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The Changing Global Theoretical Perspectives of the State in Contemporary Analysis

Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of
Political Science (NAJOPS).
2012, Vol. 3(1)
ISSN: 2992-5924
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Abstract

Over the years, issues relating to the origin, nature and purpose of the state remain a recurrent question that has transcended all generational scholarship. The problem is compounded by the changes and contradictions that have occurred in the theoretical bases of the state, and the challenges of contemporary realities. These contradictions reveal the overwhelming crisis of conceptualization of the state especially, in modern era. This is because the institution of the state which, in its theoretical meaning, came up to instill law and order has become an instrument of societal injustices and harbinger of conflicts. This has invariably exposed most existing theories of the state to unpalatable ridicule as they fail to provide the much needed explanatory bases. This paper therefore, takes critical look at the theoretical and institutional bases of the state pin-pointing as the case may be, the positions of various theories, their inherent analytical and logical contradictions as well as their contemporary relevance in explaining the existence, actions and inactions of the state in the present era of human existence.

Keywords: Concepts, Contemporary Epoch, Institutions, State, Theory

Introduction

Every citizen of the state, according to Laski (1978:1) is the subject of the State. He is legally bound to obey its orders, and the contours of his life are set by the norms that it imposes. Obviously, the state so to say, is the crowning point of the modern social edifice, and it is in its supremacy over all other forms of social groupings that its special nature is to be found. That is to say that by the very character of the state, no single member within its territory can deny the fact that the state does impact tremendously and in some cases organizes his life. The state is, therefore, so powerful and influential and remains the bedrock of political analysis and science of politics.

Aristotle sees the state as the most supreme and inclusive association whose purpose is attainment of the good life, while Appadorai (1968) perceives it as a legal entity established for the purpose of regulating human conduct. To Deutsch (1989), the state is an organization established for the enforcement of

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decisions or commands made practicable by the existing habits of compliance among the populace. Marx et al therefore, conclude philosophically to the effect that the state:

...is nothing more than the form of organization which the bourgeoisie necessarily adopt both for internal and external purposes, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interests (Marx et al, 1977:187).

Thus, as plethora as the views on the concept of the state are, so are the seriousness of the worries expressed by scholars on the theoretical and institutional bases that provide succour and rationality to state existence and relevance. "While Sociologist(s) and Anthropologist(s) agree that there exist a rich array of pre-state societies, there still exist state skeptics from varying ideological perspectives who advocate the ideals of stateless societies. These controversies have contributed further to the diversities of theories attempting to account for the nature, and reason of the state (Okereke, 2002:1). The arguments become more compounded when atrocities committed by some leaders who justified their actions on the basis of these claims are considered. Consequently, issues relating to the origin, nature and purpose of the state remain a recurrent decimal that has transcended all generational scholarships.

Thus, little wonder why a scholar like Duguit (1979) in the midst of these raging controversies declared the obituary of the state. 'The state is dead', he declared. Thus, a thrust into the theoretical and institutional bases of the state, the contradictions and their contemporary relevance form the focus of this work.

Global Theoretical and Institutional Bases of the State: the Great Variants

Reasonable writings exist on the definition, origin, nature, purpose and theoretical bases of the state. Obioha (1999:2) captured this when he submitted that separate studies conducted by Titus (1931) and Cassese (1986) showed that as at 1931, about 145 separate definitions of the state existed. That is to say that by 2010, thousands of these definitions could be existence. Suffice it to say that several theories of the state have also evolved and each recognizes the state as the most embracing of all human organizations for the regulation of human conducts.

Hence, Rodee et al (in Christel et al, 1983) see the state as an abstraction, better appreciated on the mind's eye. That is to say that different people have different conceptions of the state. Each of us has an image in our minds of what symbolizes the state just as we have different values and interests. It is an idea that extends through time, consisting in part of governing institutions with characteristics drawn from long history of government. Unlike Rodee et al, Nnoli (1986) identified a three-dimensional approach to the definition of the state: the philosophical, political and legal definitions. The philosophical definition tries to describe the required characteristics of the ideal or perfect state; the political definition sees the state as the product and expression of the struggle between the different classes in society for domination of the processes of production, while the legal definition is based on the sovereignty of each state. It also emphasizes the norms of inter-state relations. Miliband concludes that:

More than ever before, men live in the shadow of the state. What they want to achieve individually or in groups now mainly depends on the state's sanction and support. It is possible not to be interested in what the state does but, it is not possible to be unaffected by it (Miliband in Onuoha, 2002).

