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## The Struggle for Power in Post-Colonial Africa: Politics without Hegemony and the State

M.M. Fadakinte

*Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos, Nigeria*

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**Key words:** Hegemony, colonization, the state, dominant class, African states

**Abstract:** Scholars have explained the implications of colonization on Africa but none has explained the implications to include crisis of hegemony and crisis of state. And that is the thrust of this paper, an interrogation of hegemony and the state in order to explain why post-colonial Africa is enmeshed in violent struggle for power by factions of the dominant class soon after independence. At the time European colonization began in Africa, the African societies were at different stages of slavery and feudalism which means that it was colonialism that instituted capitalism in Africa when Africans were least prepared for it. Also, unlike in Western Europe, capitalism did not evolve organically in Africa. Thus, in pre-colonial Africa, there was no capitalist class and no capitalist social classes in antagonistic relations, so also there were no capitalist institutions for example, like the state. So, capitalism and the European modern states were injected into Africa at the time Africa did not have the capacity to put them into practice. Thus, colonialism imposed capitalism and inverted the process of creating a capitalist state which made the emerging dominant class who were of different ethnic and tribal origins to develop into factions. As a result, the dominant classes were made up of belligerent factions and therefore cannot institute hegemonic process which will be the way they will maintain a dominant culture through the use of social institutions to formalize power. Consequently, in post-colonial Africa, politics is without hegemony (leadership, domination and control) and a state (institution for order). And whenever people struggle for power without hegemony and the state what emerges is chaos. Hence, post-colonial African countries boil each time there is competition for power. Thus, there is need to redefine state-society relations in post-colonial Africa, based on a new paradigm of state formation that will reflect their colonial experience.

**Corresponding Author:**

M.M. Fadakinte

*Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos, Nigeria*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Post-colonial Africa has been embroiled in series of crises soon after independence and that is because social formations in Africa have been confronted with a rash of struggles in terms of leadership succession, i.e., the contest for political power. Thus, power and politics as the contestations for the legitimation of domination have been turned to bitter competitions, resulting in conflicts, violence and bloodshed. Consequently, Africa and her people continue to live with all sorts of crises such as election violence, ethnic wars, poverty, migration, diseases and underdevelopment challenges. Therefore, the struggle for power (politics) immediately African countries gained political freedom from their colonial masters, stood for everything but peaceful and violent free competition. Power and politics have therefore become two social monsters in Africa, so much so that the continent is today under dangerous siege, wrought on her by these dangerous monsters.

Ordinarily, one is almost persuaded by the interpretations of the definitions of power and politics as propounded by Lasswell and Kaplan which say that politics is “who gets what when and how” and that power is a value, an extremely important one as the explanation for this African problem. With these two definitions, power and politics become values over which people must struggle, hence, the fierce and violent struggle which is however, beyond the normal and peaceful competitive struggle over the allocation of scarce resources in Africa.

However, the problem of the bitter and violent struggle for power, in Africa is quite beyond the issue of the struggle for resources, it is indeed a problem of the nature and character of the state which reflects the absence of class hegemony, class hegemony as a class requirement for state consolidation. In any case, citizens of countries in Europe and America do periodically struggle for power and their engagement in political competition (politics) rarely end in violence and bloodshed as we regularly witness in Africa.

Soon after independence, most of the African countries evolved a factionalized dominant class with all the factions struggling for power, a development that became their preoccupation. So, ever since independence, the faction that is able to secure power, would privatize it by using nepotism, tribalism, kleptocracy and other spoils of office to hold on to power. In other words, whenever any of the factions of the dominant class is in power, it will do anything to consolidate its position which they do by ensuring that they control the political space and limit it to themselves. The various factions of the dominant class will therefore, wait till election time when it will be time to struggle for power which they do by using any means to contest election. In the process, the factions will engage in electoral competition as if it warfare. Thus, the ensued belligerency does not allow the dominant class to

be cohesive with the needed peace that will make them to be well organized, so that, they are able to rationally plan for development. Hence, there is no meaningful progress in the political, economic and social life of Africans, precisely because political competition is synonymous with warfare.

Our argument here is that to understand violent political struggle in Africa, we need to understand the dynamics of state formation processes, class hegemony and the construction of hegemonic process. Thus, crisis of state formation, as an approach in explaining the problem of violent struggle for power in Africa is very pertinent here because the state is the issue when it comes to the struggle for power and therefore whenever the state is in crisis, the crisis will manifest itself in many ways, violent politics being one. Also, whenever a society does not have a class with the needed hegemony with which to stabilize the society, the struggle for power in such a society will necessarily be chaotic. This is why state formation processes including the nature and character of the dominant class must be put in proper perspective in order to understand the problem of violent and bitter struggle for power in Africa.

Thus, since, independence, African countries have been grappling with violent crises in the process of the struggle for power, the crises that are symptomatic of crisis of state formation.

## **POWER AND POLITICS; SOME CONCEPTUAL NOTES**

Power is so central to the study of politics that everything about politics or its scientific study, political science is about power. Thus, Hagne and Harrop describe power as the currency of politics because without power, they argue, a government would be as useless as a car without an engine. And that is because the key political resource that enables rulers both to serve and to exploit their subjects is power. Consequently, the centrality of power to politics makes quite a number of authors to define politics in terms of power. For example, Hay (cited in Hague and Harrop, 2010) says that politics is concerned with the distribution, exercise and consequences of power. Thus, those who study politics and political science are very much concerned with the flow of power around a government and the flow of power between state institutions.

The concept of power is not easy to define and that is because any definition of power tangentially touches other concepts like influence, authority and legitimacy. However, we shall not be engaged in the clarification of power or its distinctions such as the connections of other concepts to power, the structure of power or its elements, all that shall not detain us here.

