UNIT 4 PROBLEMS OF STATEHOOD: INTEGRATION AND LEGITIMISATION

Structure

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we would examine the unique and unparalleled statehood experiences and developmental paradigms of a large number of African states, which became independent on a euphoric wave of hope and excitement in the early years of the 1960s. The process had worldwide repercussions for never before in the living memory had such a large number of states gained liberation and statehood in such a short span of time and that too in peace and with goodwill. When the Second World War ended there were only three fully independent states in Africa—Ethiopia, Liberia and South Africa. In the following decades, timetables for the liquidation of Europe's African Empires were drawn up and France, Britain and Belgium accepted with swiftness and ease the need to relinquish their hold on the territories and peoples whose governance they had acquired in the previous century. The process began with the independence of Ghana in 1958. It gathered momentum in the years following and between 1960-64 all the British occupied territories in East and Central Africa and the Belgian and French colonies on the continent, except the Portuguese held territories of Angola and Mozambique and the White settler regimes in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, emerged from colonial rule as sovereign independent states. By 1965, Africa was well on the road to decolonisation—a dream had come true. But African states had to contend with other critical and difficult problems of statehood and governance—consolidating nation states out of arbitrarily defined colonies and to ensure all round economic development that would help overcome widespread poverty and socio-economic frustrations, besides managing external relations including intra-African ties.

Some of these problems, which differed from one state to another, as did the African states themselves in terms of their ideology, nature and types of regimes, styles of leadership, economic development, etc., would be examined here. It would specifically address and analyse, issues reflecting on the crisis of the state—problems of nationalism and integration and the issues of regime legitimisation and leadership. These would be evaluated in the perspective of the inherited colonial system—political structures and functions of statehood—that had been passed on to the post-colonial states regardless of the reality of community and accountability in independent Africa. In fact any attempt to understand contemporary African politics should be based on the primary understanding of the specific historical experiences of these states. Such a perspective would place present day African politics in proper context and enable an understanding of the complex ways in which African societies have developed over time.

But before taking up all analysis of post-independence statehood problems, it would be in order to evaluate the nature of the African state, against an historical perspective.

4.2 NATURE OF THE STATE IN AFRICA

4.2.1 Attributes of the State

The state in Africa—the post-colonial state—had all the structural and functional attributes of a state, as anywhere else. It had clearly demarcated territories, state sovereignty and an institutional structure of governance—all of which had been bequeathed by colonial powers. Most governments of the newly independent countries, with a few exceptions, accepted generally the boundaries inherited from the colonial state even while they had been arbitrarily drawn and cut across and divided various ethnic/social groups. The exceptions were the large and disparate states — Sudan, Nigeria and Congo/Zaire—wherein dissatisfied ethnic groups threatened territorial integrity. All experienced long years of civil war. While Sudan suffered continuous civil war from 1964 onwards, except during the period 1972-83, in Nigeria the secession of Biafra sparked off a civil war between 1967 and 1970. African leaderships, however, soon realised that the colonially delineated boundaries were more a source of support than a threat to them or their governments and they made all efforts to abide by them.

Only four states — Morocco, Somalia, Ghana and 'Togo — challenged their inherited colonial boundaries. King Hasan II of Morocco laid claim to Mauritanian and Algerian territory derived from the pre-colonial Moroccan Kingdom; the Somalis supported self-determination for the ethnic Somalis disbursed through Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Ghana challenged and called for removal of all colonial boundaries and the establishment of a continental African Union and Togo campaigned for the restoration to the status of the former German colony divided in 1919 between France and Britain and to bring together the split ethnic Ewe community. While Ghana and Togo abandoned their claim, Morocco and Somalia continued their struggle against the colonial divisions. Other states like Rwanda and Burundi in Central Africa and Lesotho and Swaziland in Southern Africa abandoned their claims for rectification of colonial boundaries and felt it more prudent not to challenge their more powerful neighbours. In another instance, the people who were being transferred. abandoned the proposed transfer of South African territory, inhabited by the Swazis, to Swaziland in the face of opposition. Similarly, both Ethiopia and Sudan retained their inherited state boundaries despite serious claims of secession by the Amharic Christians and the Arabic speaking Moslems of the Nile Valley and Khartoum.

Overall, it was perceived practical convenience and mutual recognition of the need not to disturb frontiers. The only exception being the case of Eritrea, which sought independent statehood, and finally gained it.