Miliband's assertion seems to concur with Hegel's basic principles: The actual must be rational and the rational must be actual. The actual cannot be rational as a part of a whole except as a whole - a totality. The individual or particular interests are fully realized in the universal interests of the entire individual's freedom which is only fully realized in obedience to the state and the substantiality of the unity of the individual subjective morality. Thus, only in the state has the individual person's freedom its rationality (in Nwoko, 1988:58). Put together, the state is the central issue in the study and practice of politics. The implication of this is that anyone who lives outside the control of the state and its institutions run the risk of being unhappy and perpetually limited by forces that are naturally beyond his control.

While these controversies could be regarded as serious, the one generated by the theoretical and institutional bases of the state is more thought-provoking. An insight into these theories could be helpful here:

The Organic Theory according to Orji (1997:45) sees the state as the creation of •the organic or nuclear family, which expanded over time to become a larger entity, now, classified as a state. States, the protagonists say, are not the intentional creation of man but came into existence as a result of developments in the universe where people with similar traits and a common lineage sought avenues for identification. Thus, they became a homogeneous entity where decisions were collectively made on conflict areas and where such decisions had proved useful in the past, they developed into a body of rules or traditions which facilitated the governance of the people and catered for their needs. Here, collective decision for collective good is emphasized.

Charles Darwin and his apostles propounded and marketed what they called the Evolution Theory of the state which emphasizes that 'man evolved from the materials of the earth and as he expanded his frontiers developed a need for inter-relationships and a union, in the quest for nationhood'. The existence of the state came as man advanced, encountered conflicts, fought wars and realized the need for security, togetherness and convenience. Aristotle (in Nwoko 1988:25) asserts that the state exists by nature, since man, being a political animal can best secure the good life and fulfils his needs together with other men in the state. The state is then the end of the fulfillment of other natural associations. The state developed from simple social formation such as the family into the giant, complex, modern behemoths (Obasi, 2004).

The Divine Right of Kings, according to Rodee et al (in Christel et al, 1983) is the oldest doctrine of politics. Thus, they buttressed this by making reference to the Hammurabi, the king of Babylon (2100BC) who applied divine sanctions through the code of Hammurabi. The theory argues that the state and its leadership as imperative came from God; hence, leaders are not responsible to any other person except Him. The theory also evokes some Biblical backing in the letter of St. Paul to the Romans. (13, 1-6):

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities for there is no authority except from God and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, he who resists what God has appointed and those who resist will incur judgment.

The doctrine, according to Okereke (2002:4) was also used to support the absolution of James 1 of England but was later challenged by the writings of Locke and Rousseau. Hence, Nwoye (2002) argues that the theory has no place in the political discussions today. The state has not been created by God. It

is a human creation for the sake of good life. It justifies only absolute power of an arbitrary ruler. It surrounds the state with an atmosphere of mysticism which is above criticism. This theory is antagonistic especially to democracy, concludes Rowie (1969).

The idea of a Contract between the government and its people came to refute the claim of the Divine Right theorists. It shows that where a ruler was no longer ruling according to the terms of the mutual agreement between him and the people, the people had a right to refuse to obey him, having been freed from the contract by his breach. Thus, championed by Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Locke etc, who agree that the state should exist to fulfill the need of the people, the Social Contract theorists all agree that there existed prior to the Contract, a state of nature. This state of nature which to Hobbes was nasty and brutish, to Locke, was rational and, to Rousseau, free and equal, was later transformed into a civil society through a contract where people surrendered their rights to either the Leviathan or the Commonwealth etc in order that the needs of the people themselves would be fulfilled.

