact than Fanon (1961, p 149) who foresaw the betrayal of the nationalist promise:

'*National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallisation of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilisation of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been. The faults that we find in it are quite sufficient explanation of the facility with which, when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. These are the cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression that is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity. We shall see that such retrograde steps with all the weaknesses and serious dangers that they entail are the historical result of the incapacity of the national middle class to rationalise popular action, that is to say their incapacity to see into the reasons for that action.*'

While Fanon placed the African predicament squarely at the heart of the colonial regime, he stingingly called into account the 'intellectual laziness' of the national middle class for its unwillingness to truly sacrifice itself for the struggle.

As such, the distinctive quality of the apprehension expressed in African fiction was one of 'comprehensive sombreness' (Adesanmi 2010, p 258) as the narrative emphasis of the novel lay not only in depicting the grotesqueness of the ruling elite, but also in searing sociological evocations of the alienating effects of crude power. This was not just a form and position taken in the African novel or by revolutionary theoreticians and writers, but also in the everyday lived experiences of African writers who, as self-actualised dissident writers, suffered the experiences of detention, prison and exile. Early in the 1980s in the essay 'Africa in Exile,' for example, South African writer Es'Kia Mphahlele lamented the loss of freedom dreams:

'Almost overnight after independence, I witnessed the tragic unfolding of the imperial theme, as Shakespeare would have dramatised it. News filled the air of treachery, assassination, palace rebellions, preventive detention, corrupt government, neo-colonial plots to subvert independence, public executions involving rebels, of persons being liquidated by murder as members of the parliamentary opposition, and so on. Such news still hangs over the whole African landscape.'

Perhaps this should not have been surprising given the fact that constitutional arrangements derived from historically and geographically contingent circumstances had no bearing on domestic African institutions and practices. But what we find again is the lament of a condition of the basic denial of a people's longing to be free. Unsurprisingly, failure to transform the colonial condition, not simply in terms of social and material benefits but also in terms of the institutions of the state, meant that the state could no longer claim credibility to rule on behalf of the nation. Wary populations withdrew support and therefore legitimacy from the state. In some cases, this erosion of domestic legitimacy led to the civil wars and ethnic conflicts of the 'new wars' thesis.

But the context in which violence was brought to bear for political ends must also be understood in the relations of hegemony typified by the Cold War, as the struggle for political power intensified in what can only known as the global politics of state building. Indeed, if at the domestic level postcolonial elites had fallen back on old habits already intimate to the state which they had inherited, then at the international level, new ties were to be woven into the old as the pursuit of development offered more space for continuity rather than change. Indeed, to overcome their dramatic problems, many African leaders looked to the North in terms of

technical know-how and capital – from both East and West. In this, they joined a general enthusiasm for technocratic solutions that was shared almost globally. The obvious problem was that a replication of the economic successes of the North bore the dangers of prolonging old dependencies or giving rise to new ones (Speich 2009). Conscious of the dangers this pursuit presented, African leaders carefully wrapped their quest for assistance into the language of African sovereignty (Speich 2009, p 451). For example, in a public speech in Oxford, Kenya's Minister for Planning and Development, Tom Mboya (1961, cited in Speich 2009, p. 452), warned the British to 'Stop being paternalistic':

We need a continuing flow of technical, specialist, financial, and other types of aid. We will take it from you and from any other nations ready to offer aid with no strings attached. Do not grumble when we take it. We take it because we need it, and we take it because it is given free. Remember, we are also capable of gauging the ulterior motives of all those who offer to help us.

This was not an unwise caveat, for as already shown, the departing colonial powers consciously stressed the continuity between old colonial economic interactions and new modes of political and economic governance. But it was strategic too, given that the realities of a bipolar conflict between the East and the West engendered new opportunities from which to pursue avenues for development assistance and support.

To protect their sovereignty, maintain their independence and pursue their developmental goals, many of Africa's new leaders anchored their sovereignty in a middle course of non-alignment and non-involvement in Cold War politics. Growing out of an expression of Afro-Asian solidarity firmly articulated at the Bandung Conference in 1955, its main goal was to align South-South geopolitics as an alternative to the clear and opposing power blocs of the Cold War. Focusing primarily on the issues of world peace, anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, non-alignment sought to illuminate the 'cultivation of an enlightened, humanist, and morally and socially reforming modernity' (White 2003, p. 111) based on a rejection of the two geopolitical giants. This alone marked a turning point in post-colonial geopolitics; it was a geopolitical vision that recognised the shared precarity of the new post-colonial states, seeing this precarity as the result of both a militarised Cold War geopolitical system and a dominant and manipulative capitalist neo-colonial one (Sharp 2013). Far from

being passive or merely neutral it was, as argued by Nyerere (1967 as cited in Sharp 2013, p. 24) as cited in , 'or certainly ought to be, a policy of involvement in world affairs' in which African leaders were to be proactive in order to hold off the manipulation of their vulnerabilities by external forces. Nkrumah (1961, cited in Mathews 1987, p. 40) declared that 'we have strictly adhered to our policy of positive neutralism and non-alignment and whatever we have done, we have always placed Africa first.' This, of course, was not a uniform commitment, for while, on the one hand, the rejection of bloc politics and the genuine desire to create a new society made the newly independent African countries move in the direction of non-alignment, on the other, ongoing dependency served as a means by which to protect their interests and maintain control over economic and political resources. Together, these positions would make the continent the site of a new politics of struggle centred on the global politics of a Cold War between the blocs of the West and the East.

5.5. Decolonisation and the Cold War in Africa

America's entry into African affairs initially framed itself around the right to resolve international affairs, naturally coinciding with the birth and ideals of the United Nations in 1945. The initial euphoria of decolonisation, combined with a rhetoric of modernisation and social transformation, found a natural and enthusiastic partner, willing to provide technical assistance as a means to counter the Soviet advance within Africa. Working within its own imagining of an idealised, ahistorical nation reaching beyond geographical boundaries to both define and protect 'Western' values of freedom, democracy and the free market, the United States championed the cause of anti-colonial nationalist movements as a value system that went right to the heart of American national identity (Dunn 2003, p. 86). Indeed, from the American Revolution to Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points of 1918 the liberal critique of colonialism elevated to a new level of public awareness and moral authority. Later, this would find its meaning in the global ascendancy of the United States and in particular, Franklin D. Roosevelt's Atlantic Charter of 1941 to 'respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live' (Roosevelt & Churchill 2012). The historian Kennan Ferguson notes that in the Cold War period the 'dominant political discourse of the United States positioned it as the custodian of identity, policing and locating allies and enemies, threats

to, and infections of the American body politics' (Ferguson 1996, p. 167, cited in Dunn 2003 p. 86). This was particularly so when, in 1960, John F. Kennedy succeeded Dwight D. Eisenhower, and began redefining the national purpose in terms of a 'long twilight struggle' against communism (Kennedy 1961). Building on the communist-centric vision of the Eisenhower administration, Kennedy shaped national policy around a 'liberal messianism' which entailed a strong focus and promotion of American liberalism (Dunn 2003, p. 97).[25]

As such, the United States perceived Africa as a place to challenge the Soviet Union and to seek to influence the newly independent states. At the time, however, not very much was known about the continent. There were fewer than two dozen Africanists of any kind in American universities and, until the 1960s, no serious intellectual or academic journal dedicated to African Studies had been published (Anderson 1991). Consequently, the body of American information on Africa was drawn from the rhetorical devices scripted by colonial modes of thinking (Dunn 2003, p. 97). Benedict Anderson (1991) notes for example that the authors of the popular textbook *World History,* published in 1950, wrote that 'the Dark Continent is an unexplored wilderness, with an unbearable climate, a Negro population largely barbarous, and deserts and jungles quite impenetrable…The people are dark of skin; many of them are even darker of mind' (Hayes et al. in Anderson 1991). Along the same lines, the *Negro Digest* (1951) narrated 'a continent of people confined in a prison of their own making from almost the dawn of time until 60 years ago…channels of contact had been open for hundreds of years. But Africans had no use for progress of any kind' (Anderson 1991). Along with this scholarship, the popular Tarzan novels by Edgar Rice Burroughs first published in 1921 were to fix the American cultural understanding of Africa as a 'jungle playground for masculine innocence' (Anderson 1991; see also Campbell & Power 2010).[26] Through the stories of missionaries, explorers, hunters, and colonial authorities often pictured (heroically) taming the jungle, Hollywood films reproduced the idea of Africa as being synonymous with 'savagery, primitivism, chaos, barbarianism, cannibalism, and unchecked nature' (Dunn: 2003,

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[25] For Kennedy, it was essential for the United States to identify with 'that force…as Lincoln did, as Wilson did, as Franklin Roosevelt did: If we become known as the friend of freedom, sustaining freedom, helping freedom, helping these people in the fight against poverty ignorance and disease, helping them build their lives…we can strengthen freedom, we can make it move, we can put the Communists on the defensive' (cited in Mak 2010, p. 73).

[26] His twenty-six Tarzan novels sold 30-million copies, and spawned sixteen movies and 10-million comic books. Burroughs had never been to Africa and he had no intention of travelling there (as cited in Anderson 1991).

p. 87). Similar to the rhetoric of the colonial predecessors, Africa was again constructed as both a primitive and dangerous land that time forgot. It was an ignorance, however, which was to lose its innocence in the aftermath of World War II, as the imagery of the dark continent was employed within the framing narrative of Cold War competition. Here, the dangerous 'blank' that was Africa was constructed as fertile soil for Soviet penetration which therefore had to be protected and defended in the name of American liberalism and its policy of containment.

American views of Soviet aims in the developing world were well established in George Kennan's (1946) infamous 'Long Telegram' from Moscow. As American Chargé d'Affaires, Kennan asserted that, 'Toward colonial areas and backwards or dependent peoples, Soviet policy, even on official plane, will be directed toward weakening of power and influence and contacts of advanced Western nations, on theory that insofar as this policy is successful, there will be created a vacuum which will favour Communist-Soviet penetration' (Kennan 1946 [1993], p. 24 as cited in Dunn 2003, p. 86-87). It was no secret that Africa's liberation movements were already deeply influenced by ideological propositions of Leninist philosophy. Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* painted colonialism as a Western-controlled system that rapaciously exploited the developing world for raw materials and monopolistic markets. Its language of revolution gained further currency in the framing of Soviet assistance towards anti colonial movements as part of the world 'anti-imperialist struggle', which was waged by the 'Socialist community', rather than the Moscow-Washington confrontation. Seen as an 'economic and cultural' offensive by the Soviet Union, American officials were to deem 'Africa' as susceptible to communist conquest. This apprehension was further compounded by the emergence of the non-aligned movement marked by the Bandung Conference in 1955. Secretary Dulles found non-alignment to be 'an immoral and short-sighted conception,' and went on to label Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser's neutralism both 'immoral and intolerable' (Mak 2010, p. 64). For while American support for African nationalism was framed with the idea of a 'planetary emancipation from European colonialism, and therefore a part of world historical Progress', it certainly did not anticipate any divergence from the universal path (Anderson 1991). The fiery nationalist and anti-imperialist rhetoric of many nationalist leaders who, in pursuit of their nation's interest declared their policies as neither East nor West, was easily equated with being communist, especially if they dealt with Moscow or Peking, or placed restrictions on American capital's access to local resources.

As such, America read 'Africa' through the existing discursive narratives of an inherent backwardness that would render the continent as a place that had not yet 'arrived'. Independence was constructed as being in need of outside help. The discourse of Cold War competition made it of paramount importance that such 'outside help' did not come from the Soviet Union. Thus, contained within the Cold War anxieties of the time, the dominant view was that Africans (especially those under the leadership of radical nationalists determined to assert their sovereignty) were incapable of ruling themselves. Once this notion was disseminated and internalised, African sovereignty and independence became conditional. To be recognised at independence meant having friendly relations with the United States and its allies. The Cold War, as played out in Africa, thus exposed the contradictions between the rhetoric and practice of American foreign policy, especially as it related to Washington's avowed anti-colonial stance. Indeed, officials such as Dulles argued that the United States needed 'allies and collective security…our purpose is to make these relations more effective and less costly' (Mak 2010, p. 69). Consequently, the Eisenhower administration looked to Europe to accomplish these goals. This continued in the Kennedy administration. Before Kennedy stepped into office, a pre-presidential report published in 1960 cautioned that the United States would be 'doing its European friends an injustice and itself and Africans a disservice if they tried to make political capital out of British and French difficulties' (Mak 2010, p. 69). United States policy thus permitted the establishment of the former colonial powers as the policemen of Africa, keeping watch over nationalist behaviour in the name of containment. Although the former colonial powers had accepted the inevitability of decolonisation, they were determined to maintain their hegemonic positions within the post-colonial order; specifically, their economic interests. Thus, where America had once been solicitous towards Africa's anti-colonial movements, it now offered the newly emerging states a simple policy option – a 'necessary choice' – between the two politico-military and socio-economic camps which, in turn, served the ongoing agendas of the former colonial powers (Grovogui 2001, p. 181).

In this context, the US and its allies constructed themselves as both authors of and authorities over African identity. Here, sovereignty and independence were defined within a context that implied a continued submissive relationship to external Western powers (Dunn 2003, p. 90). Any foreign policy on the part of African states that was not aligned to Western interests implied a false independence and, as such, sovereignty was no longer an acceptable

legal norm to protect against intervention. In the ensuing period, Cold War conflicts and manifest neo-colonial interference played its role in the overthrow (and assassination) of democratically elected but 'disagreeable' leaders. These included Cameroon's Felix Moumie, poisoned in 1961; Patrice Lumumba of the DRC, assassinated in 1961; Sylvanius Olympia, assassinated in 1963; Mehdi Ben Barka, kidnapped in 1965; Eduardo Mondlane, assassinated in 1969); Kwame Nkrumah, overthrown in 1972; Amilcar Cabral, assassinated in 1973; and Thomas Sankara, assassinated in 1987. These coups were executed by multinational alliances that included locals, yet as Grovogui (2012, p. 123) rightly contends, 'the mechanism of implementation and structures of legitimation were all commodities of global politics way before independence.' The assassination of Lumumba alone was to trigger an era of Western-backed military coups and rule and after which Africa became a theatre of global contests, with African leaders entering into Cold War alliances as a means to secure their survival. These neo-colonial events would not have taken place without the assent of segments of postcolonial elites. Indeed, those called tyrants, autocrats and dictators today were enabled in their actions by alliances with external powers (states) or forces (non-state actors). The likes of Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire), Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor (Liberia), Siad Barre (Somalia), Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire) and many others who set the stage for some of the worst crises seen on the continent were all Cold War allies of the West, shedding light to the extent postcolonial elites were enabled, burdened or constrained by regulatory and constitutive dimensions of Cold War politics, its institutions and regimes of legitimacy (Grovogui 2012).

The loss of this group of leaders 50 years ago, who all knew each other and had a common political project based on national dignity, crippled their respective countries and the African continent. More than anything, it brought to a halt the national projects upon which postcolonial states were constituted. Instead, states turned their prior focus on nation-building and economic development for the purposes of socio-economic transformation into that of regime survival. Almost without exception, African governments invoked the state and national interest to evade questions of legitimacy and accountability. Caught in global relationships of hegemony, the newly independent states found themselves confronted by a network of non-state actors who could muster the resources, external financial support and, therefore, sufficient material and organisational structures to mount counter-hegemonic 'national projects'. The failure to open up democratic space in the independence era was to leave many hopeful players disgruntled and thus open to the possibility of harnessing their

legitimate grievances through alternative platforms. In this space, rival superpowers took turns in absolving allied states of their responsibility for violence by lending legitimacy for violence under competing ideological schemes' (Grovogui 2010, p. 181). As Grovogui (2010, p. 182) also notes that this period established the context of permissiveness and licentiousness with which violence was brought to the fore for political ends. In so being, the Cold War stripped postcolonial states of the capacity to envisage an alternative order. It not only disfigured the liberation and democratic discourse, but it also turned the fledgling independent states into pawns, and the continent into a chessboard, of proxy wars. The consequences were devastating. Shivjii (2003) notes how for example, 'today's failed states were once upon a time the darling or demons – depending on the point of view you take – of global hegemonic powers.' Contextualised in this way, the African experience brings to the fore the myth of independence, as external intervention engineered to suit the Cold War powers and its allies continues on the continent, albeit in different forms. It challenges the deeply held assumptions of a break between the colonial and postcolonial periods, showing instead the dynamics of continuity and change in the politics of the African continent.

5.6. Conclusions

This chapter sought to further interrogate the question of decolonisation and political liberation as a process of negotiation between the departing colonial power and the successor postcolonial states. As the first part of this chapter sought to show, the narrative of independence was not simply a matter of transition from one regime to another, one accorded through the benevolence of the empire to its former colonies. Rather, it served as an opportunity to translate intricate forms of colonial relations into neo-colonial relations. Empire, one could argue, was a form of identity, as well as a source of wealth of which Europe was not ready to let go. In the face of competing interests arising through the bipolar struggle of the Cold War, they sought to maintain their hegemonic position in the global capitalist order and, in so doing, protect their economic and political interests. The politics of 'our man', a trusted official over their affairs, was assumed as a means by which to do so. Herein lays the foundations of a post-colonial order formed of the continuing interests of the departing colonial powers. With it came the transfer of liberal constitutions which, being removed from the

imaginaries of life, politics and society of domestic constituents, reproduced the very essence of the colonial state in Africa. While nationalist leaders were under no illusions about the dangers this could present, their focus was, first and foremost, on the attainment of the 'political kingdom' unto which the rest would be added thereafter. The problem, however, was that this 'after' did not come, as the arrival of the Cold War in Africa set off a renewed struggle over the state, as a result of which a more authoritarian regime of rule would be justified as a means rather than an end towards survival.

Indeed, the confluence of these factors unleashed one of the most violent periods in postcolonial history as the struggle for influence transformed the continent into a site for hot conflicts between the East and the West. Worse still, it disfigured the dreams of democracy and shattered the ideals of independence as Africa's leaders struggled to hold onto power, or created autocratic means by which to do so. The inauguration of the one party state is one example of the result of a geopolitical climate that justified the transformation of the change as a period of continuity. The state, a symbol of nothing else but this, was ordained as the instrument of development and the organiser of society, with a constitution that once again bore no resemblance to the people it claimed to represent. Illegitimate in the eyes of the people, in the eyes of opposition leaders and indeed in the eyes of the African leaders who had dared dream of an alternative moral order, the ideals of a more just future lay shattered in the reproduction of the colonial state in the postcolonial moment. The assassination of the Congo's first democratically elected president was just the beginning of a succession of betrayals which many have deemed the continent's 'original sin'. That is, the clash of ambitions which tore the enormous success of the nationalism movement apart. Perhaps none more apparent than in the complete collapse of the affiliative and collaborative mechanisms that had brought creative writers, revolutionary theoreticians, and nationalist politicians together in a marriage of convenience.

