Globalization & State Capacity in Africa

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Abstract

The paper examines the impact of globalization on state capacity in Africa. It problematizes globalization as a central determining factor in building the capable state in Africa. Globalization, although it requires typologizing and contextualizing or historicizing, is used to refer to a complex set of interconnected multi-linear, multifaceted and dialectical and still unfolding historical processes, propelled by the transnationalization of finance capital, in search of new markets, and the logic of capital accumulation, and typically characterized by structural differentiation and unequal functional integration between metropolitan and dependent or satellite nations, peoples and markets. State capacity is used neither narrowly nor exclusively as human and physical resource capacity-building or capacity-enhancement, nor limited to econometric or statistical computations of gross domestic product or national income data, though it includes and requires both. Its use assumes a democratic, open, participatory, and socially inclusive political system, as important conditions for expanding and consolidating state capacity on a sustainable basis in Africa.

The paper situates the problem of globalization for state capacity in Africa in the wider Pan African context. Historically, globalization has divided and balkanized African countries, carving out political, economic and cultural spheres of influence, and weakening their ability to act collectively to defend their common interests. Collective action by African countries to confront the challenges and opportunities of globalization requires new governance structures to strengthen African regional economic communities, the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, along lines that will, by democratizing decision-making and public political processes within their member-states, enhance state capacity in various sectors.

Attributing the problematic character of state capacity in Africa to the massive problem of the structural condition of the African state, the paper argues that this is notably and significantly due to the contradictions arising from globalization and the dependent character of the African state, reflecting the lingering or residual colonial inheritance of dependent political and socioeconomic and psycho-cultural structures, institutions and processes, which are at the heart of the problem of state capacity in Africa. They reflect the dialectics or antinomies, the age-old or historically deep contradictory push and pull of globalization and localization or indigenization in Africa.

The paper suggests that, resolving these antinomies or contradictions, requires the following:

(a) Transforming contemporary globalization, on the basis of mutuality, recognition and reciprocity, emphasizing new Afrocentric epistemological foundations for thinking about African and global development, global social justice, global income redistribution, economic and socio-cultural rights, global inclusion, and global democracy.

(b) Emphasizing the use of “appropriate” technologies, to ‘fit’ the lifestyles and social organizations of local communities, growing from them, requiring less reliance on outside experts and using more local expertise.
The problematic nature of globalization

I begin by problematizing globalization as central factor affecting state capacity in Africa. But what is globalization? And which, or whose globalization is the reference to?

To understand why it is a problem for state capacity in Africa, I characterize globalization as a complex set of interconnected multilinear, multifaceted and dialectical and still unfolding historical processes, which are propelled by the transnationalization of finance capital, in search of new markets, and the logic of capital accumulation. Typically, the processes are characterized by structural differentiation and unequal functional integration or interdependence and exchange between metropolitan and dependent or satellite nations, peoples and markets. They are mediated and facilitated on a world scale by technological advances, world trade regimes, and by hegemonizing and universalizing or homogenizing cultural and intellectual institutions, even as they generate their contraries or competing responses.

More recently, this homogenizing globalization has resulted in the emergence of the internationalized state and of a “layer of transnational institutional authority above” the state, both of which facilitate the creation of transnational market interests, the movement of transnational capital, and the emergence of networks of national and transnational state actors [MacLean, et. al., 2001]. It has, however, necessitated, as a strategic policy response to the inherent logic of this globalization, new modes of political and economic governance structures and processes, which are not only derogating from traditional concepts of sovereignty but also are impelling new definitions of the state and of citizenship, while also creating new and competing political and cultural identities. This development has had profound implications for the character of the state in Africa, as indeed elsewhere in the world, and has further complicated the question of state capacity in Africa.