Sovereignty, the second important attribute of a state, arising from the first, was endowed to all post-colonial African states. Governments of these states exercised sovereign jurisdiction and were the filial arbiters of all actions within the state boundaries that they controlled. Besides, a large number of states came to independence under a national leadership that enjoyed popular support and consequent sovereignty within its territory. Even in circumstances when tlie domestic state structure ran into internal conflicts, neighbouring states did not intervene respectingtheir sovereignty. Ethiopia for instance, ruled by Emperor Haile Selassie, who claimed power as being divinely sanctioned and who controlled a government structure — unequaland conflictual—never did lose sovereignty. Similarly in Liberia, even though tlie government was controlled by a group of American-Liberian immigrants that deprived the indigenous Afiican majority of its legitimate rights, it never became a matter ofconcern to the neighbouring African states. Other states — Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, Guinea, etc., —also ignored domestic conflictual situations on the plea of respect for state sovereignty.

The third attribute of the Afiican state is the institutional structure of governance operating through the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary. Through these institutions, African states exercised sovereign jurisdiction within their respective territorial boundaries; and with the state bureaucracy, armed forces and the police it maintained law and order and controlled a range of essential functions pertaining to tlie welfare of its population. The state thus had all the trappings of sovereign constitutional authority and the support structure to govern independently and efficiently within its borders. Yet the reality of the African state was very different from its European counterpart and it failed to perform some of its basic functions. What are tlie reasons for this anomaly? Why did African states fail to deliver satisfactorily and efficiently'? We would address some of these issues in historical and theoretical perspectives of the state as it evolved in Africa.

4.2.2 Theoretical Perspectives of the State

Although there is a vast body of literature on the nature of the African state, the issue still remains enigmatic, as there is no single answer or just one overall conceptual manifestation of the state in Africa. There are as many African states as there are African countries that vary in terms of their ideology — socialist or capitalist--economic development, style of leadership, nature of the regime in power, size of population, etc. Besides, statehood in post-colonial Africa was an imposed concept unlike tlie product of evolutionary historical processes of those who ruled them, The African state was not anchored to the Afiican socio-political realities as the European modern state was to its societies. It in fact was created by colonialism and possessed different internal structures that conformed to the diverse systems of control of the Imperial Powers in their respective colonies—the Portuguese refusal to decolonise, the Belgian failure to develop indigenous institutions, tlie imposition of White settlements in Southern Africa, tlie British systems of indirect rule and tlie distinctive cultural ties tliat France maintained with its colonies. Given the nature of governments in Portugal, Spain and Italy, it was hardly possible to expect that their colonial administrations would be more effective. In fact, the systems of governance in tlie Portuguese colonies reflected the very backward, incompetent and arbitrary nature of the systems tliat prevailed in tlie home state. France and Britain, on the other hand, maintained better colonial institutions in their African colonies and tlie latter benefited from tlie quality of government. Generally then, the political systems inherited by the post-colonial state varied from one country to another making it difficult to define tlie nature of the state and its origins in Africa.

African analysts nevertheless, have interpreted and explained the content and the nature of the state, its origins and its evolution through three distinct though partly overlapping functional approaches — the Liberal-developmental, the Marxist and that of tlie overdeveloped state derived from colonialism. The Liberal-developmental concept interpreted tlie state as being virtually coterminous with the government as the apex of the political system. According to the Marxist interpretation, the state was apolitical structure controlled by the economically dominant class—an outcome of class struggle determined by the evolution of the modes of production of society. The state thus was conceived as an arena of class struggle determined by the country's position in the capitalist system. The third hypothesis perceived the state as being overdeveloped — a legacy of the colonial state, which was endowed with awesome and limitless power over its territory and its resources. The holders of state power were overwhelmingly the powerful and privileged members of the community. This conceptualisation was made as a reaction to tlie previous two postulates and was the only one that was historically specific, as only according to it the African state, as discussed above, derived its genesis from the colonial state. All these concepts drawn from the Western experiences foundered in the African context and proved to be conceptually and functionally inadequate.

4.2.3 State in Evolution: Changing Theoretical Perspectives

The evolution of the state and the ongoing changes adjusting the state functioning to the political and socio-economic realities over the last few decades highlight the usefulness and the limitations of the three conceptualisations. African states had moved to independence on a wave of euphoria when they accepted without demur the inherited political structures. However, as the euphoria waned and difficulties emerged, most African leaderships took up the challenge and evolved their own administrative systems far removed from the Western liberal paradigms of the European state structure. An understanding of these latter would help us to comprehend the nature of the African state and locate it in the African and the European historical perspectives.