The value of recovering this moment in history is that it brings us back to the question of the state and the narratives of failure that accompany it. This is because we see in this moment, the construction of the state in Africa as the product of a negotiated settlement; one in which the departing colonial powers sought to ensure their continued stake at the moment of independence. This is missing from IR in the fact that it assumes the state is a methodological given, the failure of which is then described as an aftereffect of the fact rather

than the fact itself. Yet here we find that, contrary to popular opinion, the departing colonial powers bestowed upon the successor postcolonial states a certain institutional coherence reflected by constitutional orders that purposefully aspired to domestic legitimate and international credibility; or that the postcolonial state had the aptitude and capacity to maintain a secure environment, the state at independence was by all intents and purposes, a failed state (see also Grovogui 2010, p. 177). This would suggest that the state crisis emerges from the fact of its reproduction in the postcolonial moment, rather than its 'weakening' thereafter. More so, it highlights the importance of context, for it is here that we also see the machinations of Cold War politics and the real danger facing nationalist leaders at independence. When Nyerere was asked what his greatest achievement was ten years after the Arusha Declaration, he answered (perhaps with a deep sigh of relief), 'The fact that we have survived'. The very processes of humanising the politics of transition in Africa allows us to open up the state to a moment in history through which independence was contested by various actors and players operating at different levels. What emerges from this is a more nuanced understanding of the historical factors underpinning the crisis of the state in Africa and the many ways in which these continue to play out today. In the next chapter, this study builds on this theme as it explores the crisis of the state as a renewed point of entry for intervention in the age of the neoliberal assault on the state in Africa.

CHAPTER SIX

THE AFRICAN STATE AND THE END OF DREAMS

'When suffering knocks at your door and you say there is no seat for him, he tells you not to worry because he has brought his own stool.'

– Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* (1964)

Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, this study sought to interrogate the moment of independence in the context in which it emerged. Contrary to the simple narratives of a mere transfer of power from one regime to another, independence was a deeply contested concept through which a renewed struggle for the state was to emerge at the local, national and international levels. In this chapter, the study takes the notion of crisis further, as it brings to the fore the role played by other players, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Often removed from the purview of IR for the respect of the 'sovereignty' of the state as a principle, this chapter re-narrates the immediate context of the present crisis in the neoliberal assault on African nationalism.

6.1. Introduction

In one of the most passionate speeches delivered at the 1987 summit of the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union), Thomas Sankara, former leader of Burkina Faso, issued a passionate plea to African leaders to reconsider their position with regards to debt and dependency to the IFIs of the World Bank and the IMF. African states had entered a period of global economic recession as the crisis had stripped even the most well-meaning of African leaders of the capacity to deliver on their promises. Facing socio-economic and political unrest at home, and an increasingly destabilising period of international insecurity in the context of the Cold War, the newly independent African governments had begun to rapidly accumulate huge amounts of debt from rich countries and IFIs. As the Cold War intensified, these loans were increasingly used as tool for securing political support from key countries, even governments that were patently corrupt and would inevitably default on repayment, such as Mobutu's in the DRC, were readily provided with billions of dollars in credit. The conditions in place and the constraints placed within the limits of orders given by the institutions and countries to which they were indebted, would lead Sankara (1987) to describe debt as nothing short of neocolonialism, 'a cleverly managed reconquest of Africa' and to which 'each one' becomes a 'financial slave'. He appealed for a United Front Against Debt, without which, he declared, he would not attend another meeting, particularly if Burkina Faso were alone in resisting its debt obligations. A few months later, Sankara was murdered in a coup backed by France and led by his long-time friend and colleague, the former president of Burkina Faso, thus setting the stage for a renewed period of political struggle centred on the reconstitution of the state in Africa.

The story of the Cold War in Africa has often been confined within the frame of the post-Cold War introduction of multi-party democracy in Africa and its variant strains of elections and civic rights. Indeed, facing a less favourable international climate as the superpowers lost the political incentive to support repressive regimes, the demands of civil opposition spearheaded by a coalition of professional unions, students, and opposition leaders, were for the transformation of the African state or, as it became known, 'Africa's Second Independence'. Between March 1990 and August 1991, the rulers of Gabon, Congo, Mali, Togo, Niger and Zaire faced the demands of pro-democracy forces and convened national conferences. During this same period, opposition groups in the Central African Republic

(CAR), Cameroon, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and later Chad mobilised campaigns to press demands for national conferences. The result was that most African states underwent tremendous political transformation kneading the death knell of the one-party state and the emergence of multi-party politics, a free press, independent unions and a multitude of civic organisations on the continent. During this same period, opposition groups in the Central African Republic (CAR), Cameroon, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and later Chad mobilised campaigns to press demands for national conferences. As the story goes, Africa was up swept up in transformations of a globally acclaimed democratic revolution that provoked metaphors of 'sweeping' and 'dramatic' change following the 'waves of reforms' as the demise of the one-party state gave way to the emergence of multi-party politics and elections on the continent (Villalon, 1998).

This chapter returns to this period of critical juncture as it seeks to bring to the fore the politics of a transition that, for some, spelled the death knell of sovereignty and self-determination in Africa, and for others, the triumph of Western democracy and the 'end of history'. Bringing together two stories offering a different perspective on the African state, it seeks to bring to the fore a people's own conversation of a more just and inclusive political order. For IR, this has several implications. The first, is that it challenges the constraints of a scholarship and the assumption of the state as a methodological given. Taking sovereignty as the basis of a moral order centred on a community of states removes from the purview of the discipline the extent to which it has given power numerous places to hide. At the same, it contends with a narrative of failure that has failed to locate and historicise the processes of a people's struggle for democracy in light of the experience of African states. The problem is that democratisation is analysed as a global movement which is what the hegemonic third wave of liberal democracy truly is and into which African experiments are expected to fit. As a result, too little attention has been paid to the specific historical challenges that democracy and democratisation face in Africa and the roles they are expected to play. As such, this chapter grounds its discussion in the critical tradition of African political thought and engages with the vibrancy of an intellectual community who identifies with, and remains grounded in, the broad landscape of Africa's liberation and democracy movements. It suggests that the discipline should pay more attention to these discussions and concludes with an offering of what this may look like.

6.2. Rebuilding the State in Africa

The ideas and imaginaries of national independence ushered in a period of great optimism and confidence in a future where self-determination pointed to the possibilities of socio-political and economic transformation. Here, postcolonial emancipation and African dignity, the cornerstone of the dreams of an alternative moral order, symbolised what was considered to be a new dawn in the struggle for African liberation. Emerging from a colonial past that began with slavery in 1650 and continued under colonial rule after the Berlin Conference of 1884, political independence represented the opportunity to lay a new foundation that was to be informed by a distinct African personality. As was proudly declared by Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah at the UN General Assembly on 23 September 1960 (cited in Africa Renewal, 2010), Africa was on the cusp of a new dawn:

'*For years, Africa has been the footstool of colonialism and imperialism, exploitation and degradation. From the north to the south, from the east to the west, her sons languished in the chains of slavery and humiliation, and Africa's exploiters and self-appointed controllers of her destiny strode across our land with incredible inhumanity without mercy, without shame, and without honour. Those days are gone and gone forever, and now I, an African, stand before this august Assembly of the United Nations and speak with a voice of peace and freedom, proclaiming to the world the dawn of a new era…*'

Armed with great expectations for a new era, nationalists turned their immediate attention to improving the social and material conditions of their countries. This was no easy task given that colonialism was never a system designed in the interests of the people. With colonists having left behind vast unmet needs in education, health and other forms of social infrastructure, nationalist leaders reiterated their commitment to defeating the unholy trinity of 'poverty, ignorance and disease'.[27] Ignorance would be combatted by building new educational

[27] For instance, in a speech titled 'The Future of Kenya' delivered on 3 October 1963, Kenya's then Minister of Justice Tom Mboya argued, 'We are quite convinced that if independence is going to mean anything, it must bring with it tangible, material improvement for all our people. It must bring with it the removal gradually, and we hope speedily, of poverty and the improvement in the health and educational services throughout the country.' (Mboya 1964, p 6-12)

institutions; poverty would be addressed through what was termed as African socialism; and disease would require heavy investments in health institutions as well as addressing the systemic problems of infrastructure, housing and inequality that made ordinary people vulnerable to disease. This was, then, a promise that was social in nature but political in vision in that only it could afford the realisation of the true fruits of *uhuru*.

As African leaders set themselves the twin goals of nation building and state building, the state was ordained the instrument of choice. This preference for state-led development was not new and was in fact centred on the emergence of the universal concept and idea of development (Olukoshi 2015). In the wake of World War II and in the aftermath of the collapse of the neoliberal framework in the Great Depression, a period of rethinking the framework of economic management and of responding to the rising agitation of peoples both in the metropolitan and in the colonies for better welfare took root. The response was a Keynesian plan that championed the necessity of an interventionist state system which would drive a dynamic of reflation in a way that would simultaneously solve the perennial problem of capitalism and its vulnerability to boom-and-bust cycles. Moving away from a discourse on how to secure the wealth of nations, the key question centred on how to secure the development of nations and what kind of economic principles would be needed for this. Where, at the national level, the role of the state was positioned as key, in the international it was complemented by an attempt, for the first time, to set up systems of economic coordination that would go beyond the limited agency of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) – now WTO – to incorporate the coordination of exchange rates and the management of the payments to nations. A consequence of this was the establishment of the IMF and an international bank for reconstruction and development otherwise known as the World Bank (Olukoshi 2015). First focused on the reconstruction of Europe which was left devastated by war, its responsibilities soon shifted to the infrastructural needs of its members in Latin America, Africa and Asia. By the 1970s and 1980s, however, its role centred more closely on the twin issues of poverty eradication and social development.

Closer to home, African leaders had a general enthusiasm for technical solutions that was shared almost globally.[28] Technical assistance, the transfer of specialised knowledge and

[28] For example, Paul Hoffman, the former administrator of the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe and who headed the United Nations Special Fund for development as of 1958, reportedly

financial aid were seen as the appropriate means to effect global equality within less than a lifetime (Speich 2009). This was marked by a new era in the development discourse following Harry Truman's announcement of the 'Fair Deal' for the 'underdeveloped world' (Truman 1949). Positing itself in opposition to, and implied acceptance of the notion of, underdeveloped, development discourses were distinctly embedded and framed in a directional teleology and a sense of progress whose natural culmination was Western capitalist society (White 2003). One could say that in this way, nationalist leaders appropriated development and modernisation theories as economic growth and the formation of liberal, pluralist political institutions and, in so doing, championed culture as the key to the transition from the early stage of tradition (pre-modern, pre-capitalist, undeveloped, backward, agricultural, rural, tribal, poor) to the more advance stage of modernity (capitalist, industrial, urban, rational, secular, wealthy and prosperous) (Gruffyd-Jones 2005). However, this appropriation can be understood as having been a complementary source of knowledge to be combined with a Pan-African ideology and which subsequently became known as African Socialism. At the same time, and in the spirit of Bandung, development was conceived of as a tool to disrupt the colonial project and its persistent legacies of oppression and domination. According to the late development economist Thandika Mkandawire (2011, p. 10), in their emancipatory project for political and social justice, nationalists constructed notions of development as 'catching up', 'emancipation' and a 'right'.

Thus, buoyed by the enthusiasm and optimism of the times, Africa's intelligentsia and ruling classes drew up collaborative economic plans fashioned on the economic success of the North (Speich 2009; Cheru 2010, p. 198). Guided by luminaries such as economist Sir Arthur Lewis, the newly independent states borrowed heavily in order to kickstart their economies and pave the way for industrialisation. This was subject to the assumptions of trickle-down economics, where international market forces would allow for growth to reach the poorest of the poor and as economies grew, countries would no doubt pay their loans without much difficulty (Cheru 2010, p. 198). In the early years of independence, African states boomed with great confidence as massive improvements to infrastructure ensued, particularly in the areas of health, education, and communication. New universities, agricultural research centres, national transport networks and local government structures were established to facilitate

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motivated his staff by saying, 'If we do our jobs well, we will be out of business in twenty-five years' (as cited in Speich 2009).

national developmental projects, with resources often coming from the former colonial powers. Investment was largely public because of the lack of a globally competitive domestic private sector. All in all, in the first decade-and-a-half of independence (1960-1975), African economies registered impressive growth rates given initial conditions at the time of independence (Cheri 2010, p. 199). As the state expanded its role, so too did the authority of nationalist leaders to command the space for political competition. Stating that the one-party state represented the most effective means of realising the developmental aims of states, nationalist leaders shut down avenues of political pluralism, branding this a luxury that new states could not afford. In the process, nationalist leaders not only sowed the seeds of conflict and division that would later return to haunt them, but they also effectively turned themselves into managers of processes and the 'people' into recipients of development, rather than active agents of the same. Indeed, by the very concept of state-led development, the new controllers of the state machinery saw their role as the 'sole developer' and 'sole unifier' of society and the people as an obstacle to 'development'.

By the end of the 1970s, however, many African states found themselves in deep economic crisis, regardless of the nature of their economic policies or ideological orientations (Shivjii 2003; see also Olukoshi 1996, p. 16). Two oil price hikes by OPEC sent global markets spiralling, shaking the commodity markets on which African countries were heavily dependent. The end of the commodity boom spelled disaster for the policies of 'industrialisation by invitation' and the preference for the expansion of export-led agriculture fashioned within the lines of the colonial economy. The consequences were nothing short of devastating, robbing even the most well-meaning nationalist leaders of the capacity to deliver on the promises of nation building and development. The already worsening situation was further exacerbated by drought, crippling debt repayments and the mismanagement of already bloated and weak bureaucracies, triggering the collapse of the postcolonial framework of accumulation as systemic crisis begun to appear (Ki-zerbo 1999, p. 304). Cracks in already fragile states began to open and elite pacts crumbled as ruling coalitions that had once been solicitous of all turned repressive when political consensus and economic prosperity became difficult to deliver. As Adebayo Olukoshi (1996, p. 10) puts it, deep-seated domestic economic problems in the context of a recessionary international economic environment meant that the post-colonial 'social contract' and the various alliances and networks built around it became increasingly unsustainable. As the economic crisis worsened, so too did the capacity of the state to provide

welfare services to the populace and patronage to the political and economic elite. Battered by economic decline, the legitimacy of the state was called into question, and with it the model of nation building upon which it was built. Thus, overwhelmed by unsustainable debts, facing negative trends in primary commodity markets and shunned by much of the international capital, the neo-patrimonial state turned to Western governments and international creditors in the effort to remain afloat.

6.3. Rolling Back the State in Africa

The entry by IFIs into Africa was underlined by a significant shift in the international discourse at the time. Fashioned within the Washington Consensus that was taking shape, and supported by the conservative Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan regimes, neoliberalism touted the supremacy of the market over the Keynesian preference for the state and the return of neoclassical economics to intellectual hegemony. Here, it was argued, economies were in crisis because of the impediments to the free operation of the market. These impediments were primed as the result of the overinflated interventionist state and its expansionary and redistributive policies which served to deform market data and signals. The solution, according to the neoliberal narrative, 'would be the withdrawal of the state from the economy and the reinstatement of the unhindered operation of the market' (Bolba 2010, p 11). At its core was the idea of fiscal discipline – a slimming down of public activities, as it were – as a means of restoring balance and order to budgets and, therefore, a corrective to the waywardness of Keynesian deficits and expansionary budgets. In theory, its assumptions held that the now-limited expenditure could be redirected to more 'profitable' uses which would not only serve to cover its costs, but also support other areas such as private entrepreneurship as opposed to paying for public services. Suffice to say, the neoliberal ideas of the Washington Consensus fed into the outlook and practice of the leading IFIs which, in turn, had direct implications for developing countries as the main clients of the Bretton Woods institutions.

From this perspective, the responsibility for the crisis in Africa was placed squarely at the feet of the state and its supposed excessive demands on the economy. Here, the World Bank asserted that the state as a productive structure had 'failed' in Africa and instead, an economic organisation governed by the free play of market forces was to be the most efficient

way of securing the optimal allocation of resources. In keeping with the prescriptive policy of a neoliberal mantra, it insisted that the 'rolling back' of the state was required as a measure of 'technical necessity' and therefore, as the means by which to create the conditions for economic growth. These ideas were formed from the view that rapid privatisation would yield a flood of new private capital investment and would serve therefore as a panacea for Africa's economic stagnation (Ferguson 2006, p. 71). The most influential text in launching this interpretation was the World Bank's report of 1981 commonly known as the Berg report. Its assessment of the causes of the African crisis was that they were primarily 'internal' and a consequence of the 'bad' policies of African governments due to their propensity towards excessive state intervention (World Bank 1981). Overvalued national currencies, neglect of peasant agriculture, heavily protected manufacturing industries and excessive state intervention were singled out as the 'bad' policies most responsible for the crisis of economies (World Bank 1981). Negating the fact that these were very much part of a global discourse on the role of the state and that government policy was guided from the North, the report concluded that the state in Africa had overstretched itself becoming despotic, corrupt and overbearing in the process.[29] The solution, it argued, lay in dismantling state power in order to undermine the legitimacy of the social coalitions that controlled the state and thus, unleash the power societal forces to take advantage of market opportunities.

At first hand, the 'internal' and 'state minimalist' diagnosis of the World Bank and new political economy did not go unchallenged (Ferguson 2006, p. 80). The greatest challenge came from African governments themselves. In a document published the same year as the Berg report, but signed in 1980 at a meeting in Lagos, the heads of state of the OAU traced the crisis to a series of external shocks as opposed to the internal failure of African governments (Osaghae 2005, p. 9). These included deteriorating terms of trade for primary products, growing protectionism of wealthy countries, soaring interest rates and growing debt service management. Thus, the Lagos Plan of Action (1980), as it came to be called, stated that the resolution of the crisis in Africa lay in a greater reliance not on world market mechanisms, but on the capacity of African states to mobilise national resources and foster greater mutual

[29] Its ideas converged with those of a burgeoning literature on the 'new' political economy of African development and rent-seeking/neo-patrimonial logic of African states. The texts of Robert Bates (1981) on agriculture in tropical Africa and of Lipton (1984) on the urban bias in Africa politics put forward the view that state officials in newly independent African countries used the powerful instruments of economic control that they had inherited from colonial regimes to benefit urban elites and, first and foremost, themselves.

economic integration and cooperation. In its emphasis of collective self-reliance through the eventual creation of a continental common market, the plan reflected the influence of dependency theory, as well as the sense of empowerment that African states derived from the near completion of the continent's formal decolonisation. The proponents of the Lagos Plan argued that the state had already made significant gains at independence and considering these, the programmes of adjustment presented a major disjuncture between reality and dogma. More importantly, the Plan's proposals settled further into the question of the economic emancipation agenda – a clear acknowledgement of the structural dependency of African economies to a global colonial order and, subsequently, its unfinished business of full and complete decolonisation beyond the mere attainment of political independence.