However, that power is the ground norm of political science is an understatement. Gauba (2000), opines that it is power, its nature, basis, processes, scope and results

in society that political science is primarily concerned. To Lasswell and Kaplan, political science is not only concerned with the shaping and sharing of power, it's *raison d'être* is science of power. Again, power denotes the capacity of an individual or group of individual, to modify the conduct of other individual or groups in the manner which he desires. Power embodies the process of affecting the policies of others with severe sanctions for disobedience. Here, the weight of power is the degree of participation in the making of decisions, the scope encompassing values that are shaped and controlled and the domain of power consists of the persons over whom power is exercised. Friedrich says that power is the capacity of an individual or groups of individuals to modify the conduct of others in the manner desires by the individual or the manner the groups' desire. This assertion is also in tandem with the position of Johari (2012) who contends that power is the production of intended effects. Power is a possession. Thus, one must possess it in order to be able to carry out some functions. MacIver says that by the possession of power we mean the capacity to regulate or direct the behaviour of persons or things. And that is why it is argued that power is used to produce certain desired effects (MacIver, 1965)

Again, Lasswell and Kaplan, argue that the concept of power is easily discernible in a situation where A has power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something that he (B) would not otherwise do. Consequently, power, in this case, presupposes some level of interactions or relationships between the parties in a conflictual situation. According to MacIver (1965), power is the capacity in any relationship to command the service or compliance of others.

The ubiquity of power makes the concept to be a complex one which is why (Stokefeld, 2005) says that power is one of the most complex concepts in the social sciences. Foucault, Stokefeld (2005) argues that power is not only rested in political institutions such as the state and its institutions or in collective subjects such as the social sciences but it is also dispersed in political and social relations or networks.

Politics on the other hand is about power and therefore power is the main issue in politics. This is so because politics is about organizing the people and their relationships to others (Painter, 1995), in the same society and those in other societies. This is precisely because the management of any society is carried out by a complex network or rules, about the regulations, monitoring, management and the direction of people's daily lives. (Painter, 1995).

Thus, Aristotle observes that man is by nature a political animal, that is, whenever two or more people are interacting with one another they are invariably involved in a political relationship. And that is because men unconsciously engage in politics as they try to define their positions in society and as they struggle for scarce

resources. Therefore, the necessity of politics arises from the social nature of human beings and that is because human beings live in groups that must reach collective decisions about relating to others, about using recourses and about planning for the future (Hague and Harrop, 2010). Consequently, there are institutions in society that stand for power and authority and whenever these institutions are not in existence in any society, there will be some difficulty in classifying such a society as a genuine society or as a healthy political community, because such institutions make decisions that affect the lives of all, for the orderliness of the society. Sabine and Thorson (1973). Consequently, no aspect of human life, in modern times is free from state intervention. So, you may or may not be interested in politics, but politics is interested in you. Thus, Laski says that the study of politics concerns itself with the life of man in relation to organized states.

Pollock, Agarwal (2000) has divided politics into two parts: the theoretical politics and applied politics. Theoretical politics deals with the origin, nature and development of the state and it involves the principles of political science. Applied politics on the other hand is about the actual working of the government. In other words, practical politics is about the state in action. (Agarwal, 2000). Thus, Weber argues that politics is the operation of the state and its institutions that involve the struggling to share power or struggling to share the distribution of power among individuals and groups in society.

Thus, Asirvatham and Misra (2008) argue that the study of politics today may be defined as a study of the structure of power in the political system which are at various levels of cultural, economic and political development. And to Hoffman and Graham (2009) we need to find an idea that underpins the concepts of state, politics, justice, citizenship, liberty and democracy and the idea is power. Perhaps what makes institutions meaningful is the idea of power. How strong or weak an institution is a function of the amount of power it is able to wield. So, we talk of the powers of the president, the prime minister, the legislature or the power of the police. The place and role of power in politics is unambiguous. For example, Lasswell and Kaplan say that politics is "who gets what when and how" and Easton says that politics is the "authoritative allocation of values". Thus, with these two definitions power is needed to decide who gets what, when and how and power is also needed to authoritatively allocate its resources. Thus, power becomes a means to an end for which power is sought. In other words if you want to take part in the authoritative allocation of resources, you need to first possess the power to do so. Consequently, in any society, domestic politics is characterised by many competing individuals and groups, all struggling to capture power because they all struggle to take decisions that affect the lives of others.

Thus, no society or even organisation, whatever may its nature be can perform its duties or achieve its objectives without power (Das, 2009).

Again, there is a basic function performed by politics that clearly brings out the role and meaning of power. This is that politics is the resolution of conflicts. With this function of politics, power becomes critical for two reasons. First, the required institutions to be used in resolving the conflicts must be equipped with power. Second, for the resolution to be effective there is the need for the enforcing institutions to have adequate power to do so. Thus, the centrality of power to politics makes the concept to be so important that there is a special power, called political power, the power that forms the core element of politics the power that makes politics perform its functions which is why people fiercely struggle and sometimes violently too, to capture it. Thus, power is a required possession, needed by a handful of men (those in government and other institutions of state) to take decisions that will be binding on all the population of the society.

### **POLITICS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER**

Thomas Hobbes gory picture of the state of nature gives us an insight into how the human society will be without some order. What Hobbes means is that social order is not natural but could result only from the external imposition of power (Lavenda and Schultz, 2003). And that is precisely because man is naturally selfish and competitive and therefore can only live peacefully together only if they are compelled to do so by threat of force (Lavenda and Schultz, 2003).

It has been noted that social scientists have come up with some concepts that help guide, describe and explain the orderly inter- dependence of human life in society. Such concepts include politics, power and institutions which are necessarily needed and used to provide for regularized pattern with the objective of creating a stable social order. For example, with the requisite power, political institutions bring together individuals and groups whose statuses focus on the allocation of power in society (Lavenda and Schultz, 2003).

Anderson (1997) says that politics deals with formulating the will of the state with making value judgments and with determining what government should or should not do. Politics is concerned with the allocation/distribution of the scarce resources of the state. How do the resources come about? What criteria are employed in and under what conditions do these alter?