The Force Theory of the state is hinged on the belief that the state is a consequence of the subjugation of the weak by the strong i.e. the ability of the individual to subjugate a multitude of persons as a result of his in-built ingenuity or courageous traits. Burgess (1940) observes that the strong group in a polity subjugated the weak and increased the members of his group. In this way the struggle continued between clan and clan and a tribe against another until the victorious tribe occupied a definite territory where the authority of the leader was undisputed and absolute. Orji's (1997:51) summary of the positions of some writers becomes imperative here. According to him, Nnoli made an impressive outing in his exposition of the works of Machiavelli in which he wrote that the state arises to fulfill the need of restraining man from his natural propensity to anarchy and strife. This, the state does through force. This is supported by the views of Thomas Hobbes who concludes that the acquisition of power justifies 'rulership'. Jenke, a notable exponent of this theory, believes that all modern states owe existence to warfare. Here, might is expressed and the state is seen as a consequence of conquest.

Another striking issue raised in the course of preceding discussion is the purpose of the state. Okereke (1997:5) therefore, articulated a beautiful piece to explain this. He started by referring to Aristotle who argued that the purpose of the state was to ensure the good life, while Locke on his side asserted that the great and chief end of men uniting into commonwealth and putting themselves under government was the preservation of their lives, property, liberties and the state. He continues that Bentham and Mill believed that the purpose of the state was to provide the greatest happiness of the greatest number of individuals within its jurisdiction, while Ernest baker added that the function of the organs of government in declaring and enforcing law was to guarantee the right of persons. Laski concluded that the state could be seen not merely as an end in itself but as a means to higher end. These ends center on the enrichment of the individual personality. It exists to enable the mass of men to realize social good on the largest possible scale. However, the Marxist presents a contradictory view which receives the state as the organized power of one class for the domination of others. From the above, it could be seen that the state is a sovereign mental abstraction whose *raison d'etre* is the establishment of order, protection and provision of secular and common welfare.

The concentration of public power in the absolute Sovereign who embodies the divine rights is the main position of Absolutist Theory, The theory recognizes the existence of absolute Sovereign. The Sovereign is the highest legal authority who could neither be bound by laws nor resisted by subjects. The total

surrender of rights to the sovereign is in fact cruelty complete, more thorough going and absolutist. The position of the Sovereign:

... is the formal seat, the highest in a hierarchy of group and institutions...
A legal person who represents the entire body of the seal summing up the
life of the body (Bodin in Andrew, 1987) .

The implication of the Absolutist Theory is that the Sovereign (Monarch) is above all and needs no consultations in the discharge of his duties. In as much as the theory does not in itself suggest arbitrary rule or tyranny, it does not accommodate oppression or violation of constitutional principles, but gained prominence as a panacea for war and disorder. That is to say that the sovereign is the focal point of the absolute theory of the state.

The challenge of the Absolutist Theory came to limelight with the birth of the Constitutional Theory as advocated by Baron De Montesquieu, John Locke, Black Stone etc, who, while accepting the accommodation of popular sovereignty maintains the institutionalization and modification of power relations within specific rules. The theory perceives the state and its operatives as entities, which by their nature desire more power. These powers need to be diversified or limited in order to ensure good governance. It further conceives the state as a guardian of the constitutional order whose activities must be regulated within the framework of the constitution.

Another school of thought is the Ethical which is based on the understanding of the state in terms of purposive association of individuals pursuing a specific goal. This theory is hinged on metaphysics and was effectively used by Hegel to demonstrate how the objective world of institution and laws are rooted in the subjective world of human consciousness. Hegel stated that 'it was the destiny of humans for foreseeable future to develop within states. We are not just social creatures but state creatures'. With the instrumentalism of metaphysics, Hegel developed the idea of spirit as the metaphysical principle linking human history to human consciousness. The Geist (spirit/mind) is conceptualized as a self-realizing entity developing in the self-consciousness of human beings through their activities as individuals in the state. In this regard, the state becomes the mark of God on earth representing order, permanence and legality and standing over and above civil society and without which the civil society will remain chaotic (Okereke, 2002:9).

Another interesting theory of the state is the Marxist Theory or Class Theory which states that all individuals are connected and defined by their class positions and the nature of society and states are determined by the class composition and character of struggles between the existing classes. Essentially, the Marxist theoreticians adopted three approaches in explaining the nature of the capitalist state; the Instrumentalist, Independent State theory and Institutional school.