This response was significant for two reasons. On the one hand, it signalled the revival of a Pan-African ambition to provide an economic blueprint for Africa's socio-economic and political development, primarily centred on the concept of African unity and state-led development and welfare systems. On the other, it challenged the rather narrow and narrowing parameters of a global discourse that served to centre the idea of the crisis on the corruption of weakening institutions and the unscrupulousness of African leaders. This was of course, part of a global narrative that African regimes had proven incapable of handling the reigns of economic management and that it was therefore up to the Bank – especially in a time of crisis – to straighten out the mess that was the 'African house'. Underpinned by a 'puritan tone of austerity' (Ferguson 2006, p. 77), IFIs presented themselves within a non-moral order, as a mere technique to 'correct' the management of states. The technical justifications of SAPs implied an authority on the part of international creditor agencies as reliable sources of knowledge backed up by the science and objectivity of economic theories (Olukoshi 1996, p. 19; see also Ferguson 2006, p. 77-80). What was in effect a proposal for a tutelary government would then see the Bretton Woods institutions together with public and private lenders take over the priority policy agenda of African states through a range of direct interventions in domestic economic management. These included credit controls, implementing privatisations, laying down consumption requirements, determining import policies, agricultural programmes and cutting costs – and in some cases, even direct control of the treasury (Olukoshi 1996, p. 19; see also Ferguson 2006, p. 77-80). In other words, this was a rolling back of the state as part of its mission to 'save it'. Ironically, however, it required a reliance on the state in order to ensure the execution of its policies (Dunn 2003, p. 60). Thus, the very reasons given for the

vilification of the state as being repressive and over-reaching would in fact become an asset in its capacity to implement and ensure the delivery of the 'medicine' of structural adjustment (Ferguson 2006, p. 77-80).

It was this form of intervention into the governance of the state – one that placed the direction of policy outside the state to the tutelage of foreign institutions – that was to become the subject of heated debates and discussions surrounding neo-colonialism and the 'recolonisation' of Africa. Most memorable of these was perhaps the speech by Thomas Sankara (1987) introduced at the beginning of this chapter which, in addressing the question of debt and the role played by the IFIs at the OAU in July 1987, traced the roots of debt from the standpoint of its colonial origins:

'*We think that debt has to be seen from the standpoint of its origins. Debt's origins come from colonialism's origins. Those who lend us money are those who had colonised us before. They are those who used to manage our states and economies. Colonisers are those who indebted Africa through their brothers and cousins who were the lenders. We had no connections with this debt. Therefore, we cannot pay for it. Debt is neo-colonialism, in which colonisers transformed themselves into "technical assistants". We should better say "technical assassins". They present us with financing, with financial backers. As if someone's back could create development. We have been advised to go to these lenders. We have been propositioned with nice financial set-ups. We have been indebted for fifty, sixty years and even more. That means we have been led to compromise our people for fifty years and more. Under its current form, that is imperialism controlled, debt is a cleverly managed re-conquest of Africa, aiming at subjugating its growth and development through foreign rules. Thus, each one of us becomes the financial slave, which is to say a true slave, of those who had been treacherous enough to put money in our countries with obligations for us to repay. We are told to repay, but it is not a moral issue. It is not about this so-called honour of repaying or not…Debt cannot be repaid, first because if we don't repay, lenders will not die. That is for sure. But if we repay, we are going to die. That is also for sure.*'

Sankara's appeal to African leaders was one of a collective rejection of the conditions of debt repayments. As a living and breathing example of this rejection and having accultured

his own endogenous methods of adjustment or self-centered development, Sankara made the call for home-grown ideas and solutions to African problems, one of these being a United Front Against Debt.

Despite numerous attempts to narrate the predicament of African states within international forums, these efforts were met with little success (Osaghae 2005, p. 9). The nature of the crisis had made even the most well-meaning of African nationalists vulnerable to the prescriptions of SAPs in return for much-needed economic assistance. As such, many an African government opened itself up to neoliberal macro-economic reforms, which were rolled out throughout the continent. IFIs curbed government involvement in the economy, ending subsidies, price controls and tariffs; eroding health and educational services; and destroying social safety nets. Mandated currency devaluations resulted in spiralling inflation and shortages of imported goods. To make things worse, the promise of an economic boom sponsored by a neoliberal mantra of free market liberalisation never came. Instead, economic growth declined from over three percent in 1985-90 to less than half of this figure for 1991-5. Under SAPs, Africa's debt burden saw a major jump rather than a reduction (Ismi 2004). For example, Ismi (2004) notes that Africa's external debt increased by more than 500 percent since 1980 to $333 billion in 2004 and, in the process, over $229 billion in debt payments have been transferred to the West since 1980 (Ismi 2004). This amounted to four times the region's 1980 debt. The World Bank itself found the results disappointing, with a 1992 study finding that, 'World Bank adjustment lending has not significantly affected economic growth and has contributed to a statistically significant drop in investment ratio' (cited in Olamosu & Wynne 2015). In a study covering 220 reform programmes sponsored by the World Bank, more than a third were judged to have failed by the World Bank's own Operations and Evaluation Department (Olamosu & Wynne 2015). Rather than eradicate the crisis, SAPs had simply become part and parcel of an existing economic crisis.

6.4. A People's Demand Versus a Neo-Liberal Demand

This renewed crisis created new complications, as it realigned social forces in the polity and in political governance on the continent (Olukoshi 2011, p. 9). On the one hand, SAPs

significantly incapacitated the state as an actor in national affairs. As the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa concluded:

'SAPs exacerbated the crisis of the state in Africa… The limited state capacity at their birth was weakened as the public sector and public bureaucracy became major targets for state budget cuts, often inspired by SAPs. The paradox of SAPs is that, while the state was expected to lead the process of economic reforms, stabilisation and transformation, its capacity was dismembered, and it became unable to pursue the reform measures effectively. SAPs frequently held back economic growth and social progress, negating the construction of developmental states' (cited in Olamosu & Wynne 2015).

The effects of 'downsising' the state made a bad situation worse, as a series of retrenchment measures fuelled brain-drain, facilitated the erosion of the domestic policy system, and deliberately delegitimised the state as actor in the political economy (Olukoshi 2011; 2004). At the same time, the sale and/or privatisation of public enterprises, considered important symbols of independence, epitomised the loss of ownership in which the African countries (and the dignity of their people) were put up for sale to the highest bidder. From the copper mines of Zambia to the railways in Burkina Faso, the 'symbolic robbery' of the ethos of national solidarity deepened a sense of alienation and social dislocation to which the centre was no longer a source of unity. Stipulated privatisations programmes resulted in widespread layoffs, rising unemployment, and an upsurge in crony capitalism. As already noted earlier, there was little the governments could do beyond exhorting the peasants to work harder. Social indicators like education, health, water and electricity began to decline. In sum, SAPs sapped whatever vitality there was in the fragile African economies (see Gibbon 1993; Mongula 1994; Mamdani 1994). Even the moderate social achievements of the nationalist period were swept away (Shivjii 2006).

The irony and sadness of the whole situation is that as austerity measures dispersed and fragmented society away from an affiliation with the state, the state responded heavy-handedly through a greater reliance on the forces of coercion in the name of national interest. This was because IFIs, in anticipating resistance to SAPs, insisted that economic stabilisation required that the state be insulated from its former constituencies and that it 'be willing to take firm action on internal problems (World Bank 1981, p. 123). The call for 'firm action' gave license

to repression as a means from which to enforce its measures in a move that Onimode (1992, p. 67) was to call 'repressive dissent management'. In other words, repression was necessary for silencing labour unions and students in the context of retrenchments within the civil service and parastatals, and to suppress urban unrest (Branch & Mampilly 2015, p. 47). As Claude Ake (1989) was to comment at the time, 'there was no way of implementing SAPs without it' (p. 62). The state's use of repression to suppress opposition and unrest in the name of structural adjustment was nothing short of a violation of the social pact that developmental states had made with their populations. As an instrument of outside forces and/or foreign powers not yet visible to the general public, it infused a deep sense of disillusionment and disenchantment with the state and those in power. After all, liberation had been fought on the same platform; only this time, it was completely abandoned. This repression and alienation became the background and context of political novels of the 1960s and 1970s, such as *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o; *Man of the People* by Chinua Achebe; and Wole Soyinka's *Season of Anomy*, all of which have unflattering depictions of politicians and the ruling elite and show the alienating effects of crude power. This alienation, in turn, became the context for a renewed struggle for the state in Africa, only this time against the nationalist regimes of the post-independence era.

By the end of the 1980s, the crippling effects of structural economic crisis and their impact on declining living standards and government malfeasance was give way to 'IMF riots' and in some cases, the downfall of African governments (Bratton 1992, p. 420). For example, Zambia witnessed violent riots in December 1986, when the price of maize meal was doubled as a result of subsidies under IMF-sponsored SAPs. Benin's capital, Cotonou, was rocked by public sector strikes all through 1989, as civil servants protested accumulated arrears in salaries (Bratton 1992, p. 421). Moreover, university campuses became the scene of periodic outbreaks of dissent in many African countries. In this space, a growing movement of oppositionists, professionals, students, the press and trade unions took to the streets in protest against declining living standards and government malfeasance. Couched in the language of reform, theirs was a vow to 'unshackle' and reform the state. The protests usually begun with corporate demands by interest groups seeking to improve material conditions within their own sector of the urban economy (Bratton 1992, p. 420). At the same time, troubles broke out over the issue of elite corruption and the use of the state's emergency powers to quell dissent. As civil unrest gathered momentum in the form of strikes, boycotts, demonstrations and marches, it became

an outlet for a coalition of diverse interests as the corrosive effects of inflation on living standards became a matter of national concern. In particular, the cutbacks in social and welfare services oversaw the adoption by various groups of multiple livelihood strategies, accelerated informalisation and deepened fragmentation and inequality (Olukoshi 1996; 2004; 2011). Thus, as a movement of solidarity – a solidarity with the poor, the oppressed, the discriminated and the disadvantaged – popular protest came to be formed around the demand 'for a better standard of living, greater civil liberties, and the promise of a better life for their children' (Bratton 1992, p. 420).

The growth of these movements coincided with a confluence of external factors which combined to make the popular domestic quest for the opening of political space in Africa possible. The first was centred on events in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that resulted in the collapse of the monopoly of power of the ruling Communist parties under the weight of sustained popular pressure (Bratton 1992, p. 420). The second was that, by the end of the 1980s and with the rise to power of Mikhail Gorbachev, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the Cold War ended abruptly, ushering in a new phase of international relations (Olukoshi 2011, p. 10). On the one hand, the realignment of forces on a global scale made it possible for various key powers in the international system, especially the so-called victorious powers, to begin to pressure their clients and allies in Africa towards a more democratic outcome. On the other hand, the end of the Cold War also meant that, almost overnight, many African regimes lost their clientele relationships with Cold War hegemons. Facing a less favourable international climate (as the superpowers lost the political incentive to support repressive regimes) and tumultuous domestic ones given the growing economic crisis, state authorities lost their capacity to accumulate and redistribute resources to clients, deeply exposing the fatal shortcomings within the very nature of the state. The end of the reflexive support for African states by key Cold War protagonists removed a huge barrier to the political transformation for the state, thus exposing them to the full force and fury of local opposition. Together, these processes and changing international relations coincided with a widespread movement towards liberal multi-party politics in many of the former Eastern bloc countries, bringing to the fore a new global call for democratisation and the death knell of oppressive regimes and unpopular policies.

Just as the movement for democratic change was gaining momentum, so too was a

neoliberal agenda premised on the ideas of 'democracy promotion' and 'good governance' (Mkandawire 2007; Shivjii 2003; Jones 2013; Abrahamsen 2014). Indeed, the momentous failure of SAPs and the backlash they provoked brought into serious question the foundations upon which they stood. In the publication of the World Bank's 1989 report 'Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth', the Bank categorically stated that, 'underlining the litany of Africa's development problems is a crisis of good governance' (World Bank1989). By 'governance', it meant the exercise of power to manage a nation's affairs. Here, the report stated that the 'post-independence development efforts failed', because 'the strategy was misconceived' (World Bank 1989, p. 3). The report stated that the strategy 'pinned too much hope on rapid state-led industrialisation' and, as a result, African governments were mistakenly encouraged to make 'a dash for "modernisation", copying, but not adapting, Western models' (World Bank 1989, p. 3). The problem was the fact that most post-independence African states were alien to the societies they were presumed to govern. What was lacking, the Bank argued, was the legitimacy necessary to the successful implementation of the neoliberal economic packages. As if repressive measures could ever have legitimacy, the solution of the IFIs was a new set of political conditions to be added to economic conditions: elections and multi-party systems as the frame for 'good governance'. This was, as Issa Shivjii (2003) argues, a new crusading mission in the name of 'good governance':

'If in SAPs imperial powers and the IFIs had flexed and applied their economic muscles, in the post-cold war "democracy: crusade, they aggressively and uncompromisingly applied their political muscles. Political conditionalities were added to economic conditionalities, while economic conditionalities were upgraded to include privatisation of not only parastatals but also services — water, electricity, communication, education, etc. Multi-party democracy, human rights, "good governance", "poverty reduction" became the buzz words of the discourse, now renamed, "policy dialogues".'

The irony was not lost, for underlying the pursuit of democracy and good governance was the fact that the Bank and its policies were undemocratic and unaccountable in nature. More so, that the SAPs prescribed were not the problem, but rather 'rampant corruption' and lack of personnel to properly implement its programmes. Once again, the blame was placed on the other foot, as the Bank absolved itself of being a contributing factor to the crisis in Africa.

The consequences of this reframing pf an ongoing politics of oppressive regimes and their legacies of unpopular politics cannot be underestimated. For as international donors made the question of political change central to the reform agenda, attention was placed on the role of elections as one of the most important variables towards this. Here, elections were thought to be an appropriate benchmark as they not only came to symbolise the end of the centralised authoritarian regimes, but they also led to leadership changes in many cases. In this climate, most African leaders, to varying degrees, indicated a willingness to accommodate changes as the price of continued international support. But herein lay the betrayal of a people's struggle as one formed of change as opposed to continuity as the willingness of African leaders to accept democratic change did not necessarily mean genuine democratic change. Even Zaire's Mobutu Sese-Seko found a place in the rhetoric of a new dawn designed to appease its funders in Washington. Renowned Congolese scholar Ernest Wamba dia Wamba recounted how, when the then American Secretary of State visited Mobutu to observe the progress of political reforms, Mobutu proudly asserted that Zaire had actually surpassed the United States in democratic reform because it had over 60 parties (Olukoshi 2011, p. 10). Mostly funded by Mobutu himself, the new political parties lacked a significant presence on the ground. The point being that yesterday's dictators became today's democratic darlings in response to which many African scholars rightly asked in whose name these processes were engineered and for what purpose. More so, the fragility of democracy in Africa as one managed by the dictates of foreign policies made in Washington would go on to prompt the question posed by Thandika Mkandawire (2010) as to whether African democracies were being engineered into '*Choiceless Democracies'*. Indeed, trapped in the unpopular neoliberal net that appears to be leading nowhere as far as economic growth and development are concerned, and carry large social costs, we must initiate a more serious discussion about the question of what is actually in crisis in Africa.

6.5. Agency in Tight Corners: Music as a Weapon

If, in the realm of politics and democratic governance, a people's quest for a more just and inclusive political order has been emptied out of all meaning, then in the arena of popular culture a people's dreams can remain alive to the possibilities of a future yet to come (see Chapter Two). Indeed, a musical genre blending a scathing anti-establishment rhetoric with

Yoruba traditional music and Western music forms, particularly jazz, came to symbolise and remains till today an expression of the frustrations and disillusionment of a society demanding justice and democracy. Created by Fela Kuti, the sonic repertoire, lyrics and imagery of the Afrobeat soundscape became a counter-cultural mode of life, providing a soundtrack of resistance that gave Nigerians hope during a dark era of military dictatorship. Whether Kuti was singing about rapacious corruption, the politics of suffering ('Shuffering and Smiling'), roadside rucus ('Roforofo fight'), or the crisis of cultural identity ('Gentleman'), he would narrate the harshness and the vibrancy of daily life in Nigeria, while simultaneously preaching a new form of freedom and expression. Kuti's music was as personal as it was political. This was borne out when, on 18 Februar 1977, some 1,000 soldiers of the Nigerian army raided Kalakuta Republic – a commune of residence, which he described as a space open to 'every African escaping persecution'. Razing it to the ground, the soldiers proceeded to brutally assault its inhabitants. One of those attacked was Fela's 77-year-old mother, a prominent nationalist and women's rights activist, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, whom soldiers threw out of a three-story window. A few months later, she died from the injuries she incurred. Following this incident, Kuti's critique of the establishment, its corruption and repression became even angrier. In the song 'Colonial Mentality' (1977), Kuti set the stage for his vitriolic criticism of African leaders by describing them as people still entrapped in colonial mentality. As he sang:

He be say you be colonial man
You look like a colonial man
You don be slave man before
You were once a slave
Them don release you now
They have now freed you
But you never release yourself
But you have not freed yourself
I say you fit never release yourself
I say you can't even free yourself of
Colo-mentality
Colonial mentality

Kuti's attack on an establishment gone rogue pulled all the punches of Frantz Fanon

who, only a decade earlier, had warned of a betrayal by a political class intent on assuming power where the colonial powers had left off. Thus, in this respect, Kuti deployed his music as a weapon to fight corruption, injustice and a dysfunctional government in Nigeria and Africa.

To be sure, his terrain of battle was not limited to the national container. Rather, Kuti drew on the connections that tied together men in political power with heads of big corporations and companies to reveal a system of neo-colonialism. In one of the artist's lengthiest and most overtly political songs I.T.T. (standing for International Thief Thief), Fela spared no insults in his attack on the greed and the avarice of a government in bed with corporate power. Yet the target of his protest was also specific. As Viliar summarises:

'International Thief Thief is a blatant attack on corrupt leaders, namely President Obasanjo and corporate business expert Mashood Abiola, then head of Nigerian branch of the infamously fraudulent communication company International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation (I.T.T), from which the title of the song is inspired. The I.T.T was one of the richest firms operating in Nigeria back in the day. Internationally it was involved and associated with many controversial political affairs; most notably it was linked to having financed the coup against Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973, which led to the worst dictatorship in the country.'