The most distinctive feature of the African state as it evolved is that its structure and functions replicated those of the colonial states. It inherited tlie colonial states' entire political, economic and administrative hegemonic infrastructure, including theover-manned bureaucracy that gave it an overdeveloped character. It was the bureaucratic machinery that had enabled the colonial state to establish imperial sovereignty over conquered territories and legitimise its authority through Force and coercion, and this, unlike the modern European state, without being accountable to the state's civil society. Like the colonial state, African states used the bureaucratic machinery and the powerful infrastructure of the state to implement its policies and to centralise its control. The African bureaucracy over the years acquired immense power and enforced its writ with an iron hand. At the same time the state also became more authoritarian and despotic. Like the colonial state it was everywhere, controlling and directing the administration and the economy. It also shaped the social life of the peoples by granting and withholding them amenities and often constraining their interactions with other groups. The state further extended its control by utilising a major share of its resources whether it was for the payment of salaries to its personnel, for its own needs in personally directed investments and other questionable activities. This authoritative and centralising trend as an organising principle of state policy, extended throughout the continent from the single or dominant party syndrome state to ideologically committed states and even those that maintained a generally preferential relationship with the global economy.

A range of African countries particularly tlze "Marxist" states—Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Guinea Bissau--conformed to these principles. The two radical socialist states — Tanzania and Sekou Toures' Guinea — gave another political line to centralisation. Both adopted models that stressed the need for state-patty discipline and extended democratic centralisation through ideological appeals and by introducing state economic control through public ownership of industrial, commercial, agriculture and cooperative organisations. In Guinea for example, the ruling *Parti Democratique de Guinee* (PDG) developed its own homogenous programme of nationalisation and self-reliance that included the introduction of its own currency, training programmes for its intellectual elites in its own polytechnics at Kankan and Conakry and large scale human investment programmes that were all designed to winoverthe peoples to the state's centralist trends of governance. The regime also differentiated itself from its neighbours by stressing a consistent cultural nationalism that traced the country's ancestry to its glorious African past and at the same time adapted a radical pan-Africanism for the continent as a whole. In 1968, an event of great magnitude was organised that achieved an eloquent synibiosis of these two thought processes and won widespread support for the regime's policies. A major commemorative function to honour the Fouta Djallon Chief, Alfa Yaya, a hero of the pre-colonial resistance, was organised with much pomp and fanfare. The state's political policies and its developmental strategies were in fact one of the few that helped it to break the economic hold of the former metropolis. But through its political, economic and social policies, tlie PDG has over the years extended *its* control over the people covering every village, every neighbourhood, factory and office, each having its own Party Committee.

In Tanzania, bureaucratic centralism as inherited from the colonial system of governance, evolved in two distinct ways, giving to the country's political structure a pre-eminent position in decision-making and enabled the elite to dominate the bureaucratic apparatus. Within a decade'of independence, the government agencies and the government sponsored parastatals accounted for an estimated 80 per cent of the medium and large-scale economic activities and 44 per cent of the monetary GDP. Even later efforts at decentralisation through the *Ujamaa* Socialism that gave considerable freedom for decision-malting and action at the local level to District Councils, in actuality extended the central bureaucratic influence to the periphery. Other states — Malawi, Zaire, Uganda, Ethiopia and Angola — also imposed similar bureaucratic centralist systems of governance. Ethiopia was Africa's first Communist state that evolved a centralised model of party organisation under Mengistu Haile Mariam. It rejected any concessions to the separatist forces and tightened the party's control over the administrative apparatus. Similarly in Angola, president Eduardo dos Santos exercised effective control through the central state institutions, including the bureaucracy, This policy enabled the government to provide stability and resolved the challenges that confronted the state.

The second distinctive feature of the African state system is its patrimonial nature, i.e. a system based on patron-clientties, also described by analysts as "prebendal politics" (the politics of allowances, etc.). African states in their search for a system that would enable them to exercise greater authority over their societies and territories evolved authoritarian, centralised, patrimonial, administrative structures that had liberally drawn from the inherited highly statist colonial administrative traditions. The aim was to consolidate, even if it was a slow process, political and economic authority internally and to combat the colonial legacies of a dependant status — strong linkages to the world capitalist system dominated by transnational corporations and the pervasive influence of a wide variety of international organisations—the World Bank, IMF, etc. The main elements of the African patrimonial system are a personalised and centralised executive authority whose position and power is legitimised by patrimonial and legal rational doctrines and beliefs. The state executive in such a system is supported by personally loyal officials-integrated in patron-client networlts. These officers and the network of their support groups controlled the administrative state apparatus, which overtime became the major avenue of upward mobility, status, power and wealth.