For Heywood (2017), politics is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. Thus, the existence of rival opinions, different wants, competing needs and opposing interests are guaranteed by the rules under which people live. Politics is the exercise of power, the exercise of authority, the making of collective decision, the allocation

of scarce resources, the practice of deception and manipulation to mention but a few. Again, politics is about the state, institutions, government, political parties, elections, public policy, foreign policy, even war and peace. Indeed, politics is about the ways in which power relations affect human social/economic affairs Lavenda and Schultz (2003). Thus, because people get organized in a formal political system, we take orderliness for granted which is why we seldom realize that the impact of politics on our lives is much more than we can imagine. There cannot be politics without power, just like there cannot be power without politics. In other words, politics gives birth to power and the nature of politics defines the nature and even the character of power. This is why politics is often defined as the struggle for power or the exercise of power. Heywood (2007) so, power is an intrinsic value (everybody wants it) and politics is the competition for its acquisition and retention (Hague and Harrop, 2000).

According to Turner (2005) the standard theory is that power is the capacity for influence and that influence is based on the control of resources, valued or desired by others. In other words, few would deny that power is central to human affairs. Consequently, power appears to be a universal and indispensable feature of any social organisation that functions in all political and institutional life of man and indeed, in every social relationship (Turner, 2005). Thus, power is a critical issue in any organized form of human collectivity, in that, "every group, organisation or society must solve the problems of power to achieve its goals or risk failure, dysfunction or even extinction (Turner, 2005). The struggle for power is therefore inevitable in any social organisation precisely because the capacity to influence others is based upon the influencing agent's control of resources that are desired or valued by the target (Turner, 2005).

There are two basic characteristics of politics which help to distinguish it from those concepts that claim affinity with it such as authority and influence. First, politics has to do with decisions/the making of decisions for a group of people within a defined geographical area and the decisions must be binding on all the people within the groups. Second, there is the element of compliance with the decisions which makes it necessary for there to be the use of power by the group that is ensuring compliance (Shirely, 2012). In other words, politics involves the exercise of power in making decisions and in ensuring compliance. In a nutshell, therefore, there are two things about politics which make power to be very critical to it. First, power is needed to make decisions and second, there is need to have power to ensure compliance with the decisions made. Thus, politics always involves the exercise of power by one person or persons over another person or persons which makes power to be the ability of one person to control another person or to make one person to do what the first person wishes (Shirely, 2012). Therefore, power has always been extremely

critical in and to politics. And, for there to be peaceful co-existence and coordinational relationships between persons and groups and in particular to avoid the Hobbesian state of nature, society over the years had evolved institutions with the requisite powers that regularize the conduct of human beings. Consequently, government has evolved as a set of institutions by which a society is ruled. In other words, in every society, of any size, there is some form of organised government which has been developed, due to the need for an agency with the capacity to exercise overall and special control in society (Hunt and Colander, 2008). This is particularly more so in modern capitalist society where the capitalist ruling class needs the state to protect capital and to ensure its growth in the interests of the capitalists. Thus, power and politics are organized in the state for the use of a few (the ruling class) to control and suppress the majority in society. In addition, power confers some advantages and privileges to those who have it and also because, ultimately, power serves as an instrument of domination, oppression and exploitation and therefore, it is very valuable to the ruling class and the ruling class will not brook any uncontrolled competition over it or will it allow unguarded political struggle that will make the dominated class capture it from them because as argued by Hoffman and Graham (2009), power involves dominating someone or some groups and telling them what to do. Thus, since, government is the institution of state that is equipped with the power to carry domination and oppression of the dominated classes in society, the ruling class will not be careless with its control of government because of the valuable nature of power.

Although, there are still competitions for power, in spite of the above explanations and these take place at two levels. First at the level of intra- class competition among the ruling class and second at the level of inter-class competition between two social classes.

The struggle for power must, however be guided by some conditions to make it peaceful, especially when the struggle is between two social classes. Consequently, the dominant class, being the class that is in-charge of the institutions for social control, always ensures that the competition (struggle) for power (politics) is peaceful. But to be able to successfully perform this function, of making the competition for power to be peaceful, the dominant class must be united, cohesive with the same ideology to make them do so through the state. Thus, the dominant class needs to have hegemony in the society, the hegemony that will embody cohesion, domination, leadership and culture while at the same time have the state in place as the institution that represents and articulates their interests. So, it is imperative that the dominant class must have hegemony in the society and must also ensure that there is hegemonic process. In other

words, there must be a well defined process of ensuring the formalization of power and, in addition, there must be a state that represents dominant class interests as well as consolidating hegemony and its processes.

### **POLITICS AND POWER IN SOCIETY OF HEGEMONY AND THE STATE**

The concept of hegemony according to Storey (2001) is used to suggest a society in which, despite oppression and exploitation there is a high degree of consensus and a large measure of social stability. In other words, hegemony denotes a situation in a society in which subordinated groups and classes appear to actively support and subscribe to values, ideals, objectives, cultural and political meanings which bind them to and incorporate them into the prevailing structures of power (Storey, 2001). Thus, hegemony is understood as a cultural and ideological process that permeates society with bourgeois values and beliefs (Heywood, 2007).

To Marxism, two antagonistic classes the haves and the have not, on the basis of their relationship to the means of production have always dominated any society, in so far as the owners of production are the dominant class and the rest as the dependent class through criminal exploitation. Thus, Gramsci's analysis of hegemony as a subtle strategy of domination in capitalist societies is useful to us here.

Gramsci contends that the real source of strength of the ruling classes in the capitalist societies lie in their spiritual and cultural supremacy, focusing primarily on the structures of domination. Thus, private ownership of the means of production is a sine qua non for domination but not really sufficient for complete domination in capitalism.

To Gramsci, the ruling class does not need to dominate the lower classes by force because they are in charge and they use all the institutions of socialization, such as schools, churches, family, to create a social hegemony (Sargent, 2009). In other words, whenever a class is able to institute hegemony, people will be socialized into viewing the world in the same way that those with hegemony (dominant class) view it. Again, being socialized to view the world the way the class with hegemony does, means that the view is accepted subconsciously as common sense or what is normal or that which is part of everyday life (Sargent, 2009). Thus, hegemony creates a belief system which becomes part of the life of the people and there is no reality outside it. Consequently, people will accept the structure of society and the existing institutions with the consequent values as the natural order. And this imposition of hegemonic vision is done through a whole variety of super-structural institutions such as school, religion and the media.