For Kuti, the deeds of I.T.T. were likened to a history of slavery and exploitation of African people and African lands for the benefit of corporate greed. As a result, his closing was one of a people who had had enough: 'we don tire to carry anymore of them shit'. Exacerbated by the level of betrayal, Kuti's music served to express a deep sense of disgust and disenchantment. In line with this, Olaniyan (2001, p. 77–78) observes that Kuti's focus was primarily targeted towards 'tyrannical leadership, political instability, flagrant disregard for rules, and entrenched nepotism as currency of official transactions. His exasperations seem to be not so much with the crises as with their seeming permanence, their normalisation'. Thus, in 'Authority Stealing', he urges Africans to rise and 'do something about this nonsense'. In 'Fear No Man', he calls for a people to have no fear in reclaiming their dignity, indeed their struggle. Channelling Nkrumah, Kuti addresses his audience directly as he states, 'Brothers and sisters, the father of Pan-Africanism Kwame Nkrumah says to all black people all over the world, the secret of life is to have no fear, we all have to understand that.'

The key to the struggle, according to Kuti, was to understand the roots of its condition. In his song, 'Why black man dey suffer today' (Kuti 1971), he rooted the African experience within the violence of its history and the subsequent erasure of culture. To paraphrase the repetition:

> *'Why black man dey suffer today, this is the reason why, we dey sit down for landi jeje, we dey mind our own business jeje, some people come from far away jeje, dem fight us and take our land, Dem take our people and spoil our town, Na since den trouble starti oh, Our riches dem take away to their land'.*

The result, Kuti sings, is that 'Dem give us culture we no understand, Black people, we no know ourselves, we no know our ancestral heritage, we dey fight each other everyday, we're never together, we're never together at all'. Because of this, Kuti's solution to overcoming the persistence of suffering as a condition of the African experience was the recovery of history – a history of dignity and culture. Only united would a people stand against effects of imperialism as neo-colonialism in disguise. Indeed, it was the division caused by a colonial condition that allowed the African, and in particular, African leaders to turn their backs on the struggle which had brought them into power. Thus, in his songs was a call to protest; to protest a struggle that had to come and to protect the future from what was to come. For example in 'Why black man dey suffer today' (Kuti 1971):

'Tell me again
Dat is why black man dey suffer today
We have to think of time to come
Dey take our culture away
We have to think of out children to come
Dat is why black man dey suffer today
We have to be together and unite
Dat is why black man dey suffer today'

In the works of Kuti, like those of so many of Africa's radical intellectuals at the time, was a struggle to make meaning of the optimism of a high independence era that had now given way to crisis and despair. It was a search for answers and for a road map to get out for, as in the Igbo proverb popularised in Chinua Achebe's (1994) *Things Fall Apart*, 'A man who does

now know where the rain began to beat him cannot say where he dried his body.' Its ultimate aim was a struggle not only to reclaim history, but also to assert the right of African people to make history.

6.6. Conclusions

The attainment of political independence in Africa ushered in hopes of a new era of political freedom and a better life economically and socially. Ordinary Africans had joined the struggle against the arbitrary rule of the white man. This, above all else, was a struggle against denial – denial of humanity, denial of respect and dignity, denial of the Africanness of the African. Thus, in independence lay the opportunity to begin to transform the inherited structure of the state and economy to serve the deepest aspirations of the people instead of the interests of the dominant classes of the world system. With this in mind, Africa's leaders embarked on ambitious developmental programmes in pursuit of what they expected to be the overall transformation of state and society. Looking North, they drew their wisdom from global agendas on development, while linking them to traditional discourses on the primacy of the collective as central to progress. Otherwise known as African Socialism, this was the means by which to end, 'the exploitation of man against man' (Mboya 1963) and realise instead, the fullness and expression of the African Personality. While these ambitions took off to a great start as massive improvements were made in key areas such as health and education, others took a back seat as the state demanded that the energies of the 'nation' were best focused on the question of development, rather than the everyday politicking engendered by multi-party governance. In this space, the state assumed a position of development at all costs. Theirs was a war against the unholy alliance of 'poverty, ignorance and disease' from which the new managers of state required the cooperation of the people towards its agenda. While the underpinnings of authoritarianism were not necessarily new or alien to a people who had endured even worse under colonialism, it was in the context of crisis that the extent of this violation – a social pact between government and its people was to come to light.

Indeed, the economic crisis of the 1980s robbed even the most well-meaning of leaders of the capacity to deliver on their programmes. As it deepened, African leaders turned to the IMF for assistance to stay afloat. The response of the IFIs was stern. Placing the blame

squarely at the feet of the state and its leaders, the tone assumed was one that sought to 'discipline' the state for not ably managing what had been entrusted to it. The condition of assistance, however, was that which required a 'rolling back of the state' and, with it, many of the state's programmes and public enterprises – not just in industry but also in social services.[30] This was, after all, the consensus of a neo-liberal paradigm that touted the supremacy of the market over that of the state. The effects were devastating, as SAPs served to exacerbate crisis, hurting the most vulnerable in society. The effects of downsizing the state also fuelled brain-drain, facilitated the erosion of the domestic policy system, while deliberately delegitimising the state as an actor in the political system (Olukoshi 2011; 2004). The conditionalities imposed and the effects they had were to spark a renewed conversation over the 'recolonisation' of Africa. Indeed, belying the imposition of conditionalities to assistance was an agreement that debased the sovereignty and autonomy of the state to IFI centres of power and decision making. Moreover, while IFIs sought the rolling back of the state, they relied on the recognition of the sovereignty of the state as part of their efforts to ensure the execution of policy. This was not just an intervention as by norms of a sovereignty principle; rather, it was complete redefinition of it. This dynamic is supported by the fact that SAPs, originally set against particular timeframes, have endured and have, in effect, transformed into regimes in which new adjustment packages succeeded one another and new forms of policy reform accrued to the core economic agenda.

In this space came the calls for a 'second liberation'. Formed in acknowledgement of the failure of the first to deliver on its democratic promise and transformative aspirations, these movements of popular resistance and uprising stood on the shoulders of those who came before, to demand the implementation of the structures necessary to bring change. Thus, while agency has been constrained in tight corners, African have never been passive. From the counterpoints of African intellectuals and their proposal for economic emancipation in the Lagos Plan of Action, to the courage and boldness of Thomas Sankara, were the examples of leadership at the forefront of the conversation. Additionally, the culture of political protest as inscribed in the musical repertoire of Fela Kuti's Afrobeats continues to bring to the forefront

[30] This diagnosis converged with those of other highly influential texts published the same year, such as Robert Bates's *Markets and States in Tropical Africa* (1981) on agriculture in tropical Africa. His text rapidly acquired classic status in the 'new' political economy circles about the perils of state intervention in underdeveloped countries.

the conversation of anger, restlessness and exasperations with the failure to transform the colonial condition – a failure centred on the crisis as located in the conditions of history and the unequal system in which Africa was and is constituted. Channelling Nkrumah, Kuti revealed to us the nature of crisis as formed of ongoing neo-colonial webs of power and the need for a similarly global counterpoint to overcome. Pan-Africanism and its accompanying principles of African unity and the African Personality endure in the politics of a people's imaginary that locates the struggle as far from over. Indeed, it was this idea, the idea of 'unfinished business', that was to form a renewed round of resistance against the state in Africa. Spearheaded by coalition of opposition leaders, trade union, students and the press, Africa's original 'Spring' set off what came to be known as Africa's 'Constitutional Dawn', as a series of reforms to the institutions and procedures of politics and governance resulted in the end of one-party rule and military regimes in Africa.

But the struggle is far from over. For far from the expectations that the introduction of plural politics would fundamentally change the political culture and establish a framework for democracy, yesterday's dictators became today's darlings of democracy as a neoliberal paradigm of democratic change dominated the transformative agenda. This is not to say that the effects of the Second Independence movement were not significant. Indeed, their effects continue to be felt today. What it does suggest, however, is that to a great extent the process of democratisation was usurped by a global agenda as a means to deflect from the failings of structural adjustment. Even more specifically, these concepts of 'good governance' and 'democracy promotion', which have become central to international policy discourse on Africa, have served to obscure the ongoing drama of domination of the state in Africa. This drama is that states are more accountable today to IFIs than they are to their citizens. This is summed up by Ferguson (2006, p. 84) with particular regard to Zambia:

'What friends of democracy need to bear in mind in all this is that however democratic an African government may be in formal terms, its scope for making policy is radically constrained by the non-democratic international financial institutions themselves. No matter what party is elected to power in a country like Zambia, it will have to come to terms with the IMF, and the voice of the Zambian electorate will have precious little say over those terms. Effective IMF rule over huge areas of economic and social policy is thus papered over with an appearance of popular sovereignty. The current ideological frothing over "democracy in

Africa" in this way ends up serving a profoundly antidemocratic end – that is, the simulation of popular legitimation for policies that are in fact made in the most undemocratic way imaginable.'

This brings us full circle to the question of the unfinished business of the state in Africa. For at the centre of the crisis of the state remains a struggle to realise the aspirations of a people's freedom dreams through the transformation of the colonial order (Osaghae 2005; Olukoshi 2011). This theme is taken up more broadly in the following chapter, which centres on the narratives of a people's own conception of failure in the present and contemporary moment.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RE-MEMBERING THE STATE IN AFRICA: A CASE OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS

‘Until the lion learns to speak

The tales of hunting will be weak’

– K’naan (2005)

Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, this thesis paid attention to the 'end of dreams' in the sense of a neoliberal assault on the state in Africa. While the developmental state as was organic to the social contract upon which it was formed was duly replaced with a neoliberal one, a new struggle for the state was to begin in the struggle of a 'Second Independence'. This chapter situates the story of the state in Africa at a time of massive decomposition and recomposition of social relations – a time associated with the end of the developmental model, and the search for a new one. In doing so, it seeks to be creative as it brings to the fore, a people's own experience of the crisis through the realm of popular culture as a centre for debate and analysis. One is a story of conflict and displacement as told through the Music of K'naan, a Somali musician and poet. The second is that of political violence and constitutional crisis in Kenya as told through the novel *Dust* by Yvonne Owour. The third is a debate around Twitter and the digital space as a public sphere through the story of the hashtag. Together, these challenge the disciplinary boundaries of academic scholarship and illuminate within the ongoing politics of a struggle for a more just and inclusive political order.

7.1. Introduction

In October 2014, a series of demonstrations and riots broke out in Burkina Faso following President Blaise Compaore's attempts to change the constitution and extend his 27-year rule. Word of the Burkinabe uprising spread quickly as 'Revolution 2.0' became the rallying call for mass gathering against a system that had betrayed the 'Land of Upright People'. By the end of the month, the symbols of state lay shattered as Parliament was burnt down and Compaore, with the aid of the French, was forced to flee to neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. The power of the people was once again on display; but even more powerfully, the symbolism of victory and the timing in which it occurred resonated far beyond the borders of Burkina Faso and deep into the Pan-African imaginary. Compaore, a symbol of counter-revolution for having come to power through the assassination of his former friend and confidant Thomas Sankara in a French-backed coup on 15 October 1987, ended the revolutionary dream that had once begun; a dream that told of African self-reliance and Sankara's mission to make Burkinabe active agents in the transformation of their society rather than spectators outside of a political system inspired by foreign models. Where Sankara rallied against the brutal austerity measures of the World Bank and the IMF, as well as France's lingering colonial relationship with much of the West African sub-region, Compaore settled for the continuation of old ties to imperialist governments and financial institutions, the old relationships of exploitation and abuse, and of public office to amass personal wealth at the expense of the people. Reversing the many gains made by Sankara in the lives of ordinary people in the areas of health, education, agriculture, women's rights and social responsibility, the country fell into deep political and socio-economic crisis, setting off a new demand for change against a regime that had been in power for too long.

Compaore's fate became part of a signifying feature of Africa's long dissatisfaction with the state of democratic governance. From Egypt to Gambia, Togo to Tunisia, Senegal to Cameroon, the power of ordinary people taking to the streets to demand change is once again shaping Africa's political terrain (see Manji 2016; Branch 2015; Obadare & Williams: 2014). These demands form part of a long struggle for democracy founded on the reconstitution of the state (Shivjii 2003). Indeed, long before what came to be known as 'The Arab Spring' swept across the African continent to its neighbours in the Middle East, a wave of democratic transformations in the late 1980s and the 1990s brought with it significant and dramatic

changes. These transformations marked the end of many single-party and military states and the establishment of multi-party democracies throughout Africa. But the struggle for democracy did not begin with the post-cold war introduction of multi-party systems. Instead, they were also part of the independence and liberation struggles for self-determination, beginning in the post-World War period and which culminated in the end of colonial rule (Shivjii 2003). As such, these waves of protest continue to point to the unfinished business of the collective struggle for freedom; that is, a freedom dream formed from the quest for a more just and inclusive political order. While the processes and outcomes of this quest have themselves been complex, fraught with antagonism and limited by contradictions, they point to the enduring nature of resistance as part and form of the African experience. In this way, resistance as culture – 'because it is history' – has served as the primary means for a people to assert their opposition to domination, to proclaim and create their humanity, as well as the agency and the capacity to make history (Manji 2017, p. 8).

With that in mind, this chapter turns to this period in Africa's political history and seeks to reconstruct the challenges facing the state in Africa and the prospects for its stability. In doing so, it challenges a scholarship that has so far failed to pay attention to a people's experience of the crisis of the state as part and form of their lived experience. Drawing on three case studies, it weaves together a narrative of the African state at a critical juncture, one which is formed of a need to centre a people's own conversation about what constitutes a more just and inclusive political order. To do so, it seeks to be creative as it anchors its analysis within the realm of popular culture as the space where historically – and even today – ordinary Africans continue to debate issued and matters of local, national and global concern. The first case study is the poetry of K'naan, a poet by the name of Keinan Abdi Warsame who fled his home country of Somalia in search of refuge in Canada and who brought the experiences, alienation and displacement born of conflict and displacement through his debut album, 'The Dustyfoot Philosopher'. The second is that of Kenyan writer Yvonne Awour, who was awarded the Caine Prize for her novel *Weight of Whispers* which was followed by her novel *Dust*, which tells of the perils of post-colonial state building and the politics of ongoing processes of reconfiguration and disintegration. The thurd is an engagement with social media as an expression of popular energy and a public space that has become a site of change. Together, these stories contend with the politics of memory and political agency as a driver of socio-political change in Africa. In so doing, it not only recovers a people's own telling of

their experiences, but also the space for IR as a discipline to better engage the struggles that give context and meaning to the African condition. This contributes to the overall aim of this thesis which seeks to tell a different story of the state in Africa.

7.2. The Story of the Dusty Foot Philosopher

Dusty foot philosopher means the one that's poor, lives in poverty but lives in a dignified manner and philosophises about the universe and talks about things that well-read people talk about, but they've never read or travelled on a plane.

- *K'Naan (*cited in Pennycook & Mitchell 2009, p. 1*)*

For the last thirty years, Somalia has been a country in the throes of war and political violence. Today, it remains the site of international efforts and interventions designed to support Somali people to build a federal state and achieve stability in a context of deep-rooted grievances, local conflicts and a powerful insurgency led by Al-Shabaab. Tales and stories of the violence and upheaval in Somalia have been told in many journals and books written to bring to the fore the legacies of a history that remains central to the present and as a result of which the attainment of peace and reconciliation remains a daunting task. But here too, one finds the stories of a country and its people who, against all odds, continue to defy preconceived ideas of a people and a place in this part of East Africa. It is indeed a well-known secret that Somalia is a nation of poets. For centuries, the beliefs, values and knowledge of the Somali people, like much of Africa, was passed down orally from one generation to the next. English explorer Richard Burton, who travelled through Somalia in 1854, noted the prevalence of the art. 'The country teems,' he wrote, 'with poets, poetasters, poetitoes, poetaccios: every man has his recognised position in literature as accurately defined as though he had been reviewed in a century of magazines – the fine ear of this people causing them to take the greatest pleasure in harmonious sounds and poetical expressions, whereas a false quantity or a prosaic phrase excite their violent indignation' (cited in Hultman 1993). It is in this long history of storytelling that the debut work of Somali-Canadian rapper K'naan, self-described as 'The Dusty Foot Philosopher', finds its place.

Born Keinan Abdi Warsame in 1978 in Mogadishu, Somalia, K'Naan fled the country with his family at the height of civil war in 1991 and sought refuge – first in the United States and later in Canada (Sobral 2013, p. 22). Like many Somali immigrants in Canada, he spent his youth disillusioned and dismayed by the trauma of being torn away from his beloved home. Turning to music, K'naan found solace in the rhythm and consciousness of American hip-hop culture. Summarising the origin of hip hop, while emphasising its socio-political and economic antecedents, Tricia Rose (cited in Adedeji 2013, p. 1) writes:

'Hip hop emerge[d] from the de-industrialisation meltdown where social alienation, prophetic imagination, and yearning intersect . . . [It] is a cultural form that attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalisation, brutality, truncated opportunity, and oppression within cultural imperatives of African-American and Caribbean history, identity and community. It is the tension between the cultural fractures produced bypost-industrial oppression and the binding ties of black cultural expressivity that sets the critical frame for the development of hip hop.'

Despite the fact he could not yet speak the language, K'naan felt an affinity with the musical genre's views and frustration regarding unpalatable socio-economic conditions in the everyday experiences of a marginalised life. Accordingly, the poet taught himself hip hop and rap diction and, in the process, English by memorising phonetically the style and lyrics of rappers such as Nas and Rakim (Sobral 2013; Pennycook & Mitchell 2009). The artist had found the medium of communication that he would combine with his heritage of poetry to tell the tale of woe and triumph and of his own progress from refugee to self-appointed spokesperson of a globally displaced people (Sobral 2013). It is only fitting, therefore, that in the process K'naan was to become one of the most prominent spokespeople for the political figure of the refugee in popular culture.[31]

With this in mind, *The Dusty Foot Philosopher* (2005) presents a special manifestation of the phenomenon of a place and space that has been called a 'failure'. Set against the poet's multifaceted experiences of a journey that has spanned many continents, K'naan opens his

[31] See, for example, the selection of 'Wavin' Flag' as the official World Cup Song 2010 after it had topped the billboards in fourteen countries. This song was written for Somalia and the aspirations of its people.

musical debut with a song called 'Wash It Down'. The lyrics invite the listener to 'release the tension, distress and disorder' of everyday American life and enter, instead, into a world distinguished by a different type of stress and disorder that is his life. Spoken over an instrumental constructed entirely out of splashing water, 'Wash It Down' inaugurates the poet's position as a Somali refugee in America who offers his experience as a form of 'therapy' for what he perceives as the mundaneness of American suffering. Distinguishing himself from an audience who have known nothing about nor experienced anything like that which he has been through, the poet assumes the role of a storyteller; an interpreter of some sort, who chooses to tell his stories through the universally recognised language of music. But this is no ordinary kind of music; this is the music of life which, like water, it is an essential element to the poet's existence and method of narration. K'Naan (2005) describes this method as the 'African way' in the very song The African Way:

'When we talk about hip hop starting in Africa, we're talking about this… [drumbeats] …we're talking about that drum right there and then we're saying that there is a poet, an M'cee, that may say something relevant, something fantastic over that drum; that is what we call hip hop in its origination'.