The patrimonial state emerged as a second stage in the politics of the post-Independence period when governing parties atrophied and tlie African leaders (the elite class) with its client networks gained power and sought other goals even if at the cost of the state itself. Meanwhile they themselves aggrandised or enriched. Such leaders soon became tlie norm throughout the continent. Zaire, Kenya and Nigeria, amongst others, are typical examples of the patrimonial centralised administrative systems that remained weak and soon degenerated politically. Tlie traditional clientelism based on political participation, developed into a triangular relationship between the multinationals, local middlemen and state compradors. Corruption became widespread and over the years acquired institutional dimensions that involved the government, including a large number of officials. It became adistinct functioning feature of the patrimonial state. An underground economy that indulged in hoarding, smuggling and person-to-person relations soon replaced the more organised open market system. In countries such as Zaire, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Guinea and even Sierra Leone, between one third and two thirds of all econoniic activities were estimated to be illegal. At a more . personal level several African leaders were known to have deprived their poor countries of scant resources and revenues. Mobutu for example, and his family members were believed to have defrauded the country of several billion dollars of public money and stashed it in European banks. Similarly, Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was said to have cheated the country of billions of dollars generated from tlie sales overseas of the country's gold reserves, and Omar Bongo arid his confederates deprived tlie continent's oil and mineral rich country—Gabon—of its wealth. All these developments have naturally been tragic for tlie continent, as it is now relegated to the margins of the mainstream international economy.

A third salient feature of the African state relates to its association with civil society—a relationsliip that has marginalised arid liegemonised the latter. To understand this relationsliip it would be in order to examine the two concepts in historical perspective. Unlike in Europe and in other parts of the world, where tlie state evolved organically to serve the societal needs of the people, in Africa it was an "excrescence" that developed in and upon society, multiplying its functional tools to control the people and their activities. Since the colonial state had itself issued from colonial conquest, it felt obliged to develop its own paradigms ofeffective occupation to validate its proprietary title during the phase of the "scramble for Africa". Later in 19th Century, it created mechanisms to hegemonically control society with the help of various col laborators (Chiefs, religious missionaries, merchants, etc.). Tlie Second World War had achieved a definite framework of dominance and a command relationship and this very same system was bequeathed to its nationalist successors. Thus the relationship between the African post-colonial state and its civil society continued to be the same as before. And though the post-colonial stale had its own nationalist imperatives of unity, it allowed itself to remain entrenched in the inherited colonial functional structures that were geared to the earlier hegemonic drive to control and shape society with a view to achieving unrestricted domination over it. In this way most rulers attempted to integrate tlie various social and opposing political groups into single movements or to indirectly control them and bring them within the space of state domination. Senegal is a good example of such a relationship; the state here acted directly and used its entire authoritarian means—administrative and ideological—to politically control the urban and the rural masses.

It was during this period that tlie concept of civil society emerged in Africa as people started becoming aware of their rights. The continuing dominant nature of the state and its omnipotence . played an important role, as did tlie later growing state-society economic distortions and the increasing disparities between the rulers and the people. At the same time, tlie conditionalities of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) regime enabled civil society to draw production away from the state and deprive the latter of its privileges till now held in monopoly. Consequently, almost everywhere the state lost considerable legitimacy and power. Zaire is an example, which lost large amounts of revenue to the private sector—the civil society. The result has been widespread protest in the urban and the rural areas and a nationalist self-assertion through associational networks structure and formalised into various forms of social mobilisation and widespread demonstrations. Civil society then gained considerable pre-eminence in tlie state scenario while the centralised and overextended state weakened. It is important to understand the implications of this feature of the state in Africa, as it would help to determine the continent's transition to pluralism and democratisation.

4.3 CRISIS OF THE STATE

4.3.1 Problems of Nationalism and Integration

Given this perspective, it was not too long when the independent African states were confronted by a crisis of nationalism. The governments had to handle issues to consolidate nation-states out of the arbitrarily defined colonies and ensure all round economic development that would help address widespread poverty and the frustrations of its peoples. The main reasons far the crisis were that the post-colonial African state was hardly a "natural" nation state. Its geographical boundaries were mapped regardless of the division of ethnic groups brought under state regimes. Like the former colonies from which they emerged, these states also were not geographically, ethnically, culturally, economically, socially or politically homogenous or cohesive. They were rather "amalgams" of heterogeneous groups, "incoherent patchworks" that hardly qualified for nationhood. Whereas most European, Asian and Latin American countries had some common historico-cultural, racial and linguistic foundations from which nationality could evolve, in Africa the historical process had been inverted. The construction of post-colonial nationality began from the colonial premise and was built on the foundations laid by the colonial state. Besides, even while the nation state is an important attribute of independence and sovereignty they had conveniently ignored it when the colonialists withdrew. This was because the timing of independence in Africa was politically eminently suitable for them. It reflected the colonial metropolitan and African politics rather than the political imperatives of the nationalists, who if given the time may have evolved their own nationalist country-specific myths. The colonialists had also never really taken into account the realities of pre-colonial Africa or even whether these communities would be able to live together. It had rather with scant regard for accountability to its peoples who administered and managed these colonies. The sole aim of the state then was to maintain stability. Besides, the nationalists' only unifying and binding factor at the time of independence and in the immediate post-colonial period was its African character—a definite racial category but otherwise vague in terms of any affiliation or union. Lesotho, Swaziland and Cape Verde were the only countries that had at the time of independence colonial boundaries that conformed to the historical logic; it was a reflection of the homogeneous identity of the people of these colonies. All other states were at, one time or another, plagued by divisive ethnic, racial and regional tendencies. Moreover, these states were also confronted by problems of integrating civil society, problems that originated from the states' inherited colonial legacies of state-society structural distortions, geographical and physical constraints and later mishandling by state officials. The very nature of the African state appeared to be vulnerable to crisis. Beginning in the very early phase of its post-colonial existence, the African state has had to contend with several crisis situations, some of which continues even as new problems emerge. They have created for African states a crisis not only of nationalism but also sovereignty. In this perspective African states undertook to evolve their own concepts of nationalism and national construction, which would make them viable political units. The task was difficult as the educated and westernised nationalist elite, generally trained in the metropolitan capitals, derived their notions of nation slate from the European models. Moreover, African states also encountered several obstacles that varied from one state to another and proved to be a major challenge to nationalist efforts to create a nation state. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that several ingenuous leaders drew on the continent's own glorious historical past and espoused and propagated a cultural nationalism that attracted its own people. Guinea for example, espoused a consistent cultural nationalism that traced its legacy to a purely African past of resistance to colonialism, alongside its own concepts of a radical pan-Africanism on the continent as a whole.