The Instrumentalists see the state as an instrument in the hands of the ruling class, and perceive it as a 'thing', a mere positive tool in the hands of powerful ruling class. In this case, the state is seen as a mere instrument, object or a lifeless entity having no will of its own and therefore, has no autonomy whatsoever. This represents what has been described as the 'primary view of the state'. According to Obioha (1999) Marx and Engels explained this view in the Communist Manifesto published in 1848. They argue that 'The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'. From the definition, he continues, it is not whether what is being described is

the 'state' or 'government'. In other words one is confused whether the instrument of domination is the 'state' or the 'government' or both.

The Independent State Theory disagrees with the Instrumentalists and defines the state as an independent entity with a will of its own and autonomy. The state is a subject rather than object in the hands of the ruling class. Its function is to moderate and mediate into inter and intra class struggles within the society. Engels observes that the state is a product of society at a certain stage of development. It is the admission that society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself. That it has split into irreconcilable opposites, which it is powerless to exercise. But in order that these opposite classes with conflicting economic interests shall not consume themselves in fruitless struggles, it became necessary to have a power seemingly standing above society that moderates the conflict and keep it within the bounds of order. Obviously, this power standing above the society and moderating inter-intra conflicts is the state.

The other variant of the Class Theory of the state is the Institutional School, which considers the state as a concrete institution or institutional mechanism that serves the interest of the dominant class in the society while portraying itself as serving the nation as a whole. Hence, one of the theory's protagonists, Ake, argues that the state is:

A specific modality of class domination, one in which class domination is mediated by commodity exchange, so that the system of institutional mechanism is differentiated and disassociated from the ruling class and even the society and appears as an object force standing alongside society (Ake in Okereke, 2002).

Interestingly, many of the scholars in the developing countries who wrote on the state used the Institutional perspective of the state as their basis. John Saul (1974) Colin Leys (1976), Michaela Von Treyhold (1976) etc, hinged their analyses on the post colonial state on the logic that the state is a mere institution or institutional mechanism, or on the idea of overdeveloped state. 'The lack of agreement within the Marxist fold on the actual meaning of the state is due to the fact that Karl Marx never attempted a systematic study of the state'.

The Mechanistic Theory looks at man as a creator and therefore superior to the state which is a mere instrument, artifice or creature with which he accomplishes certain aims. Whether the state is a creator or creature of man has a lot of implications for human rights, freedoms and liberties (Obasi, 2004).

The Developmentalists, who include AFK Organski, Samuel Verba, Gabriel Almond and S.M. Lipset etc., focus on the definite stage in the growth of the state towards advanced industrial societies. Vincent maintains that this approach extolled the Western industrial societies as standard rational models for developing countries to emulate if they are to develop. The emergence, at a certain stage, of industrialization and division of labour to play mediator's role in the society is the principal bases of the state.

The greatest departure from all the theories of the state is the Doctrine of Anarchism, which advocates the elimination of the institution of the state. The need was to reconstitute the society on libertarian and anti-state basis so that a new life will begin in thousands of centers, else, the state would crush the

individual and local life. The Anarchist sees the primary fault of the present economic order not in the economic arrangement, as do socialist but in the existence of the state. The state is to be overthrown and then society will take care of itself either through extreme individualism or voluntary cooperative groups of various sizes (IETSS in Okereke, 2002:12).

The Political Economy Approach on its part is a scientific way of studying the state more concretely rather than abstractly. The state from this perspective does not possess a constant character, but has transient characteristics assigned to it by the scientific demands of a social mode taken as a moment in its historical evolution. This change of the nature and character of the state is dependent on the consequent change in the mode of production (Obioha, 1999).

From the foregoing, it has been observed that the state has a lot of theoretical and institutional bases as expressed by the different theorists and scholars examined. However, the clear issue in all the variants is the recognition of the indispensable role and influence and control the state wields. It also establishes the inevitability of people to live collectively and in association with one another for optimum collective good. Even the Anarchists to some extent, also accepts this when they argued that as soon as the state is overthrown 'this society will take care of itself either through extreme individualism or voluntary cooperative groups of various sizes'. These voluntary cooperative groups of various sizes cannot be totally divorced from the meaning of the state.