Hegemony, according to Martinussen (1997) is a position of relative power which ensures the realization of the essential interests of a particular class. What is important about hegemony is that the realization of the particular interests will not depend on the use of physical coercion. And the interest of the hegemonic class will be elevated to the position of national interest which will be recognized by other classes (Martinussen, 1997). In other words, hegemony stands for the ideological ascendancy of one class over others in the society.

Gramsci argues that the superstructure, in the Marxian base and super-structural model is made of social institutions which perform different roles but which are aimed at constructing hegemony and maintaining it for the dominant (ruling) class. To Gramsci, the institutions at the super-structural level help in obtaining the spontaneous consent given by the great majority of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant class. Again, the consent derives, historically from the prestige which the dominant class enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production (Youngman, 2000). And that is precisely because people's worldview arises from their position within the social relations of production and their everyday experience, particularly in the labour process (Anthony *et al.*, 1995). Also, some of the institutions of the super-structural level constitute the organs of state which are the state coercive powers and which "legally" enforce discipline when consent fails.

Gramsci's idea of hegemony is to make us understand how the dominant class engineers the consent of the people to its rule. Thus, hegemony signifies political leadership by consent and also how it is achieved by the diffusion of the dominant ideology through social institutions in society (Youngman, 2000). Again, the idea of hegemony refers to a condition in which a dominant class does not merely rule a society but leads it through the exercise of moral and intellectual leadership (Storey, 2001).

Hegemony implies a dominant group and a dominated group with the first group controlling the second group. Thus, there are three dimensions to the concept of hegemony and these are, the intellectual, the moral and the political. The intellectual and moral dimensions constitute leadership and consent respectfully while the political stands for domination, subjugation, force and coercion (Arora, 2010). In other words, hegemony defines the nature of power in modern society and also attributes substantial role to the struggle that can be seen at the ideological, political and cultural levels. In essence, hegemony is about power and the essence of power is for domination (Fadakinte, 2014, 2017). Thus, in times of crisis, when moral and intellectual leadership is not enough to secure continued authority, the processes of hegemony are replaced by the coercive powers of the

state. It can then be argued, based on that same premise that whenever hegemony is not well constructed in a society, the society then suffers from in-cohesion and instability. And that is precisely because the society will be devoid of a unifying culture and values that will bind the people.

**The state:** The idea of the state has long appeared in the writings of philosophers and social theorists that there are today numerous theories with regard to the idea of the state. In the ancient times, Plato says that the state is a system of relationships in which everyone does what he is capable of doing. This is the definition/meaning of the state, as far as Plato is concerned which makes him to say that justice means everyman doing what he is trained to do. Aristotle describes the state as the union of families and villages showing a life of virtue and aiming at an end which consists of perfect and self-complete existence (Arora, 2010).

The church fathers, beginning with St. Augustine, describe the state as "an assemblage of reasonable beings, bound together by a common agreement on to the objects they desire". And to Thomas Aquinas the state is an instrument that helps man attain salvation by providing him both his natural perfection and material necessities. To Marsilio of Padua, the state is necessary if peace is to reign, if cooperation among people is to be sought and if certain injurious to the health of the state are to be removed (Arora, 2010).

Aside from the ancient and medieval ideas of the state that are embodied in the aforementioned definitions, modern theorists have also given the state a description/definition that moves away from the previous ideas. Starting with Machiavelli through Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and to Burke, the state is described as focusing on the purposes it serves that is for what the state exists or for what it has been composed (Arora, 2010).

However because the state appears differently to different people, as exemplified by the above narratives, we shall adopt, for this paper the Marxian concept of the state which regards the state as the political organization of the class domination in the economy whose purpose is to safeguard the existing order, like a machine for the oppression of one class by another (Arora, 2010). And we are adopting the Marxian state because the state that we pay so much attention today is very recent. Some three hundred years ago, people did not see the state as we see it today. The modern state and its current meaning is rooted in Europe, when, in the early nineteenth century, Napoleon created a well organized and broad political entity with an active and efficient bureaucracy and army thereby creating and developing the modern state along with the coming of industry and of complicated commercial arrangements (Shively, 2012). Perhaps that was because in an economy, there is always the need to

produce and for that, the society will organize itself into various institutions, methods of work, systems of distributions and exchange. All these will be put place in order to generate more and more surplus values, because, throughout history, there is always the effort by man, to generate more surpluses and also, there has always been the incidence of fighting over the appropriation of surplus, so, generated (Arora, 2010). Consequently, for the appropriation of surplus values to take place in an economy, various institutions emerged, such as political and social institutions to make rules and regulations (laws).

And thus, within a given country, today, the state is always the most powerful cluster of institutions, responsible for making, implementing, enforcing and adjudicating important policies in a country. The state also asserts with considerable success, the right to issue rules, laws and administrative regulations, all which are binding on the people within a country. As a result, a special relationship emerged between the modern state and economic activities, in that, the emergent complex commercial and industrial activities needed an institution for proper coordination and for the appropriation of surplus. Thus, the state emerged. The state emerged precisely for that. In addition, the state emerged because it was made necessary by the complex modern economy for two purposes.

First, the state now represents politics in order to provide for the mediation of class struggle and second, the state represents power because people can now be more easily controlled especially more so when a class has successfully constructed a hegemonic process. It is against this background that the Marxian state is seen as a product of class society and therefore an instrument in the hands of those who control the economy and subsequently the society. Thus, the state is intricately tied to economic activities which are the reason why it emerged. Consequently, economic factor is a critical factor in the development of the state and also in our understanding of the history and dynamics of modern state.

It can therefore be argued that the state is not natural but it is a product of specific social processes and political struggles (Painter, 1995). To Giddens, modern state formation was the unintended consequences of intentional activities (Painter, 1995). And today, the state has become inevitable, precisely because as a product of historical necessity, it has become a cluster of institutions that regulates the society. Consequently, because there cannot be a cohesive, articulate and functional state without class hegemony, a society therefore finds itself in a condition of flux if such a society does not have a cohesive dominant class with the necessary ideology to institute class hegemony in order to produce a state that will represent dominant class interests.