The first major challenge to the state lay in its very nature—an inheritance of the colonial state managed by a chosen nationalist elite which because of its vested interest in retaining power maintained links with the former metropolitan state, ethnic heterogeneity and regional economic disparities. A state with obvious politico-economic structural distortions that safeguarded the interest of a few at the cost of the large majority proved to be an incongruity in the African setting. Opposition to such a state was not uncommon with several dissatisfied sections of people dissociating from the nation state project. This is, however, not to say that these sections of people opposed independence or nationalism per se, but that they were not favourably inclined to accept and recognise the legitimacy of the "new nationalists", who had been selected to take on the political mantle by the departing colonialists after they had won the run-up elections to independence. Several African chiefs and politically powerful and influential religious leaders, who had earlier collaborated with the colonial state, strongly resented and opposed the authority of the post-colonial rulers. Their opposition and challenge was further intensified when the two groups belonged to two different ethnic communities. In Ghana, for example, the Ashantis, the single most important ethnic group both in size and wealth, had little sympathy for Nkrumah's ruling Convention Peoples' Party government. Later when the chiefs had been by-passed by the CPP and feared For their economic privileges, they rallied against the government. Repression by the ruling party consolidated tlie Ashanti hostility and they formed themselves into an effective opposition that resisted state encroachment. In Senegal, the powerful Chiefs of the Moslem Brotherhoods—the *Marabouts*—who had earlier actively cooperated with the colonial regime and who continued to wield immense power and influence over its followers had to be enlisted as collaborators by the ruling regime so as to restrict their potential of obstructing the government. In Guinea however the scenario was different; the powerful Chieftains of the Fouta Djallon were crushed when they rallied in opposition to the government.

Ethnic strife, along with racial, cultural, religious and regional differences posed other major challenges to nationalism and national integration. Except in Tanzania, where the Nationalist Party was a genuine nationalist coalition of various ethnic groups, most other independent states had to cope with its debilitating impact. Challenges emerged from the Foula in Guinea, the Ashanti in Ghana, the Ibo in Nigeria, the Ewe in Togo, tlie Bamileke in Cameroon, etc. In the case of Cameroon, only a civil war could bring independence to the country. The Baganda in Uganda, the country's most powerful ethnic group and one that had been favoured by the colonial regime, also opposed a government that they could not dominate. Without their support no effective democratic national government could survive. In Nigeria, three dominant ethnic groups competed for control of the new state in the 1960s—the numerically superior but economically weaker Moslem Hausa Fulani that dominated the political structure, the economically prosperous Christian Ibos in the west and the Yorubas in the east. Despite several years of strife and civil war between these groups and the later formation of a Federation, Nigeria still continues to be confronted by problems of political, cultural and economic integration. Similar problems arising out of regional differences surfaced in other countries making tlie acceptance of the new state and its government's legitimacy difficult. The diffidence to nationalist integration of the southerners in Mauritania and Sudan, of the Mandinkas in Senegal, Kimbundus in Angola, northerners in Chad, Makua in Mozambique, Somalis in Kenya, etc., is well known.

In the long term, the political weight of these dissident groups was tremendous and governments of Independence had little choice than to accommodate them in the political structure while not necessarily conceding to all their demands. In the case of the Baganda in Uganda and the *marabouts* in Senegal, who enjoyed considerable political clout since the colonial period, it was difficult not to co-opt them into the state system but it always came with a heavy price.