Global Theoretical and Institutional Bases of the State in Contemporary Analysis

The attainment of the ideal state has been man's concern over the years. Nwoko (1988:1) asserts that this yearning, which has led him to evolve several methods and systems aimed at the ideal political state, is evident in the numerous theories of the state we have in human history. It is part of human civilization to aim at the perfect. Man is set for himself the model for the best life. Hence, the Plethora of theories on the subject speak volumes of this essence, but how these theories have been effective and applicable to contemporary politics and post colonial experience remains a recurrent paradox.

In modern times, states have grown beyond the organic age when they were homogenous entities. This is because some of those accepted characteristics of the state: people, territory, government and sovereignty no longer apply in many circumstances. Some states today are made up of people with different origins and lift-cultural ties. Nigeria is an example with over 288 ethnic groups and languages. The Divine Rights of kings emphasizes traditional authority very far from modern political expectations. Its proposals are accepted by faith than by reason, thus, fails short of logical consistency. It encourages dictatorships which are no longer in vogue. Thus, Rowie (1969) concurs that it surrounds the state with an atmosphere of mysticism which is above criticism, justifies the recklessness of the king, and does not hold good i n any other form of government. The theory is antagonistic to democracy. That is not to say that the theory is entirely useless because at a time when the bond of social unity was loose, the fear of God's wrath brought a sense of unity. Obedience to the ruler became a religious duty. In addition, it added moral tone to the activities of the ruler as some of them feared that their activities would ultimately be judged by the Almighty God (Penn, 1970). In the twenty first century, the influence of religion is still strong as some contemporary states such as Israel, Pakistan, and much of Arab world were founded on religious principles (Nwoye, 2002).

Hobbes's Social Contract to a great extent is contemporarily undemocratic because as non-party to the Contract, the Sovereign would be too autocratic and the situation may be worse than the state of nature. This is because the Contract equates the will of the state with the will of government which makes the removal of a despotic Sovereign very difficult and any act in this direction according to it, may be a suggestion to the expiry of the state. Rousseau's General Will is also faulty in contemporary analysis. It can afford the sovereign the opportunity of misinterpreting the Contract by arrogating to himself absolute power over the people. It happened in Nigeria under President Obasanjo when the president and his PDP power bloc turned a supposedly democratic system into a dictatorship by claiming some powers he never had. This is invariably in line with Hobbes' Social Contract which fails to distinguish between the state and the government.

The Force Theory cannot effectively apply too, because other factors such as common lineage, political consciousness, nationalism and religion play significant role in the creation of modern states. Of course, with new democratic arrangements in most of the states today, the logic of force remains an aberration and antithetical to freedom and attainment of the General Will. This is not insinuating that elements of force are not needed in the maintenance of peace and order in modern societies.

The Developmental Theory, though, with a lot of modern considerations ignores the specific roles played by the state in instituting industrialization. For example, in the Nigerian state, the federal government has been setting up and assisting in industrial projects such as Ajaokuta Steel, Kanji Dam, Aladja Steel Company etc. And the theory's recommendation of the western industrial societies as standard rational models for developing countries to emulate if they are to develop does not hold water because Western Europe has no monopoly of development strategies. The so-called democratization experiment so far in Africa, Asia and Latin America exposes the loopholes of Western political therapy in solving the problem of development. The IMF/World Bank recommended economic strategies are not even working.

The Anarchist position is also faulty in contemporary political experience. Engels (in Okereke, 1999:12) observed that the Anarchist while equating authority with state and absolute evil further compounded issues when it argues that in all societies, there would above all, be no authority. Engels therefore, wonders how the Anarchist proposes to run a factory, operate a railway, or steer a ship without a Will that decides in the last resort. Furthermore, he observed that the Anarchist maintains silence on how the authority of the majority over minority, and how a society of even two people is possible unless each gives up some of his authority and even freedom.

To Scholars like Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes etc, the state is a legal, neutral and objective phenomenon. To them:

The state is neutral, impartial and unbiased umpire, mediating and moderating inter and intra group struggles within the society. Stein stressed this point when he observed that the state stands above and apart from the fractions of the society and enforces the just claims or peace and unity transcending its members (Obioha, 1999).

In real practice, the state has never been neutral in the inter-group and intra-group struggles within the society since the group that represents the state so resides within the society. In fact, the state has always been biased in favour of the strong. For instance, the Greek city-states were biased against the staves.