Having done so, the poet announces that he has something important to say, declaring that he is indeed here on a mission. It is a mission for which he is well-prepared, given that even as a young boy, he understood 'rap as the new poor people's weapon' (Sobral 2013). Willing to use it, K'naan announced that he, as the 'Dusty Foot Philosopher' has come to change things, 'trust me'. Lodging himself firmly in the violence and displacement of war-torn Somalia, K'naan finds his community and subsequently his anchor in Africa's long history of forced migration through the Caribbean and the Americas as well as that of a more contemporary route in airports such as Heathrow and holding rooms in LaGuardia. In 'The African Way' (2005), he declares:

'From Ethiopia, Tanzania, Somalia,
Heathrow airport and the customs at LaGuardia
Uganda, Kenya, my people up in Ghana
Kingston, Jamaica, big up, because you
know it's time for, the African way'

Just as he declares that ‘it is time for the African way’ and that ‘revolution is here’, the poet unveils that it is time to break free from the confines of his refugee status and, instead, embrace the triumph of survival over adversity – a story of triumph and transformation that he uses to bring us back to where it all began. In ‘My Old Home’ (2005), he opens with a lengthy depiction of the idyllic, peaceful community in which K’naan grew up before the war. Surrounded by poets, sages and beautiful women, K’naan narrates a life in the past tense that is filled with innocence, a sense of humility and satisfaction: ‘nothing morbid, it’s true we’re glorious, Boom!’ The poet gives us insight into a place that once was and remains a space and place – a place of comfort and community. The simple melody of the mbira (or kalimba), a traditional African instrument, underscores the serenity expressed in the lyrics (Sobral 2013, p. 27). Soon after the gentle ease with which the poet re-members his nation, however, the harmony of a past life is broken by a rhythm that tells of the country’s decent into turmoil as it became overrun by war. For K’naan, the conflict is framed as impersonal and overwhelming. No motives are advanced for its occurrence. It seems that almost overnight, people began to behave in the cruellest and most shocking ways, suggesting a curse of some sort.

This begins with his own loss of innocence narrated in the song ‘What’s Hardcore’: ‘we begin our day by the way of the gun, rocket propelled grenades blow you away if you front’. Everything has collapsed, ‘we got no police ambulance of firefighters, we start riots by burning car tires.’ In the chaos and anarchy of war, K’naan describes the mass confusion in ‘the looting, and everybody starts shooting’. Despite the peace deals, he sees no end for ‘bullshit politicians talking ‘bout solutions but it’s all talk’. Ordinary life is turned on its head as ‘journalists hire gunmen, there’s violent women…kids trust no one cause fire burnt them, refugees die in boats, headed for peace’ but ‘is anyone scared of death here, not in the least’. K’naan declares that ‘life is cheap here’ and that ‘the only thing that validates you is the AK.’ It is a far cry from the life he once knew and one for which he continues to long. Using both metaphor and oxymoron, the rapper begins to provoke a strikingly vivid picture of the dehumanising and corrupting effects of war as the values and principles of everyday life are turned on their heads (Sobral 2013: p 27). For example, in ‘My Old Home’, K’Naan (2005) declares:

‘Bandits will beat us down—in my old home

Rumors are law now—in my old home

Sedatives of faith—in my old home

Rapists are praised—in my old home

Demons rest well—in my old home

Infants are nailed—in my old home

Spirits are jailed—in my old home

Grudges grow tails—in my old home'

The wave of corrosion seems to have spared nothing as the song provides the setting for the rapper's transformation into a refugee.

Angry and frustrated at what has become of his 'old home', the poet moves on from a sense of confusion and alarm at the suddenness of violence and conflict, turning his attention to the warlords who have pillaged Somalian soil and divided the country into a war zone (Kim 2010). In the heavy synths of African drumming and tribal howls of the song '*Soobax*' (which means to 'come out' or 'show yourself'), K'naan pitches himself directly against those he holds responsible for his exile, challenging them to listen to him – a fearless refugee, ready to speak up:

'Basically, I got beef

I wanna talk to you directly

I cant ignore, I can't escape

And that's cause you affect me

You cripple me, you shackle me

You shatter my whole future in front of me

This energy is killing me

I gotta let it pour like blood, soobax

Dadkii waa dhibtee nagala soobax (You have exasperated the people so come out with it)

Dhibkii waa batee nagla soobax (The troubles have increased so come out with it.)

Dhiigi waad qubtee nagala soobax (You've spilled the blood so come out with it.)

Dhulkii waad gubtee nagala soobax (You've burnt the root of the earth so come out with it)'

Switching between Somali and English, the rapper wraps the fullness of his anger in the painful narration of exile and homesickness which he cannot bear anymore: 'left alone, all alone, settle your issues on your own, what to do? Where to go? I got to be a refugee damn, *soobax*'. But K'naan's confrontation with his adversaries and those who have pillaged the country and betrayed the people is not confined to those warlords and their politics in Somalia rather; he incudes criticism of the consequences of international intervention and accumulation, particularly during the Cold War.

For example, in 'Blues for the Horn', K'naan (2005) links the troubles in his home to a history of international military and global interests, reminding listeners that the problems of one country are not simply the result of isolated phenomena but part of colonial and neo-colonial histories of power and politics:

'You make a mockery of our struggle like Hollywood plans to
And I swear to god I wish you hell, burn and bake too
And I curse the Europeans who instigated you worse
And I curse the Russians who impregnated the Kalashnikov birth'

In each line is an indictment of a retelling of history that has emptied out a people and their struggle given the simple narrative of a conflict and crisis that defies simple explanation. Whether these are the dramatic renditions of Hollwood castings seeking to reconstruct the Battle of Mogadishu on 3 October 1993 in *Black Hawk Down*, or simple media narratives and their framing of a single story on Africa, K'naan rejects these and reclaims the complexity of history as part of his lived experience. Indeed, his is a construction of a crisis beyond its historical roots in a colonial order to that of the neo-colonial struggle for Africa and in particular Somalia, during the Cold War. The Ogaden war was a Somali military offensive between July 1977 and March 1968 over the Ethiopian-occupied Ogaden. Somalia's initial invasion of Ethiopia attracted the disapproval of the Soviet Union and its support through arms and troops sent by Cuba to push the Somali's out. By 13 March 1978, the Ethiopians and Cubans had recaptured more than two thirds of the Ogaden, marking the official end of the war, but the beginning of a revolt in the army which eventually spiralled into a civil war. K'Naan's reference of the Russian Kalashnikov in 'Blues for the Horn' is a stark reminder of global complicity in the making of a conflict and the legacy of the Cold War and the politics of warlordism implicated therein.

Having identified the muti-faceted nature of the crisis, K'naan begins to narrate the tribulations of personal experience within them and the effects of alienation with respect to his own involvement in illegal acts and trouble with the law. Bringing the audience back to his current setting in Canada, the poet narrates a life tormented by the alienation he so desperately feels, leaving him wondering if he's indeed dead or alive. In the song 'Voices in My Head', traumatic experiences from his past are transformed into suicidal ideations. Swaying between self-torture and the threat of self-destruction, K'naan narrates life as the realm of dead souls and horrors transferred into the individual's psyche:

'The harder the struggle the deeper the trouble
Come out of the bubble, I'll teach you to cuddle
With demons inside me, what demon is not me
Theses demons inside me, what demon is not me
These demons inside me they got me, they stop me from sleepin'
And eatin' and keepin' it even, and even my reason for breathin' this season
Sleetin' in a danger, my nose when I'm readin', it's bleedin' on paper
It's bleedin' on paper
And I'm tired of this violence, so tortured inside,
ain't awkward and overly open inside,
Have I already died? Has mom already cried?
And why do I feel like over this life.'

We hear first-hand the effects of war and his own brush with death, as the poet remembers the lives of the loved ones that he has lost. Specifically, his three closest friends who all lost their lives in a day leaves the poet wondering why he was the only one to survive. In this moment of grief, however, K'naan finds his greatest strength being that of a survivor and thus comes a bold assertion of political defiance where life is preferred over death. This acknowledgement of what has been lost provides the space for the poet to retrieve his sense of self and the hope of a future that is yet to come. In so doing, the victim becomes the hero, an active agent capable of self-transformation in the face of unimaginable adversity. Thus, with a vow to smile in the face of suffering, he leaves his horrors to those who enacted them, as he declares that the 'silent venom of our ghosts' will deal with 'silent rhythms of our enemies', but that, for now, 'we dance'.

When asked what he means by the 'Dusty Foot Philosopher', K'naan (2004, in Pennycook & Mitchell 2009, p. 1) explains that it represents both how he sees himself and a broader image of the Somali refugee in the global imaginary:

'When images of Africa are shown on television (the most common means by which people view Africa, he suggests), the camera always kind of pans to the feet, and the feet are always dusty from these kids. What they're trying to portray is a certain bias connected to their own historical reasoning, and what I saw though instead, was that that child with the dusty feet himself is not a beggar, and he's not an undignified struggler, but he's the dusty foot philosopher. He articulates more than the cameraman can imagine, at that point in his life. But he has nothing; he has no way to dream, even. He just is who he is.'

In a beautiful poetic interpretation, K'naan unravels the mystery of 'the dusty foot philosopher' who is the 'one that is poor, lives in poverty, but lives in a dignified manner and philosophises about the universe' (as cited in Pennycook & Mitchell 2009, p. 2). As represented by his old friend Mahamoud that was killed, or even the millions forced to flee their homes in search of safety, K'naan (2005) asserts the dignified humanity and thinking subjectivity of the oppressed. He describes a person who has 'talked about things that well-read people do and they've never read, or they've never been on a plane, but can tell you what's beyond the clouds' (as cited in Pennycook & Mitchell 2009, p. 2). His ideas bring forward an image beyond that of what is seen on television, which characteristically depict Africans and African children with dusty feet, mere victims lacking in knowledge. This is something he stands strongly against by reinserting a personalisation of the effects of war, as well as a recovery of the reasons for it. In this we find the historical contingencies and global relations that give context and meaning to the crises of the state in Somalia and a narrative that speaks beyond the 'single' story of a literature on state failure.

In doing so, Somalia appears as the space of life and of the living: both within and beyond its boundaries, it is a space that elicits the powerful emotions of hope and despair, triumph and loss to those who experience it. But perhaps most importantly, it remains a space beyond the boundaries of its geographical existence exposing the complexity and contradictions of humanity. Thus, K'naan's lyricism and poetry serve to enlighten those otherwise unaware of constant upheaval existing throughout the world. Indeed, the story of one man as told through the poetry of his music has served to reach millions and, in the process,

has exposed the truth behind issues that are routinely ignored. As noted by Sabral (2013), poetry provides the ultimate solution for the suffering traveller. It reconnects him with home through memory, and it carries the hope of improving the situation of his people by spreading their message across the world. We are also called to think of ordinary African people as thinking subjects and their thought as scholarship into the complex dimensions of war and peace. Indeed, to build up locally grounded knowledge that can better inform the processes of intervention (whether humanitarian or state-building) and which can then belong and be owned by the people. The nation here is not fixed; neither is the state. Instead, a transnational imaginary moves in the yearnings of a people who long to be free. Paying attention to these stories of motion allows the process of a lived experience to speak for a concept that has otherwise been rendered static.

7.3. Silenced Histories and the Kenya Crisis of 2007/8

4 August 2010 marked an historic day for Kenya following a peaceful constitutional referendum that saw a historic turnout of 71 percent of the population – higher than any election in Kenya's voting history. Close to 67 percent of the electorate voted in favour of adopting the proposed new constitution, signalling the end of more than twenty-year debate. On 27 August 2010, President Kibaki presided over the promulgation of the new constitution. The significance of this lay as much in the process as in the outcome. An earlier proposed draft was defeated in a constitutional referendum in 2005, whose political tussles are believed to have precipitated the 2007 election political crisis that plunged the country into unprecedented levels of violent conflict. Indeed, this was not the country's first experience of civil strife. Though often cited as an African bastion of stability and burgeoning democracy cycles of violent conflict in Kenya have recurred in an almost predictable fashion, often in tandem with Kenya's electoral cycles. Its most evident origins are at the onset of multi-party politics but in reality the violence resulted from tensions emanating from years of inappropriate policies and failed policy implementation that provided the foundations and generated the conditions germane to the crisis. Elections only served as a trigger to the violence that ensued in election cycles and that climaxed in the events of 2008. Thus, in Yvonne's Owuor's novel *Dust,* we find a nation struggling (and even refusing) to remember its past, a past historically constituted within the diversity city of its people, rich as the soil and the colours of its independence flag

hoisted as a marker of identity on 12 December 1963. In *Dust*, we find the author's call to re-member the nation, and re-imagine the people as central to the story of the state in Africa.

'Kenya is just a story,' says Aggrey Nyipir Oganda, the paterfamilias in Yvonne Owuor's debut novel *Dust*. Nyipir is trying to disabuse his daughter, Arabel Ajany, of all the established notions of fixity that she has always possessed about her country (Kantai 2013). Indeed, as Kantai (2013) writes, 'as disillusioned as anyone who has ever held some hope in the narrative of the new nation, Nyipir has long turned his back on it.' Nyipir's epiphany of 'the end of dreams' comes with the murder of Tom Mboya in 1969. Telling a tragic story of loss and betrayal that spans two generations, *Dust* tells the story of a nation's silences in the face of terrible secret violence through a family that both rejects and embraces its central myths (Kantai 2013). The novel opens with death on the streets of Nairobi. There are many deaths, but one sets the narrative in motion. Odidi, a young engineer turned robber who was a former high school rugby star, is the embodiment of middle-class professional aspiration. He is mowed down in a police ambush on the evening of the elections, 27 December 2007. Odidi took to crime after a clash with powerful individuals who were part of a scheme in which a lucrative engineering company colluded with government officials to steal public funds. Unable to countenance the dark underbelly of corruption that accompanied it, Odidi, like his father before him, chose to turn against it. Frustrated and disillusioned, he joined the underground life of Nairobi's gang land which ultimately cost him his life. As the blood of the 'doomed idealist', whose dreams went awry, pours into the dust – full of memories, colours, and songs – the tragic journey of a family's collective trauma begins, ultimately unravelling a nation struggling to come to terms with its grief.

Set against the backdrop of the 2007 elections in Kenya and the violence and crisis that followed the announcement of the presidential results, *Dust* explores the political meaning of these events in a search for answers. The violence, which tore across the nation leaving 1,000 people dead and a further 600,000 displaced, served to shatter the carefully constructed idea of what it means to be Kenyan. In the wake of violence, Owuor (2013) writes that, 'everything had…disintegrated into a single, unending howl of the nation's unrequited dead. This country, this haunted ideal, all its poor, broken promises' (p. 24). In the search of answers, Owuor moves away from the epicentre of the idea of Kenya that is Nairobi and journeys with the grief-stricken Oganda family to their home in Wuoth Ogik, which means 'the journey's end'. It is

here that the story of a broken nation is brought to the fore through the vivid descriptions of a crumbling, coral-coloured building that is the Oganda's family patch. Built 50 years ago, by an English colonial officer, whose name they do not speak, Wuoth Ogik 'was once a sanctuary crammed with the music of rangeland life' (Owuor 2013). In its present state, Wuoth Ogik is a shadow of its former self:

'*a father's hollow cough, herders' sibilant whistles, day handing over life to the night, a mother's sudden, haunted cry, a brother singing water songs to camels. What endures? A father sighing Aiee! Talkative shadows, crumbling walls, scent of dung and dream, reflections of long-ago clattering of polished Ajua stones falling into a brown wooden board of 14 holes; the lives of cows, sheep, goats and camels; three mangy beige-and-black descendants of a fierce mongrel herding dog with a touch of hyena. What endures? Elastic time.*' (Owuor 2013, p. 12)

'What endures?' Owuor asks, as she refuses to accept the tragic neglect of the crumbling house as the only story of what now exists. It is a question that the author repeats, refusing to accept easy answers and insisting on a careful probing into the hidden histories of an undisclosed past. In the silence of the 'talkative shadows', the author insists lie the missing stories and the answers that tell of a connection between the past and the present, the old and the new, the real and imagined. It is to their voices that Owuor turns her attention as she seeks to bring to life the collective trauma of a nation's pain through the secrets and memories of a family struggling to come to terms with its past.

One of them is the story of Hugh Bolton, the English colonial officer who, like many settlers at the time, left England's weary nostalgia for a past that had been burned to come to Kenya in the 1950s (Owuor 2013). Bolton was determined to make Kenya his country and to build a life in it for himself and his bride, Selene. But his mysterious disappearance from the land left questions of an absent life, which his son, Isaiah, now tries to answer. It is Isaiah's arrival in Wuoth Ogik that unsettles the quiet life of Nyipir, now retired in the house that Bolton once called home. A retired policeman, Nyipir was once an important man in Kenya. It was he who carried the country's flag on horseback on the day of independence (Kantai 2013). But the assassination of Tom Mboya, a 'big man' and a prominent architect of the new republic, turned Nyipir's dreams for a new nation into an experience of painful disillusionment marked by subsequent violence. Nyipir was suspected of committing this act of treason and was exiled

to Wuoth Ogik, where he traded in guns and engaged in cattle rustling across the northern territories and into the Horn of Africa (Burkeyewo 2015). But his is a much darker secret. It is one that tells of an affair between Bolton and Akai, his Turkana mistress. His cruelty towards her prompted Nyipir, his then-young Luo assistant, to kill him and hide his body in the cave. It is here that Owuor deconstructs, through skilful narrative, the story of a broken nation as found in the painful violence of its colonial conception. It is a nation bound to the histories of cynical colonial manipulation and violence, to the atrocities in response to the Mau Mau rebellion, and to the brutalities of the post-independence state. It is these histories, as told through the fallen figures of fatherhood in both Bolton and Nyipir, that speak of a nation's past in the present.