## **HEGEMONY, THE STATE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER**

Why are we focusing on hegemony and the state in the analysis of the struggle for power in Africa, especially after flag independence? The connection between hegemony and the state with regards to the struggle for power may not be too obvious because the roles of the two in politics appear hidden or latent and therefore they are seldom seen as two critical factors in politics. Consequently because political competition (politics) is aimed at securing the legitimation of the domination of the process of the distribution of resources, the struggle for power can be volatile if rules are not followed, if citizens hold divergent views (ideologies) on the same issues.

How and what then makes citizens to agree on some given rules and what are the nature and character of the rule-making institution in society? Herein lays the connection between hegemony (citizens' consent and consensus to dominant class ideas and values) and the state (the institution that defines the political community) and the struggle for power. Thus, while rules are made by the state, hegemony ensures that there is consensus about the rules and so, people obey the rules.

The need for hegemony in the struggle for power is explained by the fact that hegemony focuses on the complex balance of class forces within society which means that, it is only on exceptional circumstances will the oppressed effectively challenge ruling class authority (Swingewood, 1979).

Today, the concept of revolutionary proletariat in the actual historical processes of social change as outlined by Marx is frustrated by hegemony, precisely because with capitalism the dominant class is so powerful that the oppressed do not see the capitalists (capitalism) as their oppressors because with hegemony, the oppressed willingly submit to the existing conditions of things and sometimes defend such conditions and see no reasons to alter them. Thus, with hegemony, the oppressed become passive and too easily swayed by the ideas and values of the dominant class (Swingewood, 1979). And this is made possible by the fact that class consciousness and class actions are mediated through the dominant institutions (schools, religions, culture, ideas) and ideology of society all that are in firm control of the dominant class. In other words, the social authority of a particular dominant class represents a crucial mediating force in the development of class consciousness. Therefore, capitalism deploys hegemony which embodies domination at the superstructures of society and it is carried out, not only within the economic and political

structures of society alone but in other institutions such as the family, religion, political parties, the mass media, all that serve as the institutions that control the shaping and influencing human thoughts, including ideas, values and culture (Swingewood, 1979).

Furthermore, some level of citizen's consensus about rules and values is required to make them participate peacefully in a competition, especially, in a plural society where groups differ in terms of ideas values and beliefs. This condition of relative consensus becomes a requirement because politics (political competition) is about power and the essence of power is for distribution of resources. The group consensus is what is provided by hegemony which makes the people to identify their "good" with the "good" of the dominant class and which makes the values of the dominant class to be the values of all (Arora, 2010). The task of hegemony is therefore achieved through the exercise of political leadership by consent, carried out by the diffusion of the dominant ideology through social institutions (Youngman, 2000).

What should be noted is that a system is sustained on the basis of certain factors such as values, tradition, ideas and culture? And what makes this possible that is what makes citizens share common values, ideas and culture is hegemony, a process by which a dominant class articulates its interests which are embodied in values, ideas and cultures that are defined by the dominant class as the interests of all in society (Arora, 2010).

Therefore, the need for class hegemony, hegemonic process and the state in the struggle for power cannot be underplayed because, in the bid to acquire power in any context, according to Oke (2001) there must be certain minimal rules and procedures to follow. And this is because the concept of power itself is meaningful and significant only in the nexus of a range of other concepts and activities which jointly define politics. Thus, being the goal of political competition, power must obey some rules, even though the rules are defined by the ruling class and also interpreted by the same class, however, failure to abide by the rules usually leads to crisis and chaos and sometimes bloodshed (Oke, 2001) and these are possible outcomes of the struggle for power that are vehemently loathe by the dominant class.

For the modern state, it is relatively a recent institution in human history which evolved as societies moved from the pre-capitalist to the capitalist mode of production (Hughes *et al.*, 2002). Consequently, the modern state emerged in response to the needs of capitalism wherein the capitalists being the dominating class, needs to control the dominated classes because some tension exists in society between the dominating class and the dominated classes over oppression and exploitation, unleashed by capitalism and for which the

state must wield power on behalf of the dominating class to douse the tension and keep the dominated classes in check. In a way therefore and with hegemony, the state is but an instrument of power. Thus, the state as the institution that represents dominant class interests emerged to assume dominant class power in contemporary life because, the dominant class needs the state to maintain order and protect the interests of capital.

Again, according to Shively, to the extent that one believes that the state emerged because it was made necessary by the modern economic activities, industry and commerce, its emergence then represents politics and power because people could now be controlled more easily than before. This is made possible by the fact that the social institutions of society, responsible for the control and coercion of the citizens are now deployed by the state on behalf of those that control the economy. Thus, with capitalism, characterized by private property, the state of economic development, together with the division of society into antagonistic classes the need for the state became inevitable, in order to protect private property. In other words, the state became a necessity at a certain stage of economic development which created the cleavage of society into classes. As a result and with the help of the state, the dominant class is able to maintain their power over the economically weak classes and they are also able to maintain their domination in society. Therefore, the dominant class continues to be served by the state, through the integration of other classes into the prevailing system which is made possible by social institutions. And with hegemony, the oppressed do not realize that all the activities of the state are geared towards the protection of the interests of the dominant class, in so far as hegemony is used by the dominant class, through the state, to attain and maintain domination. In reality therefore, for the struggle for power to be well structured and well executed, the state and hegemony are two inevitable requirements.

Thus, the state is today as it will continue to remain, for as long as the capitalist mode of production prevails, an important institution for the dominating class in society. In other words, in the capitalist society that creates antagonistic classes, a society that thrives on individual and private laurels, a society in which private property reigns and a society where the property class enslaves and oppresses the property less classes, the dominant class needs to have hegemony, create hegemonic order and build the state that will protect property and act on their behalf (Arora, 2010). Consequently, for the dominant class to be able to organise politics (the struggle for power) and be sure to be in charge, in order to hold on to the domination of the people, both the state and hegemony become critical and must be under their control.