States in the medieval world were biased in favour of the owners of landed property. Since the Industrial Revolution, the state has been biased in favour of the owners of the means of production and against those who have nothing but their labour power to sell. When the socio-economic policies of the industrial countries, especially, those under the capitalist mode of production and distribution are placed on the table, such issues as deregulation, privatization, liberalization and what have you, where those with economic power buy up company shares, are indeed, in favour of the strong. This, no doubt, places a perpetual question mark on the mediator's (unbiased) role of the state.

It has been established that the major cause of instability in the society is the biased nature of the state. Consequently, allegiance to the state is constantly withdrawn by some groups, which take the view that the state is biased against their interest. Thus, Laski (1978) explains that the state as it operates does not deliberately seek general justice or general utility, but the interest in the largest sense of the dominant class in society. This evokes instability. Practicable examples would be relevant here. The taking to arms by the militants in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria is consequent on the refusal of the Nigerian state to address the Niger Delta questions; so is the struggle for the sovereign state of Biafra. The people of the Darfur region in Sudan are also reacting against the state's instability-prone policies against her own citizens, while Anambra is still licking the wounds of the alleged federal government sponsored crisis, when, according to Amodu (2004:9):

...national executive sees no evil, hears no evil, while a seemingly 'family affair' becomes a festering sore.

Hence, if the state has degenerated to the level of being its own destructive forces, then the argument that the state exists for stability, law and order is an aberration in the inner chambers of critical analysis.

The capacity of the state to make and implement its decisions without internal or external dictations is called sovereignty, which is another area where the Bourgeois Perspective is anchored. Hegel explained this issue better when he observed that the state is the self-contained absolute mind which acknowledges no abstract authority but its own. Bodin also re-echoes Hegel's view when he asserts that 'the state is sovereign because it gives orders to all and receives orders from none'. Obviously, the concept of sovereignty which forms one of the characteristics of the state has collapsed. At the time the Westphalia Treaty was promulgated in 1648, it was unrealistic to talk about sovereignty as an attribute of the state. Today, it may be unrealistic to insist that sovereignty should be indispensable characteristics of the state. In fact, since the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1988/89, the only country that may still claim to have its sovereignty intact may be the United States (Obioha, 1999).

The situation has been worsened by the activities of the Multinational Corporations that dominate the production and marketing of goods and services worldwide. In most cases, these MNCs determine who get what, how and when? The role of the IMF and World Bank in the developing countries has to some extents made nonsense of the concept of sovereignty. In most cases, they determine which president should stay in power and vice versa. The cases of ITT and Pinochet of Chile and Museveni of Uganda are indeed revealing. In fact, in this era of globalization and rapid movement of persons and ideas, it is difficult for any country to make decisions and implement them without external influence and in some cases, dictation. Where then lays the concept of sovereignty? (Hakim, 2000:32). The trend has turned up the call for the restructuring of the state system as well as its supportive theoretical bases to reflect the new realities.

The flawing of the theoretical and institutional bases of the state on the platform of loss of sovereignty is also emphasized by the realities of the three fundamental theoretical perspectives that suggest the End of Politics: the Apologetic, Functionalist and Cybernetic Materiality Approaches. Hakim (2000) submits that these approaches agree on series of propositions. According to him, the approaches led to the idea of the extinction and marginalization of politics. Politics had to be disenchanted by steering it from its learning for Utopia and dream and by reducing it into a simple tool for the management of municipal affairs. Secondly, the influence of politics on multilateral institutions had to be reduced to a minimum. From this viewpoint experts were able to provide the most adequate technical responses to the problem raised.

To the Functionalist, politics has lost some of its substance due to the dominance of monopolies. In the perspective, national political choices are fundamentally determined by the logic of financial capital. Political powers of the nation-states are trying to implement policies aimed at attracting international investments. In fact, the strategies of flexibility on the labour market and the weakening of procedures and mechanisms of social protection and solidarity by the welfare state are aimed at attracting investments. In sum, politics escapes the control of citizens and becomes the privileged area of action for major international lobbies. Thus, while the territory was the central area that merged social linkages and consequently, the locus of the discourse of politics, the break up of territories due to globalization emasculates politics and therefore, fuels its extinction.