The trajectories of this model of globalization as a historical and structural-process of capitalist and imperialist domination on a world scale, and of the global diffusion or replication of its economic substructures and cultural and political superstructures, have been well outlined and analyzed by others and need not be repeated here. [Aina, 1996; Ake, 1996; Amin, 1976, 1992; Griffin & Khan, 1992; Hoogvelt, 1997; Leys, 1996; McBride and Wiseman, 2000; Nabudere, 2000; Robertson, 1992; Rodney, 1972; Rugumamu, 2001; Scott, 1992; UNDP, 1996; Wallerstein, 1974]

However, the point to emphasize here, in order to locate the problem of state capacity in Africa within the context of globalization as a historical and structural-materialist, diffusionist process from the West to other parts of the world, is that in its engagement with Africa, it has historically been characterized by uneven market and cultural exchanges between unequal partners, the underdevelopment of Africa’s human capital and the fragility of its economic and political institutions. But globalization has not only led to the marginalization of Africa but also denied it the possibility and prospects of auto-centered development, by regarding it [Africa] as a “follower society,” in the image of hegemonizing and globalizing West.

Problematizing state capacity

But what does state capacity mean in the context of the African state? What conditions, determines or shapes its exercise, and what does globalization have to do with it? Put differently, what do globalization and state capacity have to do with the crisis of development in Africa?
The answers to these questions are partly to be found in the attributes, or the powers and functions normally associated with the modern state. Such attributes, though not necessary and sufficient ones, generally include sovereignty; the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force to ensure law and order, to enforce contract, and to deter external aggression; the pursuit of the public welfare, through public political institutional processes and public policies; and physical, natural, social, cultural, and human resource endowment and development.

State capacity is also a function of the complementary, and reinforcing, and, therefore, consolidating role of subsidiary associations and groups in mediating the relationship between the state and its institutions on the one hand, and the civil society, on the other hand, and in conferring legitimacy on the state. This is another form of human resource endowment or capacity. State capacity, therefore, is a function of the strength or deficit of these attributes, and of the extent to which a political culture of public spiritedness prevails within the ordinary citizen.

State capacity is also a function of the distance between the state and these subsidiary associations and groups. In other words, state capacity depends on the extent to which citizens value, take their civic responsibility seriously and will defend their own sovereign rights; believe they own the state and belong to it; and have confidence in its ability, through legal and political processes, to manage or contain conflict impartially.

This perspective towards state capacity, which does not narrowly restrict it to, or define it exclusively in terms of, human and physical resource capacity-building or capacity-enhancement, or limit it to econometric or statistical computations of gross domestic product or national income data, though it includes and requires both, assumes a democratic, open and inclusive political system, based on what might be described as a social contract between the state and its citizens. While it also assumes that there is a strong connection between state capacity and the direction and substantive content of public policy, it views state capacity as a function of both a combination of democratic political and legal culture, and of the evolution and durability of democratic public political and socio-economic and cultural institutions. What the perspective also underlines is the need to shift focus to and specify the determining material and socio-political conditions or environments for state capacity, and how to restructure or change them to enhance state capacity.

This is what Amartya Sen [1999:298] meant when he hypothesized that, “Development is indeed a momentous engagement with freedom’s possibilities.”

Although there is ebb and flow of state capacity, which is to say that it is always, and necessarily developing, waning and waxing, depending on historical or conjunctural forces, much also depends, in the long run, on the character of the state and its ability to sustain and continually renew, regenerate or re-invent itself. Much also depends, in this regard, on the answer to the question, “to whom does the state belong?” For to pose the question is to raise the critical issue of access to the state, and to project participation and inclusiveness as important conditions for expanding and consolidating state capacity on a sustainable basis in Africa as elsewhere.

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Antinomies of Globalization & African Development: The Pan-African Response.

It is the contradictions, arising from the lingering or residual colonial inheritance of Africa from earlier imperialist processes of globalization, which are at the heart of the problem of state capacity in Africa. The contradictions reflect the dialectics or antinomies, the age-old or historically deep contradictory push and pull of globalization and localization or indigenization in Africa.