## **CAPITALISM, THE STATE AND HEGEMONY**

Thus far, it can be argued that both the modern state and the idea of hegemony are rooted in the development of capitalism that is the modern state is a product of economic activities and hegemony is used by the dominant class in exercising the domination of the other social classes with their consent which has come into being with the rise of class contradictions (Johari, 2012). And that is because, the capitalist economy rests on a fundamental dichotomy between capital and labour generating some contradictions that are transmitted at the level of social relations into the antagonistic relations between the haves and the have not (Barbara, 1985). Consequently, the state, in particular was never in the past a dominant institution in society as it stands today. Today, the modern state remains a unique political form, distinct from all past institutions in preceding political formations (Hague and Harrop, 2010). Therefore, since its emergence, the state has become a powerful institution, being the power house of society a social structure that now organizes, directs and executes policies for the entire society.

From the above, we can make two deductions. One, that the modern state is a creation of capitalism, in that the state did not emerge from social contract but it came into being as an organization of the dominant class that will protect its interest against the economically weak classes. Two, because of the conflict of interests that were engendered by capitalism and the subsequent class struggle, the property class, united by the ideology of private property and in realization of the need to have a power that will mediate class struggle, so that, they are not consumed, in the ensued conflict, created an organization that will preserve its superior status and property. Thus, the state emerged, even though it does not belong to the whole society but for the dominant economic class which it needs in order to maintain its rule.

What comes out from the above is that capitalism as a mode of production must produce a capitalist class that is the property class which becomes the dominant class in society that will recognize the need to have a power that will protect their interests. However, once the state emerges to protect dominant class interests, its method of doing so will not be by force alone, the method must include persuasion, through hegemony which according to Gramsci is embodied in intellectual, moral and political dimensions. While intellectual and moral hegemony are about leadership, the political dimension is about domination and subjugation, force and coercion. Thus, through hegemony, the education that is provided in society emanates from the intellectuals and it is designed and applied to all, so as to obtain peoples consent and

their collaboration. In other words, the secured consent of the dominated classes in society is not as a result of the fear of the force or the punishment of the dominant class and their agents institutions but from the efforts of the intellectuals, who rationalize on behalf of the dominant class, the ideas of the property class as the suitable and good ideas and values for all. Consequently, in modern society and with the capitalist mode of production, hegemony and the state are the hidden but powerful forces for the functioning of society in equilibrium.

Thus, if a society does not have a cohesive dominant class but one that is in factions, the factions that are always in belligerent conditions, making it difficult for the class to define and agree on common interests, common values and common ideas so that with hegemony the interests, values and ideas are held by all, the struggle for power will certainly be chaotic in such a society. Also, if a society does not have a stable state with the necessary class ideology of domination and a common class position, politics will necessarily be chaotic. In that case, how can we describe the conditions of hegemony and the state in post-colonial Africa, where the people now regularly struggle for power?

**Hegemony and the State in Africa:** At the time European colonization began in Africa, the societies were dominated by slavery and feudalism as modes of production. At that time, the African societies were under the dehumanizing master-servant relation of slavery and the land tenant relation of feudalism (Onimode, 1983). Thus, colonialism brought and instituted capitalism in Africa and as the capitalist mode developed extensively, it confronted the non-capitalist modes of production, slavery and feudalism and because the confrontation was aggressively conducted with superior military power, capitalism triumphed. Colonialism, therefore, changed African social organization of production and replaced it with the capitalist system which involved private proprietorship, especially in peasant agriculture and in some few cases petty-trading (Onimode, 1983). Colonial Africa was therefore linked with the outside world through the system of international capitalism (Brett, 1973).

So, with the triumph of capitalism, commodities in African societies became products for international market, making Africans to be engrossed in capitalist socio-economic production there by creating a colonial social formation which led to a gradual break up of traditional landholding (Onimode, 1983). Again, with colonialism, Africa was drawn into relations of dependence on metropolitan Europe, the development that restructured African societies to produce socio-economic relations that were both of pre-capitalist (slavery and feudalism) and capitalist systems.

Although the African societies were dominated by the international capitalist system, during colonial rule, the system did not lead to socio-economic development in Africa. And that was because the nature of the African societies was very different from the type that produced the original capitalist revolution in Europe (Brett, 1973). Even though colonialism planted the capitalist culture in Africa, the result did not engender socio-economic development as it recorded for Europe. What it succeeded in doing for Africa was tying the continent to the apron string of Europe, making Africa a net exporter of raw materials to Europe and a net importer of finished products, a relationship that is responsible for the under- development of Africa.

In Western Europe, capitalism evolved organically but was injected into African societies from outside, a system that eventually became an imposition precisely because Africans were least prepared for capitalism at the time of its imposition. What is extremely important is that the organic evolution of capitalism in Europe produced an indigenous capitalist class which was rooted in the social structure, culture and values of the Europeans. In addition, the dynamics of the European societies were in favor of the capitalist class, the class that, in turn, relied on those internal characteristics of the society for support and legitimation (Brett, 1973).

Furthermore, the dominant character (values) of the capitalist class at the early stage of capitalist development was subjected to intense opposition both from the old feudal order and the emergent working class. What that development brought about was an institution, created by the blooming capitalist class to protect capital and allow it to grow and also to protect the capitalist class against the old feudal order and the exploited and oppressed working class. Thus, the institution was to mediate the antagonism between the capitalists, on one hand and the old order and the working class. In other words, a palpable class struggle needed to be mediated by an institution. That institution was the modern state, created by capitalism for the protection of the capitalist class. The modern state, therefore, evolved as a social force which, though in favor of a dominating class, it could not be rejected by the citizenry, given the values, ideas and the dominant culture in European society at that time. Consequently, the state was seen and accepted as a needed institution, in order to avoid the Hobbsian state of nature. From the foregoing, the following assertions can be made, regarding pre-colonial Africa that is:

- Pre-colonial African societies were at the stage of slavery and feudalism
- There was no capitalist class in Africa
- There were no capitalist social classes in antagonistic relations

- There was no capitalist institution (the state) that represented the capitalist class to protect capitalist interests

In other words, the modern state was not in existence, in Africa, prior to the imposition of capitalism by colonial rule. However, the colonial administration needed an institution to be able to run the colonial economy because the administration needed the power to tax the citizens, appropriate and transfer surplus production and a power to evolve policies regarding politics and economy. Consequently, the European modern state was injected into Africa as capitalism was injected and the colonial state was born to protect the interests of the metropolitan capitalists in Europe. Thus, the colonial state became the managing agent of the dominant private interests of the capitalist system of Europe with a vested interest in maintaining their dominance inside colonial African societies. It is against that background that a problem arose with the relationship between the colonial state and the social forces that were generated by the newly created system of colonial production (Brett, 1973). That was the contradiction, together with some other forces that led to the nationalist movements.