Another crisis for the state that surfaced in a later phase of African political development and which challenged state efforts at integration was the conflicts that erupted between state and civil society. It is interesting to note that in Africa, the use of the concept of civil society as a term of analysis emerged only in the 1980s whereas conflict situations arising from state society structural distortions were a legacy of the colonial period. These distortions—political and economic—issued from the authoritarian and centralised procedures of policy making that marginalised and deprived local communities of a share in state affairs — including economic development. Seen in historical perspective, for more than a century over the colonial period, the subjects of these states remained circumscribed by state domination while economically they continued to be mere units of labour to be used for surplus extraction by the state. Society in the colonial period was subordinated to the state.

In the closing years of the colonial period there was a relaxation in the process of control and domination; political associations sprang heralding the birth of civil society as an important component of the state. But most of these associations were aborted by the dominant societal projects of the nationalist leadership, mismanagement and the power of the colonial state. Similar measures were also applied in Eyadema's Togo, Chad of the Tombalbaye regime, Mobutu's Zaire, etc.

Africa's integration into the world economy had further complicated matters; intended to achieve higher levels of growth, it in fact deprived a great majority of Africans of better standards of living and an improvement in their economic levels. The erosion which began in the colonial period, resulted in making African producers, and by implication the African economy. dependent on markets outside and to keep economic decision-making beyond the African states. The outcome then was that civil society, till now heavily dominated by the colonial regimes, was further marginalised in post-colonial Africa and state society distortions aggravated the scenario.

4.3.2 Crisis of Legitimacy

Evolving African states had also to contend with challenges to its legitimacy. There were differences in the theory and practice of their policies; state policies that should have been welfare-oriented instead of being elitist and class-oriented. The state thus had belied the initial expectations that it would be the prime mover of all developmental efforts pertaining to agricultural, industrial, educational and social welfare of the society. Instead, the stale and the post-colonial governments which took off from where the colonial state had left, acquired more and more power and became hegemonic and patrimonial serving the individual and class interest of a few.

Since the inception of African statehood in the 1960s, challenges to its legitimacy have unfolded through several distinct phases and state systems have adjusted accordingly. In the first phase—the immediate post-Independence period of the nationalist regimes inherited from the former colonial state—challenges were nominal and generally easily resolved. These regimes enjoyed more or less complete authority as their legitimacy had been derived from its nationalist credentials following their success in the run up elections to Independence and also a period of euphoria and the scenario was one of hope and confidence. Opposition, if any, was controlled by absorption/integration into the system. Thus for example, in Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire, where there were threats to nationalism and national unity, opposition was generally overcome through persuasion and grant of positions in the state institutions. In other instances however, such as in Ghana and Guinea, where legitimacy declined over the years and resistance grew, the latter was quelled through the use of force.

This period of uncontested political legitimacy in the nascent African state was however short-lived; within a few years the continent was rocked by political convulsions that ushered in changes. A wave of "left" political orientations in Guinea, Ghana, Uganda, Congo, Tanzania, Mali, etc, occurred. Over the same period, a rash of military *coups*, more than 17, for in some states they was more than one coup, overtook several African states through the Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville),Congo (Zaire), Dahomey, Ghana, Malagasy, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somali Republic, Uganda and Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta).

At the third level, challenges to legitimacy increased considerably as the ruling regimes monopolised and centralised state power in unitary systems of governance that politically and economically favoured a few at the centre while the large majority in the rural areas remained deprived. This was the phase when the state developed patrimonial/prebendal characteristics applied through widespread networlts ofpatron-client relations, in which those belonging to the networks benefited from the patrimonial largesse of the political bosses. Such states soon acquired tremendous power and authority; the ruling elites exploiting it both internally and externally in total disregard of society's claims and expectations. On the political front, these regimes retained control of most of the state's institutional structures including the powerful bureaucracy and the administration. Through these latter it was able to dominate the state infrastructure and used its services as per its own needs and to its advantage. The African state thus became highly politicised and its power of patronage through collaboration, goodwill and consent increased. Besides, under this system corruption soon became commonplace in several countries; deals were concluded and there were instances of embezzlement of public funds leading to loss of faith in state actions. At the same time, politicians and other members of the ruling elite taking advantage of the dramatic increase of the state revenues from the export of minerals did not hesitate to direct billions of dollars to private accounts.