Indeed, colonialism lay the foundation for political violence in Kenya, but it was the betrayal by a postcolonial elite and its politics of violence, assassinations, corruption and succession politics that replicated and refined this very foundation. After Mboya, Owuor (2013) describes, 'Kenya's official languages: English, Kiswahili and Silence. There was also memory' (p274). For Owuor, recovering memory becomes a bold political act as each of the protagonists must follow their own maps of memory and trace the beginnings of the stories that puncture the silence which has defined their lives. As told through a generation who refuse to suffer the betrayal of the generation before, Isaiah Bolton and Ajany emerge as the hope for a story's end. In Isaiah is a search for answers regarding his father's disappearance, while in Ajany is the refusal to accept that her brother is gone. Brought together by the haunting memory of Odidi's legacy, theirs is a search for answers in a bid to lay their ghosts to rest. Together, they return to 'journey's end' as the truth of their stolen lives emerges. When Ajany asks Nyipir who Hugh Bolton was, he does not explode with anger as he once would have. Rather, Nyipir narrates the story of a man with whom he shared 'trouble'; a euphemism for the suppression of the Mau Mau rebellion in the 1950s. Nyipir attempts to voice that which to date has been hidden: 'Aaah! We bury evil with the covenants of silence…for the good of the country…even if you plant another story into silence, see, the buried thing returns to asks for its blood from the living' (Owuor 2013, p. 6). Nyipir's laugh is short and dry, as he explains that 'death does not keep secrets well'. The presence of Isaiah marks the beginning of a breach in the secrets of Nyipir and in the truth-telling that proceeds, Owuor narrates the possibility of a nation in coming to terms with the intricacies of its ancestral trauma in succeeding generations.

In doing so, Owuor's presents a narrative of truth-telling that brings forth a connected history of haunting. In Isaiah is a Britain haunted by the spectre of its former colonies; while in Nyipir is a Kenya haunted by the spectre of its colonial past. Owuor embraces the fragility of these passionate human beings. Indeed, there are no heroes in this story; all characters are guilty of righteous violence and all bear wounds and hopes that will lead to death or redemption. As the narrator puts it, 'the wound won't close until its existence is spoken aloud' (Owuor 2013, p. 299). Through their acts of remembrance and lamentation of a colonial history in the violence of the contemporary present, a family is brought together in the place that the journey began. Once the secrets are revealed and the tombs kicked open, Owuor suggests that the next thing to do is to destroy what was past and begin afresh, no longer held down by the burden of the past. Thus, in the final scene of the novel, Ajany and Isaiah burn down Wuoth Ogik and leave the fire that is engulfing the house to finish its work. The house glows, burning everything – including memories – into ash (Owuor 2013, p. 363). The hope and promise of a new beginning lie within the characters of Ajany and Isaiah as symbols of a generation open to the truth of and reconciliation with its past. The question of 'What endures?' is answered implicitly by the recurrent reference to dust. It is a dust that speckles the grounds of Wuoth Ogik in the colours of the national flag: 'red, black, green and white'. Red for the bloodshed, black for the colour its people, green for the abundance of its pastures, and white for the enduring legacy of peace for which it fought. A collective idea of a people is the only things that endures in the ashes of a crumbling nation.

Dust is nothing short of an expansive account of a nation that has lost its way. But it is also more than that. Just as the crumbling house of Wuoth Ogik is brought to the fore in the tragic story of Odidi's untimely death, so too is the fragile myth of the idea of Kenya which lies in the ruins following the post-election violence of 2007/8. These are the narratives that have been central to the founding myth of Kenya. As Peter Simatei (2001, p. 55) observes, 'the desire by nationalist leaders to construct a unified nation and originate an official history to rationalise and legitimise the sanctity of the nation' precipitated 'the suppression of alternative histories and other possibilities of identity formation.' Since stories, especially those on the margins, are suppressed, Simatei (2001) contends that literature intervenes in the making of history by evoking these suppressed stories. In this way, Owuor's intervention recreates an alternative version of events through the lives of those forgotten on the margins of an official history. Through a skilful narrative of motion, *Dust* weaves together the stories that

tell of betrayal, loss, violence and dispossession as part of the Kenyan experience. Asked why she chose to tell this story, Owuor (2018) explains, 'I needed to kick open painted-over tombs where we had nurtured our demons. It led me to wonder if ancestral trauma caused by a violence inflicted on the humanity of another lives out its resolution by haunting succeeding generations.'

To this, the author found that the central problem facing the current Kenyan postcolonial state is a refusal to reckon with the violence that is intrinsic to its colonial past, which is subsequently reproduced in the present. For Owuor, the present state is a haunted entity and the country's biggest obstacle is the failure to acknowledge this haunting. To build a nation is to begin with the truth of its past, through which one finds that there is space for forgiveness, and subsequently, a chance to retart – with truth.

Tom Odhiambo (2014, p. 56) avers that to read *Dust* 'is to be jolted back into reality; away from the songs of hope retailed on Kenyan TV, radio, newspapers, in churches, at rallies by politicians, in lecture halls and even by NGOs that are supposed to be auditing the delivery of goods and services by the government.' Beyond the cliché of a 'beloved' country that stands as a bastion of stability in a region of chaos, Kenya emerges as a state that has normalised violence, death, abandonment, alienation and marginalisation. Accordingly, the novel challenges the prevailing and dominant notions about a united and peaceful loving Kenya to provoke a conversation about ignored facets of the nation's history. Thus, in *Dust* is not merely the attempt to recall a history, but also to reflect on the socio-political realities of a period of more than fifty years in a nation's story. Written at a time when the country was engaged with constitution-making processes, a much-needed opportunity to reconfigure a people's conversation about their shared future, *Dust* constitutes a reminder of the need to begin with what lurks beneath the surface. For no matter the 'hardware' of the state – the model of institutions so to speak – it is the 'software' that shapes the idea of a nation struggling to realise itself. In this way, the novel offers a different form of critical scholarship, an intimate unravelling of personal history told through the national narrative of a country's own reckoning with its recent past. The roots of political violence unearthed move beyond the stereotype of tribal conflict and are located in the critical juncture of state-making at independence and its reproduction in the post-colonial present.

7.4. The Story of the # – A Digital Public Sphere

In the Summer of 2015, Kenyans on Twitter (KOT) took to task the globally acclaimed news network CNN for its coverage of President Obama's visit to the country ahead of the Global Entrepreneurship Summit. In its report, CNN raised concerns about the Al-Qaeda affiliated terror group al-Shabaab, stating that 'President Barack Obama is not just heading to his father's homeland, but to a hotbed of terror' (CNN 2015). According to Robert Baer, an author and a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) case officer who was interviewed by the network, Kenya was 'the most dangerous trip the president has ever made…more so than Iraq and Afghanistan' (cited in Sparkman, 2015). In response, KOT resuscitated the hashtag '#someonetell' to express their outrage and demand and apology from CNN. This was not the first time that the network had been the subject of KOT's frustrations. Through a mixture of ridicule and sarcasm, KOT inverted the catchphrase 'hotbed of terror' to portray their cities as safe and the county as more than just a simple headline. Kenyan media owner and industrialist Chris Kirubi proved to be one of the most popular commentators initially, with a tweet that read: 'Unless you are the one bringing the terror, we are a hotbed of opportunities & great people' (Kirubi 2015). As the word 'hotbed' made its way across cyberspace, Kenyans rallied together against what they felt was a misrepresentation of their country at a time when the world's attention was turned towards it. During the summit, President Kenyatta joined in the rewriting, stating that Kenya was a 'hotbed of vibrant culture, natural beauty, and infinite possibility' (Kenyatta 2015). To the nation's delight, President Obama added his own twist by describing Kenya as a 'hotbed of innovation' (Obama 2015). The strength of KOT's protest was felt within the corridors of power, forcing Tony Maddox – one of CNN's most senior executives, to deliver a personal apology to President Kenyatta and to the nation. In his statement, Maddox expressed deep regret, stating that 'there is a world at a war with extremists; we know what a hotbed of terror looks like and Kenya isn't one' (Mutiga 2015).

This example of KOT is one of the many ways in which tech-connected Africans are making their voices heard in an increasingly connected digital world. Boasting the fastest growing mobile phone penetration rate in the world, Africa is witnessing mobile telephony revolutionising the ways in which its people interact. Mpesa (a virtual banking system that provides transaction services througha SIM card), for example, has transformed the way small and medium enterprises, farmers and informal traders, operate. As a result of increased

connectivity, mobile revenue today is equivalent to 3.7 percent of African GDP – more than triple its share in developed economies. Were the Internet to eventually match or exceed the level of impact mobile telephony has achieved, it could contribute some $300 billion to Africa's GDP by 2025, according to a 2011 report by consultancy McKinsey. It is calculated that, in this leapfrog scenario, increased Internet penetration could propel private consumption almost 13 times higher than current levels of $12 billion, reaching some $154 billion by 2025. At the moment, only 20 percent of the continent's one billion people are online, but that share is rising rapidly as mobile networks are rolled out and the cost of internet-capable devices continues to fall.[32] In part, this is because the old state-run fixed line companies were inefficient monopolies, causing many in Africa to take up mobile phones with great enthusiasm at the start of the last decade. As handsets have become more affordable, greater accessibility to mobiles – which have outpaced other forms of communications infrastructure on the continent – began transforming the way in which public services are delivered and business and politics are being conducted. The rise of mobile Internet access served to bring online those who had previously no access to desktop machines or fixed line broadband in their millions. Consequently, the range of opportunities created by social and online media to reach beyond the traditional lines of conversation in such a short space of time has been remarkable.

Thus, as access to mobile phones and, by extension, access the Internet has exploded, so too have the efforts of a people ready to make their voices heard on all matters local, national and international. Social media has become a particularly powerful platform for sharing multiple stories. Nowhere is this seen better than in the rise of the hashtag which, according to Kaigwa and Wu (2015m p. 202), has become 'the rallying call for a people to put away digital divisions, cultural contrasts and differing opinion and respond to the call to arms.' They describe people as being 'ready with their data bundles, Wi-Fi hotspots, keyboards, and keypads prepared to take digital aim at the latest target' (Kaigwa & Wu 2015, p. 202). The most frequent target of this digital-savvy generation has been Western media circles and the misrepresentations of African countries through a sensationalised and oversimplified frame. Notoriously, it was the #Kony2012 online campaign and viral advocacy video by the American

[32] As a matter of fact, it is estimated that as more than 720 million Africans have mobile phones and 100 million were on Facebook by 2014. Another figure quotes that there are more mobile phones that adults in most African countries, with the subscriptions in Kenya, for example, surging from 330,000 in 2001 to 38 million in 2016, in a country with a population of nearly 45 million.

non-profit advocacy group Invisible Children that gave rise to a continental outcry over what was a factually inaccurate and oversimplified take on a very complex conflict (Invisible Children 2012). From #Kony2012 to #someonetellcnn, African social media bloggers and commentators have taken to Twitter to elicit calls to action against longstanding views of a 'helpless' and 'hopeless' continent in need of saving. Perhaps most notorious was a series of tweets posted by Nigerian-American author Teju Cole (2012), who decried the 'white saviour industrial complex' of these campaigns. As stated by Cole (2012), 'from Sachs to Kristof to Invisible Children to TED, the fastest growth industry in the US is the white Saviour Industrial Complex'. This complex denotes the Western predisposition to see and accentuate narrative stereotypes about the continent's supposed helplessness in the absence of interventions from foreign (i.e., Western) partners. Thus, his was a criticism of the backers' culture 'for supporting brutal policies in the morning, founding charities in the afternoon and receiving awards in the evening' (Cole 2012).

However, Western representations or misrepresentations have not been the only target of online struggles to reauthor narratives about Africa. African leaders and their governments have not been spared the wrath of Africa's growing Twitter users. The use of social media terms and Internet-based tools has gained momentum, taking on openly political themes and broader socio-economic grievances. Some of these are seen in the implications of #OccupyNigeria, a series of protests that brought that country to a standstill for the first two weeks of January 2012, following an announcement by President Jonathan that he would scrap a fuel subsidy that most Nigerians considered their birth right (Mark 2012). Hundreds of thousands of Nigerians streamed onto the streets to join marches and rallies. The national strike was only suspended after the government partially restored the subsidy, following a deal brokered with trade unions. By most estimates, #OccupyNigeria was the largest and most sustained short-term protest movement in any sub-Saharan African country in recent decades. Meanwhile, Hlawulani Mkhabela (2017) writes of the organising force of the hashtag in Southern African nations. Recent movements such as #RhodesMustFall referenced student protests against retrograde attitudes and policies in tertiary education; #FeesMustFall allied workers and students criticising the high cost of education and pay for staff; and in 2017 #MenAreTrash pulled together multiple protests decrying misogyny and a poor security response to violence against women (Mkhabela 2017; Manji 2017). Also, in April 2016 under the banner #MyFlag, Evan Mawarire – a Zimbabweam priest with no real connection to regime

or opposition political elites – posted a video of himself draping the Zimbabwean flag around his neck, railing against the depletion of public services and an economic meltdown which impeded his ability to raise his family (Mkhabela 2017). The amateur video went viral as members of the public began sharing stories of hardship, wearing the flag as a sign of solidarity and protest. Very quickly, Mawarire became the face of a protest movement which coordinated the July strike of 2016, supported by multiple blogs and other web-based projects such #Tajamuka, a campaign pulling together the youth wings of opposition parties and NGOs calling for then-President Mugabe to step down and promoting continued citizen resistance (Mkhabela 2017).

Social media has become the site on which frustrations with the current state of affairs has been laid bare. There is a belief in the power of technology to bring about change, shift dialogue, and present a narrative that plays out both on a smaller stage for local trending topics and sometimes, the larger state of the world. For Kaigwa and Wu (2015, p. 203), Twitter today has emerged as a virtual 'town square'. Although specifically referencing its rise in Kenya, these sentiments have been repeated across the board. Narrating his five favourite cities in the world, Teju Cole (2017) stated that 'Twitter' was one of his favourites because 'it has become such an important space for having these conversations that are not happening elsewhere'. Rejecting the idea that there is an 'absolute separation between the people who march on the streets and the people who talk about it on Twitter', Cole (2017)has argued that:

'Many of the people who march on the streets, people who have brought about the kinds of changes, the people who have made despots and fake democrats look foolish and those who have made them uncomfortable, are organised on Twitter too'.

Indeed, the use of social media is being reinvented to increase political engagement. It is notable that African heads of state have started to take advantage of this relatively new public sphere, recognising it as a space in which to engage a citizenry that it has otherwise alienated. Paul Kagame, the current president of Rwanda, has been named 'Digital President' for having over 3 million followers and praised for trying to get Rwanda 'wired'. But outside the politics of personality, Twitter has also become the space for political campaigns as incumbent leaders as well as those of the opposition have taken to the platform to engage their politics online. Election debates have centred on hashtags such as #NigeriaDecides and #KenyaDecides, showing it to be a valuable tool for engaging a population in a discussion. Of course, this does

not mean everyone is online and able to participate, but it does show its increasing popularity as space for shaping the conversation.

But perhaps more exciting are the ways in which ordinary Africans are themselves getting to know one another. In July 2015, Siyanda Mohutsiwa, a writer in Botswana, tweeted asking, 'If Africa was a bar, what would your country be drinking/doing?' The response was swift and sweeping as the hashtag #IfAfricaWasABar went viral. Kicking off the conversation with her own anecdote on South Africa's ongoing attempts to build a post-racial society following decades of apartheid rule, Mohutsiwa (2015) wrote that 'South Africa would be drinking all kinds of alcohol and begging them to get along in its stomach.' The hashtag quickly drew thousands of Africans into a conversation about their continent. These conversations touched on a wide range as issues including the economy, colonialism, imperialism and corruption were satirised. Steve Biggart (2015) used the opportunity to poke fun at stereotypes, tweeting that 'Nigeria would be outside explaining that he will pay the entrance fee, all he needs is the bouncer's account details.' In the case of Rwanda's improbable post-genocide recovery, Marie (2015) tweeted that 'Rwanda would be that girl that comes with no money and no transport but leaves drunk, happy and rich.' For some, the platform provided an opportunity to criticise government spending, with one tweet saying that 'South Africa would be ordering bottles it can't pronounce running a tab it won't be able to pay' (Chasing Summer 2015). For others, it presented an opportunity to remember those countries often overlooked in the many countries that make up Africa as a whole: 'Lesotho would be that person who nobody really knows but is always in the pictures' (Alban 2015). There was also the opportunity to make light of weightier geopolitical tensions in South Sudan: 'South Sudan would be the new guy with serious anger management issues' (Little Hansel 2015). Fun was also poked at countries perceived to act as though they are not part of Africa: 'Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco be like, "What the hell are we doing here?!!"' (Egyptien 2015).

When asked what inspired the hashtag, Mohutsiwa (2017) stated that her wish was to 'travel around Africa through the perceptions of other Africans as much as possible, without having to leave my country' (Mohutsiwa 2017). In so doing, the birth of 'Africa's Twitter Bar' spoke of the conscious effort to tell African stories through the experiences of those who live it in the everyday. Mohutsiwa's ambition was not to ascribe meaning to the African condition, but rather, to open space for those who give it meaning to speak for themselves. Rich in satire,

humour and realpolitik, these conversations brought to the fore shared experiences and commentary on Africa's colonial past, xenophobia, dictatorship and government failures. Using humour as a means by which to tell a different story, the tweets about Africa raisde issues that people grapple with everyday, such as political conflicts, corruption, poverty and economic crisis. Indeed, for a week in July 2015, 'Twitter became a real African bar' (Mohutsiwa (2017) From these stories, connections were made between the past and the present, as well as between people with shared experiences that transcended the boundaries of the nation state. While the Pan-Africanism of old may have centred primarily on the racial struggle against the oppression of the black race, what we find in the new, are conversations about the realities of post-independence Africa as spoken in the everyday language of those who experience them. Of course, this is not representative of an entire continent, neither is each medium investigated in this chapter, but it does indicate broader narratives emerging of a people's experience of conflict, war, betrayed hopes, and dreams for a future in which they are free.

This is a lesson that holds dear to the discipline of IR in which, for too long, African voices have been rendered invisible as the dominant focus has remained the 'great powers' or those who make the 'most difference' (Waltz 1979). As a result, to the extent that Africa has been considered, it has been with regards to its perceived malign influences on international politics such as failed states, civil wars, regional security complexes, shadow economies, and illicit transactions. In contrast, benign influences such as positive norms, peaceful coexistence, security communities, supranational entities, and free trade areas are almost always Western or, these days, sometimes Asian (Thakur 2015). The discipline has effectively silenced the experiences of a continent of over 900 million people in what is seen as a politically empty continent. Yet, beyond one-dimensional frames of violence, poverty and disease are the vivid living histories, political debates, urban and rural complexities, and cultural and social dynamics that define and yet defy simple narratives. Giving space to people confident in their analysis of the challenges facing the continent, new platforms – whether in the form of novels, music or indeed, Twitter – point to the agency of a people able to tell their own stories. Thus, they offer new ways of thinking IR. As we saw earlier in the analysis of the novel *Dust*, the state as an unproblematised unit of analysis is reconfigured within its colonial and postcolonial histories to reveal a contested idea of nationhood. In K'naan's debut album *The Dusty Foot Philosopher* are the insights of a transnational experience of migration – perhaps one of the

biggest challenges of our lifetime. And in rise of the hashtag as an alternative site of public engagement, the dominant idea of the continent as a passive and voiceless space is turned on its head. It is here that we need to look for new insights into thinking the state and the politics of the state in Africa – together with those who live and experience it in the everyday.