The contradictions also go to the heart of the implications of globalization for the prospects and possibilities of development in Africa. As for state capacity, Albert Memmi’s [1967:113] apt observation is pertinent: that colonial rule underdeveloped the colony’s human and physical resource endowment; so much so that “after decades of colonization, the multitude of children in the streets is greater than those in the classrooms; the number of hospital beds is pitiful compared with the number of the sick; the purpose of the highway system is without regard to the needs of the colonized but absolutely in line with those of the colonizer.”

The crisis of development in Africa, which is as much economic as it is political and socio-cultural, and which has been graphically reviewed on an annual basis in recent years in the UNDP Human Development Report, shows that in many sectoral areas African countries are far behind and are, therefore, unlikely to meet the expectations of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. As one recent report concluded, despite “some striking successes... recorded.”
“In Africa, the magnitude of the challenge to be met in poverty reduction remains vast and requires the mobilization of all partners involved in the development process. In 1997, income poverty affected some 220 million people in Africa, roughly 45% of the population... Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest incidence and fastest increase in poverty... Within Africa, women, children and old people are the most affected by human poverty.

In overall human development terms, the challenges of Sub-Saharan Africa are considerable. The health and education indicators show severe deficiencies. The morbidity and mortality rates are now higher in Africa than in the rest of the world. Health and nutrition standards have deteriorated, and Africa is the continent hardest hit by AIDS. Furthermore, recent armed conflicts have caused terrible damage and destruction.”

The structural crisis in higher education, reflected in infrastructure decay, resource constraints, staff and academic programme rationalizations, and how to cope with it under pressures of globalization, was and continues to be a major constraint to state capacity and needs to be emphasized. Indeed, “as market imperatives and ideology have gained or are struggling to gain supremacy universities are increasingly valorised or find themselves compelled to seek valorisation for their private and vocational good.” [Zeleza and Oluokshi, 2004:3]

Various dimensions of the contradictions of globalization, and of the African reaction to them are reflected, for example, in the writings of a distinguished body of Black and African intellectuals, which includes Claude Ake, Samir Amin, Amilcar Cabral, Cheik Anta Diop, William B. Dubois, Frantz Fanon, Mahmood Mamdani, Dani Nabudere, Abdel Gamal Nasser, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, Leopold Sedar Senghor, and Issa Shivji, among others, who offer an Afro-centric counter-interpretation or perspective to western-driven globalization, and of the relevant variables to provide the organizing variables for studying it.

Placed in the broader context of their assertion of the contraries of globalization, the idea of Pan-Africa, in its different theoretical formulations and policy prescriptions by these intellectuals, underscores another important element in the dialectics of globalization and state capacity in Africa. Historically, globalization divided and balkanized Africa carving out, in the form of colonial rule, political, economic and cultural spheres of influence, and weakening the ability of African countries to act collectively to defend their common interests. This is why there is compelling need for collective action at the African continental and Diaspora levels by African countries to deepen and consolidate and move the state capacity-building project in Africa, in the context of continental integration process forward, so that common problems of state capacity facing them can be more collectively handled. It is in this respect, for example, that the African Peer Review Mechanism [APRM] is a welcome and desirable development in providing a continental framework for monitoring state capacity and related good governance issues on the continent.

In a similar vein, the revitalization and strengthening of regional economic communities like ECOWAS, SADC, and EAC, together with recent proposals to rationalize some of them, make them outward looking in a more Pan-African manner, under a harmonized “multilayered, multidimensional” approach, so that they can serve as “building blocks towards deep continental integration” [African Union, 2006:28] is designed to enhance state-capacity in Africa, through collective continental policy action.