Over time, the possibilities and avenues for enrichment increased tremendously. Discovery of oil and its exports brought a windfall to Nigeria, Gabon and Angola, but a large portion of the revenues were clandestinely diverted to the pocltets of the ruling elites. Even in the very poor countries of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Somalia, etc., whose resources were extremely limited, the ruling elites did not hesitate to divert funds to themselves rather than use it for the welfare of the poor, Often funds for development of the rural areas, transferred through the bilateral agencies and the international financial institutions—the IMF, the IBRD and other developmental agencies—and channelised through state agencies were never really utilised for the purpose that they were provided. The consequent skewered patterns of development that favoured a Few of the privileged as against tlie large majority of the farmers in the rural areas widened the gap between them. And as the poor remained economically deprived the state served tlie class accumulations of those who had access to its institutions. There are several instances of investment in unproductive ventures—a car assembly plant set up for national prestige in Guinea Bissau and an agro-industrial parastatal in Tanzania that conformed to the state's socialist ideology. In other states agro-industrial enterprises were set up as extensions of clientelist politics in Sekou Toure's Guinea and Ghana, during Nkrumah's regime, These projects were all intended for political prestige and not as productive ventures for the region. Over all, all state developments of the period generally were biased towards urban/industrial projects while the rural sector remained neglected. Given this scenario opposition to the state was not uncommon.

As the gap between the expectations and performance of the governments created a crisis of governance and legitimacy, it also weakened the links between the state and society, particularly in the rural areas. Consequently the states' writ in the areas weakened and eroded its legitimacy. The public that now viewed the stale as an alien institution asserted itself to secure its legitimate rights and amenities, and state-society interaction collapsed.

But the real challenge to authority and the crisis of governance and legitimacy is a more recent development, of a contemporary nature. Arising from the cumulation of grievances, political and more especially economic of society, it is at the heart of the crisis of political accountability that affects the legitimacy of African governments whatever their political complexion. Seen in historical perspective, almost from 1975 onwards most African economies started undergoing a slow economic downslide. As the ruling regimes persisted to misappropriate the state's scarce resources, development received a further setback and states became vulnerable to economic stagnation, decay and fragmentation. The 1973 oil crisis made worse the economic degradation from which many African states have still not recovered. Large areas of the productive sector that remained deprived, while the few of the elite enjoyed the benefits, left the former disillusioned, frustrated and without faith in the ruling regimes and the slate institutions. The crisis of indebtedness, which followed, further weakened African economies and underscored the inability of the stales' economic structures and of the political rulers to satisfy their clients.

Internal stagnation and fragmentation increased; the already weak state that had been struggling to retain its power and sovereignty had to confront other challenges — especially the uncertainty of dependence internally for unity and power and externally on the world capitalist system. By the 1980s, the wealtened African states gave in to the pervasive influence of the international financial systems —the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Structural Adjustment Regimes, which brought them into the fold of the world capitalist system.

The Structural Adjustment Programme's (SAP) regime addressed African economic management problems through a liberal market-oriented approach that advocated pluralism and increased private .enterprise. It was subscribed to by all Sub-'Saharan African states by 1993. But the conditionalities of balancing state budgets by cutting government expenditures—particularly the measures relating to food pricing, removal of food subsidies and health-care benefits liad an adverse economic impact on the poor in these countries. The withdrawal of food subsidies and other controls on foodstuffs to meet the demands of the urban constituencies had a detrimental effect on food production, and the cultivation of food crops was abandoned for other cash crop cultivation. And as the prices of rood grains soared die poor in the rural areas had to depend on imported food supplies, which understandably were beyond their sustenance budgets. The withdrawal of health and educational welfare subsidies further aggravated the problems of the poor. Overall, the SAP's formula intensified the disparities between the urban elite that still maintained control over the affairs of the state and the deprived lower middle classes in society.

Civil society in Africa had generally been underdeveloped because of the colonial patterns of differentiated development; now state-society economic distortions worsened this condition considerably. At the same time, the collapse of the patrimonial system following SAP conditionalities also disenfranchised tlie former clients in the network who now joined with others in civil society and challenged state authority. Civil society had by now become aware of its rights and privileges and sought representation in decision-making. This scenario heralded widespread conflict situations in the urban and the rural areas, which erupted in demonstrations and popular protests that challenged state authority and legitimacy.

Zambia and Kenya are examples of two states, amongst others, wherein popular sentiment for political change surged in the 1980s and the 1990s. Both states had distinctly differentiated patterns of development for its urban and rural populace and wide economic disparities prevailed between the different sectors in each state. The presence of an active civil society in both countries, as also the fact that the continent itselfwas advancing towards political liberalisation that accompanied the withdrawal of Super Power support for client states, made it possible to challenge the authority of the state. In Zambia, the labour unions linked the economic plight of ordinary people with the failures of the ruling regimes and united social classes to challenge state authority and impress on them the need for political change. Confrontation between the state and the Copper Belt labour unions began in the 1980s over reforms to decentralise administration, which would dilute the quality ofwelfare services to be provided to the mineworkers. The popular rallies peaked in 1990 when maize meal prices were doubled. Similar popular protests in Kenya, which began in 1982, challenged the ruling regimes developmental policies. By 1990, they called for pluralism and improvement of the welfare of the peoples.