These narratives demonstrate that the yearning to be free never ends and that the state endures as an arena of the struggle through the various eras of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial. An engagement with alternative stories and sources from the margins offers new ways of 'seeing' the enduring nature of resistance on the continent and shapes more nuanced perspective of its future. This goes beyond thinking about the place of story in the discipline as it centres on a scholarship in practice which, so far, has failed to consider the struggles that give context and meaning to politics in Africa and which propel processes of change. The cases explored in this chapter demonstrate the confidence of a people in a future yet to come. Though the state had forgotten its promises to the people, the people have not forgotten these. Armed with memories of resistance as a fundamental tool for emancipation, ordinary Africans have continued to engage, transform, co-opt, undermine, reproduce and even reinforce the postcolonial state in Africa. Occurring in multiple dimensions within the levels of both the formal and the informal, critical pedagogies are thus required as a means to decipher them. As noted by Wendall Marsh (2015, p. 19):

> '*Because memory is so often developed from non-written texts, these narratives are more difficult to trace because of the scarcity of traces, but deep in the ideologies, practices, and politics of those denied history is an ethereal yet very real memory that is un-stated but nonetheless dis-static. In other words, History is the science of the state, while memory is the art of the stateless.*'

In the memories of the stories interrogated in this chapter are the visions and imaginaries of a state that is far from complete. As an unfinished business, the state is being called to centre its people at the heart of the story, rather than outside of it. It is this future, and not the failure of a continent, that keeps the state alive in story and which centres story as a form of politics in practice.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RE-IMAGINING THE STATE IN AFRICA: A CASE OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS

8.1. Introduction

This study set out, to tell a different story of the state in Africa. It has been driven by a frustration with the narrative of a discipline and its discourses of failure, to the exclusion of the vibrant, multi-dimensional nature of processes of state formation at critical junctures. It has located this failure against the backdrop of a growing optimism after the Cold War. In this era, some believed that the international community had entered a new era, when the combined action of its members could reduce conflicts and alleviate the suffering of those affected by them. Africa had been caught up in transformations that provoked metaphors of 'sweeping and dramatic' change, following 'waves of reforms', one-party states were in demise and multi-party politics took hold across the continent (Villalon 1998). This, however, was to be short lived, with the eruption and intensification of civil war as the predominant form of violence globally. Africa was no exception. At one extreme was the tragedy of unspeakable proportions experienced in Rwanda and continuing in parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and South Sudan. At the other, the seemingly peaceful transitions to democratic majority rule that had taken place elsewhere on the continent became increasingly riddled with incidences of violent conflict, as was seen in the experiences of Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, and Kenya during electoral cycles. African regimes responded to the pressures for political change in ways that spanned the spectrum from disintegration to profound reconfiguration. Nearly three decades on, it is almost undeniable that the imposed model of democracy and multi-party politics has not been consolidated in most parts of Africa. In most cases, it is increasingly clear that the post-colonial state has not given rise to deeper socio-cultural transformations or consent. Instead, it is said to have become a driving force behind military coups, civil wars, repressive regimes, refugee flows and economic stagnation.

Yet what this study has found is that the core narratives of the mainstream IR discourse are wanting in their analysis because they reduce the causes of the crisis state to internal factors alone. Specifically, it showed this idea as being central to theories of patrimonialism and/or neo-patrimonialism and state criminalisation, which have steadily fashioned debates underlying the so-called 'new political economy' or 'public choice' approaches. There have been many definitions of neo-patrimonialism, incorporating a diverse range of sub-concepts, including clientelism, ethnicity, tradition, tribalism, nepotism, or rent- seeking. This study took Clapham's definition (1985, p. 48) of neo-patrimonialism as 'a form of organisation in which

relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines. Officials hold positions in bureaucratic organisations with powers which are formally defined but exercise those powers . . . as a form . . . of private property.' The problem, as this study has showed, is not primarily the content of the term, but what it has to encompass: a theory of causation for economic malaise on the continent. In addition, theories of neo-patrimonialism explained the failings of the post-colonial order through the corruption of public institutions and the unscrupulousness of Africa's political leaders. Notwithstanding diverging opinions on the socio-economic context of political change, neo-patrimonial theorists have been fairly united in locating the rent-seeking behaviour of African political actors as both the cause and effect of political malaise and crisis on the continent. This, on the one hand, has served to define African politics as predatory pursuit, or rush for spoils of wealth and power, and as a mode of governance. On the other, it has become a descriptive mechanism to capture the way that Africa *really* works (Chabal and Daloz 1999).[33]

These ideas have been relevant in drawing attention to the very real challenges facing many states in the poorer parts of the world, especially with regards to upholding law and order, delivering public goods and addressing development problems. They have done little, however, to further understandings of the ongoing resilience, stability and potential of African statehood. Their capacity to capture nuances of change is greatly limited by the fact that they are replete with gross overgeneralisations. The assumption that neo-patrimonialism is a universally valid explanation for the cause and effect of multiple crises on the continent does not allow for nuances of change because it is conceptually confused about the relationship between nature and society. Furthermore, the idea that neo-patrimonial politics have been detrimental to the continent's development is ahistorical and cannot be supported by empirical evidence. Finally, the fact that theorists resort to 'culture' as an explanatory variable and suggest that an entire continent that has fallen under the weight of its own tradition depends upon essentialist and deeply reductionist understandings of African culture and upon sweeping generalisations which imply that there is only one African politics. Theorists have seen neo-

[33] Chabal and Daloz (1999) refer to a process by which political actors in Africa sought to maximise their returns on the state of uncertainty, confusion and chaos, which to them is characteristic of most African polities. Here they argue, legitimacy of rule depends more on accommodating powerful elite factions than on delivering rapid economic growth and employment. 'Africa works' simply on its own logic of disorder.

patrimonial politics is being a general characteristic of all developing countries, with Africa being no exception to this rule. Perhaps the most damning indictment of neo-patrimonial approaches, however, is a normative one. These theorists continue to privilege the Weberian ideal type as the modern normative model against which state rationality and performance can be 'modelled, analysed, inferred, referenced, compared and contrasted' (Wai 2012).

From this perspective, this study has argued that Africa has been understood in relation to what it *ought* to be, rather than what *actually* is. Scholars scurrilously draw attention to what is absent and lacking, prescribing ambitious programmes to overcome its deficiencies. Conceptually, the African state is often categorised as pathological, deviant, a lame leviathan that exists on the verge of death. Yet, what the discourse fails to mention in its analysis is that no modern state, either conceptually or empirically, has ever met the criteria of the Weberian ideal type. Weber himself considers the ideal type to be an abstract methodological construction that is intended to bring out meanings that humans give action to, rather than offering a description of an empirically grounded reality. Despite this, proponents of this discourse continue to apply its conceptual parameters uncritically to African economies on their own terms as distinct from those of others. This unilinear evolutionism has served as an instrument, knowingly or unknowingly, for uniformity and conformity, disregarding diversity and opportunities for creativity and originality that such diversity presents. Consequently, the narrative produced of Africa when set up against the universalism of the European experience is one that continues to reinforce the image of the continent as the inadequate and even the absurd, occurring only in the shadow of that which has already been.

So, what if, as this study has suggested, 'we invert the order of things? What if we subvert the epistemic scaffolding on which it is erected? What if we posit that, in this present moment, it is Africa which affords a privileged insight into the workings of the world at large? What would this mean for the nature of the explanation?' Such questions, it has suggested, would offer a radical re-centring of Africa's position within the international sphere. A more useful question for the discipline would be one that asks what experiences from Africa and scholarship generated by African thinkers could contribute to an understanding of the state in Africa? The idea here is to consider Africa as an agent of IR knowledge rather an object of IR study. As such, this study has positioned itself within an increasingly vocal scholarship and discussion concerning Africa's place within the international sphere. It has explored *what* it means to

study Africa and *who* gets to do this in its name. It has argued that the basis for a re-imagining of the state in Africa is found in the experiences of those who experience the state in their everyday lives, amid anti-colonial, Pan-African and nationalist struggles for freedom. In doing so, this study has sought to be creative and bring to the fore the existence of a political community in Africa that is characterised by diversity, contestation, sacrifice and visions of a better society. In doing so, it has challenged the idea that all Africans are defined by neo-patrimonialism. What it has offered instead are the intricacies of a society's conversation for a more just and inclusive political order. In the context of these aims, this chapter offers an overview of each chapter as it presents the findings of its inquiry into a people's challenges facing the state in Africa and the prospects for that society's stability.

8.2. Rethinking Approaches to the State in Africa

Chapter Two provided a counter-narrative to the narrow parameters of a discourse on the dramatic and significant changes taking place in so far as it served a basis from which to continue the interrogation of the state as a fixed and unproblematised unit of analysis. In so doing, it offered a discussion of the context within which political change is being experienced on the continent in order to illuminate how and why political processes matter and how better to understand these processes without resorting to stereotype, despair and malaise. In the first instance, it sought to contextualise the continent's colonial legacy within the broader and complex interplay of the local, national and international factors as well as the formal and informal and, in so doing, to draw out the common processes to all of Africa that have been critical in provoking alternatives to the contemporary political terrain of the post-colonial state. It argued that the concept of the state in Africa cannot be separated from its colonial baggage and, from this, the persistent question of its legitimacy. Lasting less than a century, a mere moment in historical time, the colonial state in Africa totally reordered political space, societal hierarchies and cleavages, and modes of economic production. The environment of conquest was not always the same; African states differed in their scope of political organisation and their inter-state relations at the point of intrusion (Young 1994, p. 79). Yet the territorial stamp, etched out at the Berline Conference in 1884-5 by European powers, was eventually to determine the states that got sovereignty, forming the present-day system of African polities (Young 1994, p. 10). The artificiality of the African state is not in doubt. Yet it is the African colonial experience that was markedly unique when compared to its counterparts in other

regions, not only for its late arrival in the age of imperialism and its speed of conquer, but also its sheer 'absolutism and arbitrariness' from which was forged the 'decentralised despotism' that became the hallmark of the colonial state in Africa (Mamdani 1996, p. 10).

It is this legacy that offers the basis from which to understand the nature of the state and the politics of the state in Africa. The paradox of colonialism was that it transferred to its colonies the most modern system of political and economic domination and control – that of the bureaucratic administrative structure. Far from the ideals envisioned in the Weberian ideal type marked by a system of checks and balances, open representative democracy, and the rule of law that is ultimately guided by the principle of 'equality under the law', the structures that were imposed served to exploit, dominate and control its subjects. To effect this predation, the bureaucratic system was used as an instrument for class and racial domination (Mamdani 1996). Here, colonial authorities reified two types of difference – race and tribe – which distinguished those who were subject to civil law (Europeans and other immigrants as racial outsiders) and those who were subject to customary law (Africans and tribal natives). Institutionally, the former was organised along the principle of differentiation and the latter along the principle of the fusion of power in order to create a dependent but autonomous system that contained Africans within a multiplicity of mutually exclusive tribal categories, each with its own distinct traditions and territories (Mamdani 1996, p. 1-2). Divide and rule in this way became 'define and rule'. Thus, the colonial state that emerged was a 'quintessentially modern' mode of governance that sought 'not just to acknowledge difference but also to shape it' (Mamdani 1996, p. 1-2). Absolute and arbitrary, it simultaneously created agencies of rule and invented extractive devices whilst imposing on the subordinate societies the cost of this unsolicited governance proposed for them (Young 1994,78). With violence and brute force at its core, it was all-powerful and despite its raison d'etre of low-cost domination, its overpowering image of strength and authority meant it sustained its hegemony with relative ease.

Yet given its arbitrariness, it could not engender any legitimacy even though it made rules and laws profusely and propagated values. Consequently, its authority became the focus for challenge of anti-colonial and nationalist movements agitating for greater autonomy and eventually independence. The type of politics that emerged in and through this process was essentially a zero-sum game, a quest for survival between two exclusive claims to rulership

that made no room for moderation or compromise. The result was an unprecedented drive for power sought by all means, which eventually gave way to the decolonisation process and independence of the colonies. With independence at hand, nationalist leaders were convinced that that political independence and the primacy of politics in human affairs, rather than economic determinism, was the key to all other improvements in the African condition (Mazrui 1993, p. 105).[34] To this end, post-independence politics in Africa was fashioned within the framework of the anti-colonial struggle that gathered pace in the period after the Second World War. It was a framework that placed the state at the frontline of all key socio-economic and political processes of the polity and which was organic to the social contract upon which the nationalist anti-colonial coalition was constructed (Olokushi 2004). The ideological underpinnings of post-independence politics (in which the state-led or state-interventionist postcolonial model of accumulation retained a central role) was then critical to the intensive restructuring of social relations and politics which, in turn, included the acceleration of the process of class formation and differentiation (Olokushi 2004). In this way, rather than breaking down the oppressive, extractive and authoritative nature of the colonial state at independence, its core elements were passed on intact to its successor (Young 1994, p. 29).

Indeed, as the new leaders were soon to find out, the inherited model of accumulation came with its own structure of incentives – of rewards and penalties – and by which decision-making units were overloaded with demands and expectations but had few capabilities and resources to meet them (Mazrui 1993, p. 490). Neither did the parliamentary system make for smooth sailing as it did for its predecessors; the new systems of checks and balances and the separation of powers did not make it easy for those schooled in the authoritarian culture of colonial politics. For the new leaders, consolidating power and securing the material base became the priority, for which maintaining the status quo provided relative predictability and stability. How the state legitimated and maintained its power and authority was crucial to the formation and consolidation of the state. Given the growing centrifugal tendencies and political competition arising from the mutual alienation of the coalition partners, more value was placed on the capture of political power for fear of the consequences of losing out (Olokushi 2004; Ake 1996). With such a premium placed on it, the command state could not operate on the basis of ultimate impersonal authority and coercive force alone; indispensable to its survival were supplementary mechanisms translating state rule into personalised linkages

[34] Socialist countries such as Tanzania were the exception.

with intermediaries and their ramifying networks of clientele. Patrimonial webs of personalised circuits of distribution reciprocated with clientele loyalty created a honeycomb of networks by which the ascendancy of the ruler was maintained (Young 1994). This had far-reaching implications for the process of state formation and consolidation across sub-Saharan Africa. The struggle for political power intensified and, in this struggle, once-solicitous ruling coalitions turned on one another, stifling the space for political debate and ushering in the advent of the one-party state in Africa.

It was in the context that the legacy of colonial rule in Africa was brought to fore, deeply exposing the disjointed social contracts upon which post-independence coalitions were formed. The already worsening situation was further accelerated by drought, crippling debt repayments and the mismanagement of the already bloated and weak bureaucracies, triggering the collapse of the postcolonial framework of accumulation as systemic crises began to appear. In the growing economic disarray, the postcolonial state also found itself faced with a suddenly more hostile international climate arising from a paradigm shift in development economics. The Washington Consensus that was increasingly advocated by IFIs and championed by the conservative-led administrations of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, touted the supremacy of the market and the return of neoclassical economics to intellectual hegemony. The result were onerous reform demands placed on African governments seeking assistance for recovery. Towards the end of the century, facing a less favourable international climate as the superpowers lost the political incentive to support repressive regimes and with growing economic crisis, state authorities lost their capacity to accumulate and redistribute resources to clients, deeply exposing the fatal shortcomings in the nature of the state. The end of the reflexive support for African states by key Cold War protagonists removed a huge barrier to the political transformation for the state. Almost overnight, many African regimes lost their automatic clientele relationships with Cold War hegemons. In the ensuing vacuum, political settlements forged in exclusionary bargains collapsed as the long-suppressed demands of citizens exploded into the open. Nowhere was this vulnerability more visible than in countries such as Zaire, Ethiopia, Angola and Liberia. The growing political movements of opposition politicians, professionals, students, the press and trade unions, sought to capture central power, using the language of reform in vowing to 'unshackle' the state. These upheavals came to be grouped under the heading of democratisation.

8.3. The Global Politics of the Post-colonial State in Africa

It is this background to the state, one rooted in its colonial genesis in Africa and its reproduction in the post-colonial era, that gives context and meaning to the arena of politics as a form and practice of colonial rule. Notwithstanding the machinations of one-party rule and its oppressive regimes, the contextualisation of the state within its historical formation offers a much wider and broader understanding of the state in Africa. This too cannot be separated from the nature of international relations and questions surrounding sovereignty, state and intervention. As Chapter Two sought to show, Cold War conflicts and manifest neo-colonial interference played a role in the overthrow and assassination of democratically elected but 'disagreeable' leaders including Patrice Lumumba in 1961, Sylvanius Olympia in 1963, Kwame Nkrumah in 1972 and Thomas Sankara in 1987.

These coups were executed by multinational alliances that included locals yet, as Grovogui (2012, p. 123) rightly contends, 'the mechanism of implementation and structures of legitimation were all commodities of global politics way before independence.' The neo-colonial events would not have taken place without the assent of segments of postcolonial elites. The assassination of Lumumba alone was to trigger an era of Western-backed military coups and rule and after which Africa became a theatre of global contests where African leaders entered Cold War alliances to secure their survival. Indeed, many of those considered tyrants, autocrats and dictators today, were those enabled in their actions through alliances with external powers (states) or forces (non-state actors). The likes of Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire), Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor (Liberia), Siad Barre (Somalia), Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire) and many others who set the stage for some of the worst crises seen on the continent, were all Cold War allies of the West, shedding light om the extent to which postcolonial elites were enabled, burdened or constrained by regulatory and constitutive dimensions of Cold War politics, its institutions and regimes of legitimacy (Grovogui 2012).

At the same time, political decolonisation and formal independence in Africa did not mean the end of imperialism in Africa, but rather a change in the guise of imperialism (Chiweizu 1993, p. 769). Indeed, empire and colonialism have outlived decolonisation in the form of economic colonisation. Multilateral economic organisations such as the UN, IMF,

World Bank, European Economic Community (EEC), Organisation for Economic Cooperation (OECD) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) were at the apex of a structure of rules, laws, customs and organisations which together determined the workings of the capitalist world into which African states emerged from colonialism (Chiweizu 1993, p. 772). Co-opted or obliged by various overt and covert sections of the instruments transferring political power at independence in order to retain economic, diplomatic or cultural agreements, African states not only found themselves subordinated to the apex institutions, but also tied by a thousand cables to the inner working structures of the global capitalist system. This subordination meant that colonial trading patterns remained intact, with Western Europe as principal trading partner and Africa as supplier of raw materials to the West and as market for Western manufacturing goods. Internally, therefore, African economies retained their colonial character as since little effort was made to change them and they continued to produce what the West needed, as dictated by the demands of the world market, rather than what the citizens within these economies needed.