Collective action by them will require new governance structures to strengthen African regional economic communities, the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, along lines that will democratize decision-making and public political processes in African countries. The drive for collective African action derives from what has been characterized as a “common interest” perspective on state capacity in Africa, based on the following assumptions:

(a) Owing to the “increasing wave of globalization, and the emergence of strong regional, economic and trading blocs in other continents, the challenges of over dependence and under-exploitation of its potentials have increased the marginalization of the continent in world affairs,”

(b) “The goal in pursuing development through a common interest perspective is to bring about human progress in Africa; restore human dignity to the African people... promote progressive African social and political values and defend the African personality”;

(c) There is need to develop the human potentials of Africa and include the people in the development process,” so as to

(d) “Build its [Africa’s] collective capability and capacity to act as stakeholder and not an outside in world affairs, and to fully participate in shaping international norms and agendas.” [African Union: 2006:8]
Globalization, state capacity and the development process in Africa

“What does globalization and state capacity have to do with the crisis of development in Africa?” To answer this question, it is instructive to view contemporary globalization dialectically and analyze it concretely in respect of what is generally referred to as the African crisis. It will be instructive to do so because globalization is Janus-faced—it has had positive and negative impact on state capacity in Africa. Rabid anti-globalization postures may miss or overlook its positive aspects, while uncritical adulation of globalization may obscure and draw focus away from some of its negative impact on state capacity in Africa.

Yet, given the nature and the economic, cultural and political context of globalization’s encounter with Africa, highlighted by racialism, the political economy of colonial rule and the pervasiveness and durability of the colonial inheritance, in the form of neocolonialism and the neocolonial state, much of the radical progressive African critique of globalization is understandable. [Ake, 1992; Amin, 1992; Mkandawire and Olukoshi, 1995]

If we take the political economy of colonial rule, as a starting point, it was authoritarian, and led to the underdevelopment of state capacity on the continent. In the circumstance, it is not surprising that this critical underlying deficit, which was in many colonies exacerbated by the deliberate divide and rule policy of the colonial government which created regional, racial and ethnic disparities and inequalities, in access to education and the provision of infrastructures, thereby giving advantage to some, and placing others at a disadvantage, not only started off the postcolonial African state on a poor human and physical resource base, posing a major human and physical endowment challenge to the emergent postcolonial state, but also sowed the seed of ethno-regional and racial conflict within it, with grave and decimating consequences for state capacity on the continent.[Atkinson, 1999: 24, Horowitz, 1985:160; Mamdani,2002; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1987]

Historically, therefore, Africa’s experience of globalization has been that the relationship lacked recognition, reciprocity and mutuality in relations between cultures, nations and peoples. This is why Afrocentric critics of colonialism like Aime Césaire, in characterizing colonialism, as a phase of globalization, argued for something similar to what Sachs [2005:358] recently characterized as “an enlightened globalization.” In other words, such an enlightened globalization would address and promote the pressing imperative of global poverty reduction, global social justice and equity, global income redistribution, global environment and democracy.

In short, and most importantly, what Césaire’s [1955:10] position implies, when he argued that, “for civilization exchange is oxygen...” is the possibility for Africa and the Black World, in bringing their own cultural, socio-economic and political perspectives and agenda to bear on the globalization process, to make it truly global and non-parochial.

But moral suasion has its limits, and nowhere is this truer than in the case of globalization, where power relations are politicized as relations of economic and political superordination and subordination, arising out of its being a process of unequal exchange and social relations of production among unequal partners. As Fanon pointed out, although “what [the Third World] expects from those who for centuries have kept it in slavery is that they will help it to rehabilitate mankind... it is clear that we are not so na?ve as to think that this will come about with the cooperation and the goodwill of the European governments.” [Fanon, 1968:106]

The African engagement with globalization therefore calls for struggle and contestation, beyond moral suasion. It involves the “remarkable politicization of social life, while also creating new modalities and institutional arenas through which its imperatives are contested.” [Held and McGrew, 2000:325] The “institutional arenas” of the struggle and contestation are, of course, varied and may move from local to international spaces, at the level of GATT or the WTO, for example, and may be pursued by less conventional means.