Furthermore, from the political philosophical viewpoint, thesis on the End of Politics feeds on the hypothesis of the End of Modernity. This philosophy seeks to reconcile individual freedom and equality, which are the sources of justice in democratic societies. Obviously, it is said that distribution is not fully egalitarian in democratic 'societies but it is difficult to imagine fairer system of wealth distribution. In this context, modernity would have reached its objectives by making reason and the free individual the basis of democracies.

Okereke (2002) in an attempt to articulate the potency of the state in contemporary African societies quoted Ake at length: he perceives the state as a source of the endemic conflicts which have consistently plagued the continent of Africa. He argues that the underdeveloped structure of the new states together with the possibilities of its use for domination, exploitation and oppression, have sparked off intense competition between and among the emerging indigenous power blocs for the control of the institution. The ensuring struggle for state power, he maintains, has become so intense, normless and so absorbing with politics degenerating into warfare. He also adopted a UN Security Council report on Africa to buttress his points. According to the report, the nature of political power in many African states, together with the real and perceived consequences of capturing and maintaining power is a key source of conflict across the continent. This situation is exacerbated when as is often the case in Africa, the state is the major provider of employment and political parties are largely either regionally or ethnically based (Ake, 2000:61). The case of Anambra State of Nigeria could be reported again as a reference point. In November 2004, hoodlums burnt down public buildings in front of security agents. Accusing fingers kept pointing at the federal government led by President Obasanjo. Up till now, nobody has been arrested or put on trial for the act. Plateau state had its own turn while Bayelsa seemed to be the mother of all federal power instigated problems. The situation is not different when the disturbances in the Congo, Mauritania, Rwanda, Angola etc are critically analyzed.

The consequences of this are enormous and re-emphasize the need for the redefinition and re-conceptualization of the state over the years. This is because the resultant struggle for, and personalized use of state power, the limited atomization of the state, economic under development, poverty, corruption and tendencies at re-colonization have undermined the legitimacy of African states. In the absence of institutionalization of formal freedom, economic rights, equality, open competition and enhanced standards of living, African states lacked objectivity. This is what Ake (2000) refers to as the crises of legitimacy and nation building. For Zartman (cited in Okereke, 2002), it depicts the collapsed state.

As it is with Africa, so it is with some other nations of the world especially those of Asia and Latin America although sharp differences may exist in terms of magnitude. But one thing is clear; the state system is faced with more challenges that require its re-conceptualization and restructuring.

Conclusion

It is stating the obvious that the theoretical and institutional bases of the state have experienced tremendous changes over the years. According to Nnaemeka (2002), the epochs were Roman, Medieval, Reformation, Era of Reason and Enlightenment, Colonial and Post-Colonial. For example, while the western capitalist state was created by ascendant bourgeoisie class for the promotion of capital formation, the state in post colonial societies was a creation of the colonial metropole to facilitate colonial aggrandizement in post-independence era.

These contradictions reveal the overwhelming crisis of conceptualization of the state especially in modern era. As such, one can conclude that the institution of the state has for long stimulated intense political struggles between and within social classes for its control. As such, the institution of the state which emerged to pursue order or justice in the society has at times become an instrument of societal injustice and consequently, an invitation to disorder and conflict in the polity. Invariably, the motive force of politics revolves around the potency of state power.

One is not insinuating that the present state system has 'no active role to play in history' in terms of contemporary socio-political relevance - far from it, after all, it is the present state system that has maintained the systemic sanctity over the years, through maintenance of law and order, protection of life and property, provision of socio-economic facilities and welfare, as well as, manpower development and creation of enabling environment for growth and development.

However, the experience of Africa and some other developing countries vis-a-vis the contemporary state system is a serious indictment on the state which renders almost irrelevant, the theories and concepts that hitherto support the state in its present constitution, nature and functions. Hence, the state and its contemporary proponents should do well to exonerate themselves from the current mess the state found itself or be overtaken by the realities of time of which globalization and its concomitant cybernetics are part.

It is therefore recommended that there is need for the collectivization of the institutions of the state which one believes, will make the state broad-based enough, and truly effective in, and responsive to the needs of the citizenry. This, therefore, requires responsible and responsive political leadership in every state. This will enable the adoption of the structures of the state to the changing needs and aspirations of the citizenry.

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