Colonial regimes of property found new applications in a global economy from which the position of Africa as the provider of raw materials was further entrenched in neoliberal arrangements. Beyond being subjected to an extraordinary degree of foreign tutelage on how to run a country and becoming a foreign laboratory for new forms of Western domination through the SAP programmes of the World Bank and IMF, the loss of autonomy and sovereignty on the part of African states (many of which became accountable to international aid agencies rather than to their domestic electorates) ensured a brutal reversal in the balance of social forces to the benefit of capital (Amin 2002). The devastating results of these policies are well known. Yet in their weakened state – recognition of the constitution of property as a legitimate function of the state by neo liberal schemes legitimised deals and the transfer of ownership of land and industry to foreign firms and creditors. Sovereignty became a legal façade by which non-state actors and foreign firms simplified questions concerning the legitimacy of contracts and adherence to laws in the home countries of these players (Dunn 2001, p. 51). While the strictures of the global political economy and the power politics at play show the external signs of neo-colonial webs of power, a closer look reveals the regimes of morality, law and order that undergird and legitimise them in the postcolonial era. For Grovogui (2012, p. 125), the most pervasive and enduring ideological undercurrents to African Studies in the post-World War II era have been liberalism and rationalism, which made their

entry through theories of development, modernisation and the rule of law or good governance. The theory of modernisation put forward in W.W. Rostow's *The stage of economic growth: a communist manifesto,* paved the way for the study of postcolonial states as traditional and non-modern as compared to the liberal democracies of the West.

These ideas validated and embedded the liberalism of the post-war Western global reform agenda by granting legitimacy to development aid and the agenda of liberalisation of trade and investment abroad. The result was the acceptance of capitalism and liberalism as the key to post-colonial salvation and to which the role of the continent was to catch up with the West. Far from questioning the effects and failures of the reform agenda, proponents and scholars simply turned their gaze onto the functions and/or dysfunctions of local institutions, culture and behaviour in explaining corruption and violence on the continent. Contextualised in this way, the study of the African state within IR has come under sharp criticism for its ambivalence towards the history of slavery, colonialism and postcolonial and/or neo-colonial relations upon which the state is founded and which, in many ways, continues to operate. Far from being marginal or a continent that is only acted upon, the experiences and events of imperialism, colonialism and postcolonial relations have shaped the existence of the conquerors or hegemons and the conquered and subordinated alike. In this way, while analysts have viewed 'native' Africans as the agents and victims of state failure, corruption and conflict, the structural and normative contexts themselves are hardly African. Moreover, while some regimes have been vapid and predatory, they cannot be understood outside of their context, the omission of which inaccurately conflates the representation of the state with the ruling elites and the events themselves with the enabling processes and structures (Grovogui 2012; Olokushi 2004, Mamdani 1996). Considering this, truth seeking as one of the primary functions of scientific pursuit needs to be brought back into the study of the African state, global politics and the promotion of justice, peace, order and security (Grovogui 2009). Part of this enterprise begins with the necessary questioning of the West's authorship of IR theory, whose hegemonic practice closes out other readings/writings of global politics.

8.4. IR – An Imperial Relation to an International Relation

In response, Chapter Three took on the challenge of Africa's place within IR. It argued

that the question of the state in Africa and the politics of the international (as central to understanding the state) are not simply matters of disciplinary concern but ethical questions too, given the roots of the discipline and its politics in an imperial and colonial era. Thus, it gave credit to several studies that have called into question the applicability of existing IR theory to the developing world, and Africa in particular, given the neglect of these regions in IR theory. Typical of such discontent are accusations that the field is indifferent to and dismissive of policy issues outside the core, and that its primary conceptual tools, analytical categories and concepts are ill-equipped for understanding many of today's voices. Seeking to move beyond these well-founded arguments, the chapter sought to consider what experiences from Africa and what scholarship from Africa could contribute to these debates and to the question of the state in Africa and the state in the international. It found that, inspired by the rise of constructivist thought within IR and by foundational re-evaluations of Africa's historical experience which were produced in the 1990s and 2000s, a vibrant and multidisciplinary literature on 'African agency' in the international is emerging. These studies focus their attention on the different ways in which African states (either individually or collectively) have leveraged their assumed strategic value to major powers on the international stage in order to secure resources, influence and favour which may have otherwise been unavailable to them.

Assessments of African agency have been made, for example, on how African states deployed their strategic value within the bipolar East-West geopolitical conflict of the Cold War and how they have leveraged positions such as 'ally' in the context of aid agendas and, more recently, in counterterrorism efforts led by Western counterparts (Schmidt 2013). They have also paid attention to the agency of African states in challenging and redefining the analytical underpinnings of Western states' rationale for engaging with them (Brown 2013). This has been especially prevalent in the reshaping of donor understandings of concepts such as state-building, conflict and fragility. Particularly interesting are new and emerging literatures on Africa's international relations as distinct from the international politics of so-called 'great powers' (Tieku 2012). Grounded in assessments of the ways in which African actors have secured room to manoeuvre within the global institutions whose rules they played no role in setting, these literatures have illuminated the power of the 'solidarity' principle as a mechanism for collective action on the international stage. These ideas have been central to putting the continent on the discipline's map, highlighting African contributions on matters such as the environment and climate change, health and HIV/Aids, gender, conflict and security

(Harman & Brown 2013). While these have served a valuable function by adding African cases and empirical examples to IR, they still exclude the many ways in which African citizens and communities have fundamentally and proactively changed the rules of the game. The chapter found this to be partly the result of the focus of much contemporary analysis on African agency on the role of and influence of African states. Consequently, they have remained constrained by the limits of a state-centric approach and thus confined to the Westphalian ideal as a 'state-centric, sovereignty-orientated, territorially bounded global order'.

It is this ideal which has come to inform the systemic explanation of international politics in traditionally mainstream IR theories and thus to constrain our thinking of a politics beyond the West. This is the idea that the history of modern international relations is largely assumed to be rooted in the European state system which was born out of the Peace of Westphalia of 1648. This view is supported by the idea that through the agency of European empires and decolonisation, a Westphalian morality of state sovereignty formed the basis for the international order or community of states. What it misses, however, is that this is precisely the period of colonial expansion and settlement that saw some European states consolidating their domination over other regions and over their peoples, who came to be represented in racialiwed terms. It is this idea, or the 'Westphalian commonsense', as Siba Grovogui (2002) calls it, that has come to permeate an economy of knowledge which has consistently allowed its adherents to orient their inquiries and research agendas towards particular perceptions of the world and to effect particular understanding of 'international reality'. To the extent that it prevails, it translates into a perception of normative lack when it comes to the postcolonial state in Africa. Herein lie the roots of a discourse of failure within which the African state has been almost endlessly pathologised as a deviant of an ideal Weberian Western state, whether as the failed state, the weak state, the criminal state, the neo-patrimonial state, or the quasi-sovereign state. Such analyses of the state are classic examples of the application of theory to Africa, seeking to fit its institutions and practices into an already existing model and constantly finding it wanting (Abrahamsen 2017). Rather than use the African experience as evidence that undermines the empirical thesis of a uniform Western model, theorists have often construed deviations as a sign of the inability of the African state to live up to the requirements of sovereignty (Jackson 1992; Clapham 1996).

Thus, returning to the dilemma first outlined in Chapter One, this chapter (Chapter 8)

suggested that we recover the study of Africa as a place in and of the world, capturing its societies as both unique and global. It did so in two ways. The first was to suggest that from the Fifteenth Century there was no longer a 'distinctive historicity' of these societies which was not embedded in times and rhythms heavily conditioned by European domination. That is, that the experiences and events of imperialism, colonialism and postcolonial relations shaped the existence of the conquerors or hegemons and the conquered and subordinated alike. As such, to the degree that European modernity has been a world-historical process, it can be narrated from its assumed peripheries as much as it can from its self-proclaimed centres. The second is that we reclaim the space for stories – in this case, African stories. Indeed, while agency has been constrained, African actors are not and have never been passive. Thus, the challenge is to uncover the stories of such agency: stories of human initiative in thought and action; stories of ordinary people standing up to powerful structures of inequality and in some cases changing them; and stories of the everyday experience as resistance itself. These stories do not have to be created; they already exist in African scholarship. While at first glance they may not be recognisable to IR, they nevertheless hold the potential for new insights into understanding international relations. The chapter thus suggested that we be creative and transcend the disciplinary boundaries of IR to explore the stories being told within the African context.

In so doing, this chapter (Chapter 8) put forward the idea of narrative as an inclusive frame of reference by which to capture African voices otherwise made invisible by concepts that are core to IR. Drawing from the works of Clandinin and Connelly (2006), Reismann and Speedy (2007), and Labov (2013), it offered the idea of narrative inquiry as a relatively new qualitative methodology for the study of experience understood narratively. As a ubiquitous practice (in that people have told stories about their experiences for as long as we could talk), it is its emergencein the field of social sciences that feels new. As the study of experience, story is the portal through which a person enters the world and make sense of the world. Narrative inquiry is first and foremost, therefore, a way of thinking about experience. To employ it is to adapt a view of experience as phenomenon under study. In its simplest form, narrative is an account of the sequence of events in the order in which they occurred to make a point. Its aim is not only to explain the action in question but to enhance and extend understanding, comprehension, and experiences. As with all stories, there is a beginning, a middle, and an end (a sequence rather than a haphazard organisation). There are characters in

the stories, and events that point to a future in as much as they elicit emotion. There is an audience to whom these stories are given, as well and an underlying plot which is usually familiar to the audience from stories they have heard before. In the context of the study of IR, there has always been a strong narrative content, especially if the discipline of history is conceived as narrative in nature. The chapter set the challenge to recover the space for African stories, proposing a frame of reference put forward by Karen Smith (2009) to do so.

8.4.1. Re-Interpreting Old Stories

Given the context of its findings, it Chapter 4 chose to reinterpret an old story of decolonisation and independence through the visions and imaginaries of the state from within the African continent, starting with those of its founding fathers and their Pan-African ideas. In so doing, it tasked itself with the question of how they imagined and thought through the question of decolonisation, sovereignty and the state. Was a continent containing more than fifty states, each maintaining its own sovereignty, the inevitable outcome of decolonisation? Through an interrogation of the Pan-African and nationalist vision it found this not to be the case. Instead, as Chapter Four demonstrated, just as the reality of independence appeared within reach, nationalist leaders and intellectual circles widely deliberated and consulted on the most focal issue of the time, that of African unity and a proposed United States of Africa. Emerging from this was a trans-national imaginary of political community that expressed a people's desire to democratise the international and, subsequently, to transform the territorial map etched out at the Berlin Conference of 1884-5 Berlin. Drawing on a critical juncture analysis, Chapter Four further explored the context within which newly independent states emerged and drew on the idea of 'the dilemma of the pan-Africanist' as described by Nyerere (1977) to narrate the political agency of nationalist leaders and the function of decision-making in determining the course of history. It foregrounded the international context of the Cold War and global capitalism (and the determination of colonial powers to maintain their positions within both) and told the story of agency in constrained spaces and decisions taken that gave context and meaning to the reproduction of the colonial state in Africa as identified in Chapter Two. This foregrounded the agency of political actors and the unfinished business of a people's idea for a more just and inclusive political order as expressed through the AU, which replaced the OAU. It argued that if the basis of such a union remained a conception of sovereignty as one formed of states and not of people, this would remain an unrealised ideal. It thus concluded

with an analysis of the ongoing politics of Pan-African unity through a people expressing its legacy in the arts and culture.

8.4.2. Telling Stories in a Different Language

With regards to the imperative to tell different stories in a different language, Chapter Five centred its analysis on anti-colonial, pan-African and nationalist struggles for a more just and inclusive political order. It drew attention to the politics of transition as put forward by then-Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, who likened African nationalism to 'the processes that gave birth of the nation states in Europe', with the result that Europe could no longer justify the grounds for colonial rule (cited in Myers 2000, p. 564). At its core was a struggle against denial: the denial of humanity, the denial of respect and dignity, and the denial of the Africanness of the African. It was a demand and struggle *against* rather that *for* something. Indeed, as Issa Shivii (2003) argues, the quintessence of African nationalism was, and is, anti-imperialism. Foregrounding the conditions of denial and crisis that gave form to the struggle enables a move away from the idea of the failure of the state as an aftereffect of the fact, rather than as the fact itself. Indeed, as it appeared at the dawn of independence, the inherited state was nothing less than a crisis of social disintegration. According to Basil Davidson (1992), what the nationalists of the 1950s inherited in the 'transfer of power' was essentially a transfer of crisis marked by 'a coil of problems pregnant with serious (if yet unadmitted) crises of malfunction'. The conditions of crisis facilitated the question of the state at a critical juncture in which the transfer of power would take place. While no one at the time could have foreseen the full extent of the concessions made in the name of independence and by accepting the liberal institutions conceived of in the colonial capitals of the newly independent states in Africa, the acceptance was to set the foundation for what remains an ongoing struggle over the form of governance centred on the reconstitution of the state in Africa. An inquiry into this moment exposes the terms of transition and the politics of decision making through which a new crisis of the state was engineered.

8.4.3. Telling Stories with New Main Characters

At the same time, Chapter 8 offered the context through which nationalist leaders were operating in relation to the Cold War, global capitalism, and the determination of colonial powers to maintain their position within both. Indeed, the confluence of these factors

was to unleash one of the most violent periods in post-colonial history, as the struggle for influence transformation the continent into a site of hot conflicts between the 'East and the West'. Worse still, it disfigured the dreams of democracy and shattered the ideals of independence, as Africa's leaders struggled to hold onto power or created autocratic means by which to do so. The inauguration of the one-party state is but one example of a geopolitical climate that came to justify the status quo rather than the politics of changed as promised through the liberation discourse. The state, a symbol of this, was the ordained the instrument of development and the organiser of society, with a constitution that bore little resemblance to the people it claimed to represent. Illegitimate in the eyes of the people, in the eyes of opposition leaders, and indeed, in the eyes of African leaders who had dared to dream of an alternative moral order, the reproduction of the colonial state in the post-colonial moment shattered the ideals of a future yet to come. The assassination of the DRC's first democratically elected president was the beginning of a succession of betrayals which many have considered the continent's 'original sin'. That is, clash of ambitions which tore the enormous success of the nationalism movement apart. If in the exclusionary politics of the one-party state African leaders were to engender the emergence of Cold War alliances in a battle for power over the state, then through betrayal of the 'common aims and aspirations' of a people's promise for a more just and inclusive political order. Perhaps none more apparent than in the complete collapse of the affiliative and collaborative mechanisms that had brough creative writers, revolutionary theoreticians, and nationalist politicians together in a marriage of convenience.

It is this period of history that determined new struggle for the state, one which Chapter Six sought to tell through the recovery of a political community in Africa characterised by diversity, contestation, sacrifice and visions of a better society. Bringing to the fore the politics of Thomas Sankara and his pleas for a United Front Against Debt, it sought to link the politics of a present past with that of Kwame Nkrumah's call for a United States of Africa. These narratives centred the issue of Africa's position in the international as weak when contextualised within a neo-colonial order, but also represented an important counter-narrative to the essentialist and uniform ideas of predatory elites. Instead, they contained the contradiction and complexity of human characters who find themselves in moments of overwhelming crisis and change and, despite having few options, had a determination to succeed in the objective to transform and indeed, democratise, the international order. Chapter Six showed how, even where they failed, these ideas and their politics remain in circulation

within a critical intellectual tradition within African political thought. The proposals of the Lagos Plan of Action and the existence of CODESRIA bring to the fore ideas and imaginaries of a political community in Africa that remains committed to the transformation of the African state. Their absence from the purview of a discipline's exploration as to the nature of the crisis in Africa impoverishes understandings of a people's struggle for a more just and political order. Chapter Six also found in the music and politics of Fela Kuti's Afrobeats a stinging indictment of the failure of African leaders. But contrary to the single story one finds in the neo-patrimonial discourse, Kuti's music provides an expansive idea of their failure as produced within the framework of the colonial state in Africa and the modes of governance within which the state has come to exist.

8.4.4. Telling Stories with Existing Characters with a New Plot

It is therefore in the recovery of ordinary people and their experiences of the state that we find a narration of conflict, crisis and the endurance of anti-colonial, Pan-African and nationalist imaginaries for a more just and inclusive future. These are stories of a people's resistance to the oppression of ruling regimes and unpopular policies which find their origins in the historical struggles preceding them. In Yvonne Owuor's novel *Dust*, the state as an unproblematised unit of analysis is reconfigured within its colonial and postcolonial histories to reveal a contested idea of nationhood. In K'naan's *Dusty Foot Philosopher* are insights of a transnational experience of migration, perhaps one of the biggest challenges of our lifetime. And the rise of the hashtag as an alternative site of public engagement challenges the dominant idea of the continent as a passive and voiceless space. Together, these stories and the complex and multiple histories of state combined, unpacked and unravelled the concept of the state as an unfinished business. Indeed, set against the dominant paradigms of the imaginary of the state as some deviant form of an ideal Weberian, Western state (weak, failed, neo-patrimonial, criminalised, quasi-sovereign) explored in Chapter One, this study finds an alternative perspective from the African experience. This experience tells of a multiplicity of actors, interests, values, ideas and imaginaries, each combining at different moments in history to tell of the state as terrain of contestation, negotiation and bricolage. We are to read it as a process of struggle in the making of nations and in which the deviance from an ideal is, in factm deviance from a particular experience: the colonial experience. We also find within the dualism of the state, the inability to overcome the very nature of its imposition.

This raises an important question of whether the anti-colonial imaginary was ever plausible and, if so, whether postcolonial constitutional collapse is a deviation from the original imaginary that mobilised masses of African for decolonisation. What is clear, however, is while African agency has been constrained in 'tight corners', Africans have never been passive. The political struggles for democratic transition remains an enduring feature of the resistance of people. The extent to which these have been constrained or enabled by international factors is also a question that brings into view the nature of the continent's politics as a global phenomenon. Indeed, the crisis of the nation is a global condition, and the crisis of elites is a global condition. Thus, in many ways, the African experience offers a means to move beyond ideal types and engage instead with the 'what is'. This enables a much clearer view of the politics of the international. More so, it challenges the narrow and narrowing parameters of a discipline that has so far failed to include the voices of those who are most affected by globalisation and its impact on already weak economies. At a time when what has been portrayed in the Western imaginary as an 'African problem' finds itself to be a global condition (crises of nation states, democracies, economies, politics and societies), Africa offers important lessons and insights in a world trying to understand the politics of change. As such, this study has centred on the need for a more radical scholarship in which the voices of those otherwise left of the mainstream are included and given space share what is truly an international relations. It has also foregrounded the importance of being creative in where we look for these stories, democratising the academy beyond its ivory tower. Finally, it has urged that when scholars consider institutions and structures, we remember the people – the 'software' of the state, for it is through their imaginaries that future of its politics is shaped. Only in this way can we truly offer a re-imagining of the state in Africa and the state in IR as truly global phenomena.

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