As noted earlier, colonial rule created some social forces that eventually became antagonistic with colonialism. These social forces were made up of African petty-bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the peasant social classes all that emerged in Africa with the appearance of private ownership of the means of production and property inequality (capitalism). The colonial state, out of necessity educated the African petty-bourgeoisie so that Africans can acquire European culture and European mode of thinking so that Africans are able to accept European ideology and be useful in colonial administration. Consequently, those Africans who had acquired European culture and education became confident with high expectations as a result of their newly acquired status that placed them in the position of local leaders. However, the expectations and hopes of the blooming African petty-bourgeoisie were regularly frustrated by the colonizers, because they (the colonizers) had exclusive claim to political power and were also in control of the economy. The African petty-bourgeoisie eventually became a formidable political force and began to challenge colonial domination (Onimode, 1983). Thus, the nationalist struggle made the petty-bourgeoisie to assume the position of local dominant social class, even though the dominance was only at the level of socio-political sphere. The dominant class then formed political parties and created socio/tribal movements as tools for waging the struggle for self determination.

The colonial economy was therefore affected by the dialectics of capitalism with profound effects on the

colonial society from the point of view of the contradictions it generated, resulting in the agitation for change. Consequently, the local dominant class came together for the displacement of Europeans who exercised domination, especially at the economic and political spheres. Thus, colonialism created a situation which led to the contradictions that gave impetus to the rise of nationalist movement and liberation struggle in Africa the development that enabled African dominant class to mobilize the masses against colonial rule.

However, it is pertinent to emphasise that the nationalist movement in Africa was more a struggle against colonial rule than a movement for nationalism. And that is because nationalism is a value, a political movement in which a people with a common culture, language and historical tradition, claim the right of self determination (Gordon and Gordon, 2006). But in Africa, the colonial territories that were ruled by Europeans were collections of different peoples (nations) who lack a common spirit, a common culture as one people so as to form a cohesive social body (Nwabueze, 2010). What is important and which should be noted about the above description of colonized Africans, who struggled for self rule is that apart from the extent of territory and the difference in language, between the different peoples, there are other fundamental differences such as in character, attitude, habits, way of life and social conditions, between them. In other words, some of the different peoples were even “antagonistic, mutually antipathetic, utterly incompatible and even bitterly hostile to each other.” (Nwabueze, 2010). Thus, the historical roots, cultural orientations and the social bases of the dominant classes in Africa were sharply different.

Consequently, most of the political parties and the anti-colonial movements that were formed to fight for self determination were either ethnic based or were dominated by one ethnic group. As a result, the development crystallized into the creation of factions among the dominant classes. However, in spite of the existence of factions within the dominant classes, the struggle continued and that was because what was on the mind of African freedom fighters was just to secure political independence. In other words, the political struggle drew the people together only for opposition to their subjugation by an alien power (Smith, 2009). Thus, the dominant classes in Africa were united only in their desire to throw off colonial domination because there was no other common binding identity than anti-colonialism. (Smith, 2009). This explains one unique but vital point about African people, with regards to post-colonial crises that ensued immediately after independence and that is that, each colonial territory in Africa “is indeed a conglomeration of a larger number of different nations, artificially pieced together with the weak glue of

colonialism” (Nwabueze, 2010). Consequently, those who are dominant in terms of their positions in politics are not able to develop a trans-ethnic consciousness and coherence because they are either tribal chieftains or are ethnic warlords who hold tight to ethnic identity and not national identity.

In Africa therefore, there is no dominant class both in the Marxian sense of relationship to the means of production and in the Weberian sense of income or consumption power in relation to the market. In other words there is no dominant class in terms of being socially dominant in the ownership or control of the most productive assets or a dominant class that commands a sufficient monopoly over the means of coercion and over the cumulative socio-economic pre-eminence in society. Indeed, there is no national dominant class which is made up of individuals that own and control the apex positions in the economy, politics and society. Thus, the dominant class, as a result of their weak condition, cannot evolve and install an enduring hegemony since independence, because they lack cohesion, discipline, intellectualism and leadership which now make it difficult to have strong, stable and powerful state institutions. And which also makes it difficult for the African state to manage crisis.

In spite of their weak condition however, occasioned by intra-class struggle, the dominant class were motivated to pursue the struggle because of their desire to achieve elite social status so that they would inherit political power from the Europeans at independence have access to the economy and accumulate wealth. Again, with the scarcity of private resources and opportunities and the realization that political office could deliver the opportunities that will make them have access to the scarce resources, the struggle for political power was doggedly pursued. However, the development resulted in an inverted process of state formation and that is because unlike the Europeans who began with the nation which then developed into the state, colonialism first created the states in Africa which the Europeans used in ruling Africans but after independence Africans were now struggling to build the nations. So, in Africa, colonial rule created a modern state that dwarfed all other organised elements of the economy and society. That is, a colonial state was created that extended and deepened its control over the society in terms of the economy and social life. In a nutshell, the colonial state controlled the means for personal income and modern occupational status as well as the control and distribution of national wealth. The colonial state, indeed, became the instrument for the formation and consolidation of class domination.