Similar popular uprisings, through other countries, that challenged their state regimes, made Afsican leaderships aware of the need to extend representation to its peoples, for without representation there would be little legitimacy. Widespread social assertion and the desire of society to pat-ticipate in decision-making was another challenge to leaderships.

At the same time, following the application of economic conditionalities and the exposure to external' control, African states that had for more than two decades enjoyed total and uncontested political sovereignty had also to contend with challenges to its authority both internally and externally. As stated above, the internal domestic challenges were widespread and unidirectional; they called for power sharing and regime transformation externally, the state lost the moral legitimacy that it had so far enjoyed because of instances of gross and public abuse of power through patronage and an obvious violation of human rights of its subjects. Three rulers in particular, symbolised the degradation ofpower — Uganda's Idi Amin, Jean Bedel Bokassa in the Central Afsican Republic and Macias Nguema in Equatorial Guinea.,

By the 1990s however, Afsican leaderships became somewhat sensitive to the needs and demands of its constituents. Also, the end of the Cold War and tlie Organisation for African Unity's (OAU) recognition and approval through a declaration of the need to promote popular participation in the government and to ensure human rights, made African regimes also declare the commitment to multi-party democracy and pluralism. This would strengthen their eroded legitimacy and resolve the growing challenges to their authority. Over tlie next few years several states acceded to multi party elections consequent to domestic pressures. Mathieu Kerekou in Benin and president Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia were the first to step down when the lost the elections. Other states surrendered to external pressures; Malawi's president Hastings Banda was first persuaded to hold a referendum for multi party elections, and then when he lost, lie was asked to step down. Yet others continued to cling to power; Cote d'Ivoire's president Houphouet Boigny agreed to hold elections under opposition pressure but did so without giving the latter time to organise themselves for the contest. In other Francophone countries several rulers were able to ward off the opposition's call for elections with external support. In Cameroon, for example, the ruling regime falsified election results with the connivance of the French government that feared for the success of an Anglophone president. In Togo, president Eyadema left' no stone unturned to frustrate the efforts of the newly elected government to run the slate while he enjoyed external support. Similarly, the Nigerian president Babangida held out for several years despite firm domestic political opposition, failure in elections and all resourceful means. Nevertheless, the most determined and resourceful attempt to stay in power has been made by Mobutu in Zaire. Not only did he avoid holding elections but also survived through opposition efforts to unseat him.

Thus, while most African states sought ways and means to legitimise and stabilise their challenged regimes, yet others retained their hold despite internal and external pressures. It is nevertheless important to note that the challenges to state authority and legitimacy of the contemporary period did nudge most states out of their complacency and they have set about to rectify and adopt more representative systems of governance for the future. The challenges to legitimacy also subsequently provided the imperatives for policy reforms and change in the state structures. Ultimately they have led to the demise of statism and the entrenchment of economic and political liberalisation as the new developmental path for Africa.

4.4 SUMMARY

The slate in Africa has thus evolved and come a long way since Independence in the 1960s decade. From the status of a nascent nation-state, insulated, sovereign and secure in its domestic environs, the African state has transited from an inherited statist structural framework derived from the international power systems of the period and faces today bold political and economic challenges from an aware civil society, but has become economically a dependent entity in the new global system. Having borne patiently through the period of transition a severe developmental crisis of catastrophic proportions, of poverty and socio-economic inequalities, the heavy economic debt burdens, SAP conditionalities and the crisis of legitimacy, the African state chastened and matured appears now to be sufficiently conditioned to handle the present crisis/challenges of the need to have a representative system of governance that would recognise the power of civil society. The challenge is tremendous as African governments move out from the highly privileged earlier position as intermediaries between their own societies and the external sources of power that were dependent on them (African governments) to generate the necessary resources to enable their economic and commercial sustenance.

Above all, the scenario of internal crisis and challenge and externally of the repercussions of globalisation—pervasive and profound—that have seeped deep into the body politic of the African state system has not only marginalised African states but also paved the way for state disintegration. It is important for African states now to overcome tlieir earlier weaknesses and devise mechanisms of democratic governance, such which would be acceptable for regulating their own tenures and exercise of power and policies of political accountability that would ensure their legitimacy over its peoples. Governments should also re-examine their priorities and re-shape their developmental strategies relying essentially on local resources for developmental purposes.

4.5 EXERCISES

1) How would you analyse the nature of the African state? Evaluate the distinct features.
2) What were the problems of statehood that confronted African states?
3) Discuss the major challenges to nationalism and integration in Africa.
4) Assess the role of the African leadership addressing the problem of political opposition?
5) Analyse state-society distortions as a challenge to legitimacy in Africa.