With the intensification of the nationalist struggle, coupled with some political developments in other parts of the world, it was apparent that colonial rule would give

way to political independence. However, what escaped the minds of the nationalists, at the time of the struggle and which was extremely critical was whether the system of socio-economic and political organization that was established by the colonialists would be able to perpetuate itself and be able to retain the capitalist system, produce indigenous groups that will be capable of replacing colonial rulers once political freedom (independence) is attained (Brett, 1973). It is important to realize that at the twilight of colonial rule, the African societies were just beginning to develop the features of the capitalist system. In a sense, no capitalist class to manage capitalism, no capitalist social classes for capitalist production and social relations, no capitalist institutions to form the basic superstructures of society, no local dominant class with the hegemony to construct hegemonic process for nationhood and no indigenous state to protect indigenous capital. Indeed, the African societies, at that time, had not evolved sufficiently strong and well rooted capitalism at the time Africans were negotiating with Europeans over political power. Thus, at independence, African countries did not have a cohesive indigenous state nor were they with a dominant class with hegemony. And as it has earlier been argued, capitalism created the modern state and hegemony became the needed value to ensure capitalist class domination. However, because neither the state nor hegemony was in existence in African societies at the time of independence, we can now begin to conjecture the kind of leaders that will succeed the European colonisers and the type of societies that will emerge.

### **CONCLUSION**

We have argued that there must be a dominant capitalist class, to create the state and possess hegemony and while the state is an institution that represents dominant class interests, hegemony ensures that there is a general consensus on a common ideology and a common culture that are the ideas of the dominant class. Thus, the centrality of the economy in state formation and in the construction of hegemony is without debate.

At independence, the level of the capitalist mode of production with its attendant economy, capitalist values and capitalist culture were very low, resulting in very weak liberal capitalist ethos. This explains why, in Africa, the internal structure of capitalism is fragile and the African economy continues to depend on foreign support. Thus, the nature of the African economy is one that is characterised by low level of production, poor technology and lack of adequate manpower. Consequently, in today Africa, the people depend on the capitalist west to assist them in establishing the structures and institutions that are

required for a strong capitalist formation. As earlier noted, the private ownership of the means of production is a sine qua non for capitalist dominant class to have domination and also to have hegemony, a cultural and ideological process that permeates society with bourgeois values and beliefs (Heywood, 2007). But colonialism instituted and imposed capitalism in Africa when Africans were at the stage of slavery and feudalism and at the time of independence, Africa had not evolved the institutions and the capitalist social classes to engage and manage capitalist production. Consequently, in Africa, there is no ruling class, a class that is most powerful economically for being in control of the economy and there is no hegemony which embodies/leadership, discipline, intellectualism and domination.

Soon after independence, most of the dominant classes in Africa were torn apart by their struggle for political power and because of that they were only too busy in their violent struggle to secure access and control the post-colonial state apparatus. Consequently, because of in-fighting, the dominant class could not develop the ability to speak with one voice as a strong and united class so as to be able to evolve a virile state, as an institution with the needed hegemony to formalize power. Consequently because they were not united, they could not provide the required hegemonic order for an emergent society. So, there has been, in most cases, throughout the continent an apparent lack of nationally recognised and collective leadership. In Africa, it is apparent that leadership is devoid of cohesion, morality and the discipline required for the creation of strong state institutions, develop meaningful social structures for the society because they possess very fragile legitimacy of authority.

In addition, the intra class struggle and the ensued violence create so much chaos which now inhibits the ability of the dominant class to institute hegemonic order, the order that should create the guiding values for the society. Unfortunately, in the apparent confused and state of flux that Africa has found herself, without a stable state, without a hegemonic class to provide accepted values and socio-political culture for all, she still regularly organises elections for the belligerent factions of the dominant class to compete for power. No wonder there is so much chaos in the continent, where politics (competition for power), has become warfare where there is apparent lack of morality on the part of the leaders, where there is so much corruption where each year is worse than the previous year and where, according to Hagne and Havrop, there are 7 out of the 10 failed states in the world.

In summary, colonialism imposed capitalism when the people did not have the capacity to engage in capitalist mode of production the situation that continued till after

flag independence. In other words, colonialism brought capitalism which inverted the process of creating a capitalist state, in that, the dominant class emerged at independence, not because they had control of the economy but because they championed the struggle for self determination.

Two, colonialism weakens the African economy and made it dependent on European capitalist system by tying it to the international capital. Thus, because the economy is weak, it cannot produce capitalist social classes where there will be property class and properlyless classes with the former as the dominant class with common values, ideology and interests that will unite them and make them to possess hegemony and guide the society. In other worlds, the condition of the economy led to the in cohesive dominant class and the absence of capitalist social classes. The situation also led to the absence of a ruling class because no class is economically strong enough to be in control of the economy and politics.

Three, colonialism created political territories made of different people of different culture and history, of different values and philosophy, without any regard for national boundaries and ethnic/tribal identities and differences. This development later turned the different ethnic groups to different factions, after independence, leading to fierce struggle for power and making the competition for power a nightmare.

Four, the African society, after independence, did not have a strong and efficient state precisely because the colonial state could not function well after colonial rule and that is because, according to Hague and Harrop (2010) a state is not a prefabricated building, to be constructed on site from imported parts.

Finally, with the weak and dependent economy, the disorganized dominant class, the lack of capitalist social classes and the absence of a ruling class, politics will inevitably be chaotic. Indeed, with the weak state and its agent institutions, the belligerent ethnic and tribal formations as factions, the struggle for power (politics) in Africa will continue to be characterized by violence. This is because, in Africa, there is competition for power when there is no cohesive state as the institution to mediate the struggle for politics and where there is no hegemony to provide a common ideology, a common belief system and a common culture for all.

**What then is the solution?** Africa needs to redefine those colonial legacies that now constitute her major problems from the economy, education and state- society relations but most particularly the artificial colonial boundaries. Today, most of the countries in Africa are bunches of incompatible tribes and ethnic formations. The ethnic formations are now the belligerent factions of the

dominant class, those that fiercely engage in violent struggle for power. As a result, there is no cohesion among the dominant class and therefore it is difficult for a strong state to emerge or for a class to construct hegemony. Consequently, a redefinition of the colonial boundaries along ethnic lines will facilitate cohesion among the “same” people.

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