Because globalization constraints the domestic and external terrains of policy choices over several policy areas for the African state, invariably blurring the tenuous distinction between the external and external policy fields, the policy process within the African state becomes the critical focus area where the struggle and contestation over policy and its ideational foundations, consequences and outcomes are waged. In this way too, globalization becomes a critical factor in the structure and process of the domestic and external politics of the African state, and with implications for state capacity, particularly with respect to endogenous policy formulation and implementation in public sector administration and management.

This much is obvious not only from the various international demonstrations and rallies against globalization but also from deep-seated popular based autonomist political action and resistance by social movements and citizens across Africa, against authoritarian rule generally and the externally imposed structural adjustment policies of
various African governments. [Adekanye, 1995; Beckman, 1992; Gibbon, Bangura and Ofstad, 1992; Laakso and Olukoshi, 1996; Mamdani and Wamba-Dia-Wamba; Osaghae, 1995; Rudebeck, 1992]

The interdependence of the domestic and external political economies, which is one of the hallmarks of globalization, becomes problematic, in the African context, precisely because, in view of its inherited fragile economic and political institutions and its underdeveloped human resource endowment, the typical African state generally lacks the capacity for independent action or resistance to the imposition of economic and political conditionality by forces and institutions of globalization. This is also why in many cases the African state lacks the capacity to control and hold accountable multinational corporations and local ones, and to engage the industrialized countries on an equal intellectual footing at multilateral bargaining meetings.

This generalized point must, however, be qualified by the observation that, as Sklar [1975] has shown in his study of Zambia, the fact of political independence and political sovereignty can be a powerful weapon in constraining the activities of multinational corporations in the African neo-colonial state, through legislation, the emergence of a local African bourgeoisie, with an independent national or home political base, and the creation within the African state of local constituencies or vested interests for local affiliates of metropolitan multinational companies. The conflicts of interest or fractured loyalties thus created diminish from, and vitiate the loyalty of these local affiliates to their metropolitan headquarters. Yet, this intertwined set of market relationships engenders its own contradictions, because “[it] perpetuates imperialism.” [Sklar, 1975:86]

Globalization and the explanation of the African development crisis.

What is the nature of the relationship between contemporary globalization, with its ideology of economic and political liberalization, and the African crisis of development? Is democracy compatible with structural adjustment policies? Or put, differently, is economic liberalization a necessary condition for political liberalization? For some, the answer is at best ambiguous, or both “yes” and “no,” depending on conjunctural factors. [Van de Walle, 1994:129; Robinson, 1996]. To others, structural adjustment does not undermine democracy. [Bluwey, 1992:45]. Yet others point to its anti-democratic and authoritarian impulses and consequences, which undermine the long-term prospects for democracy on the continent. [Beckman1992].

This is also part of a broader concern with globalization, democracy and the state in Africa. Applied to Africa, the dominant mainstream neo-liberal ideology of contemporary globalization subsumes a theory of the African state as weak, overextended and ill equipped, as currently constituted, to undertake the task of economic and political development in Africa. In this respect, globalized mainstream neo-liberalism marks a paradigmatic shift in the application of development theory to Africa, with a refocused intellectual shift by mainstream development scholars and practitioners to the application of the “new institutionalism,” and rational choice theory to the solution of the development crisis facing the African state. [Apter, 1996; Leys, 1996, chapter 4].

Presuming the benefits and merits of the interplay of unfettered market forces as the most rational and efficient allocator of economic resources, globalized mainstream neo-liberalism argues for the minimalist state in Africa, and for political liberalization, in the form of competitive liberal democratic party politics. Following the logic of the neoliberal assumptions, the Bretton Woods Institutions and Donor Countries moved to require from African countries the acceptance and adoption of a policy reform package of conditionalities—implementation of structural adjustment, economic liberalization, democratization and civil/public service reform.

The advantage of this new institutionalism is in highlighting institutional weaknesses and failures as causes of the poor performance of the African state, and consequently of the impairment of state capacity. Situating the primary reason for institutional failures and weaknesses in the preeminence accorded social needs, in other words, politics, over citizen’s economic interests, rational choice theory, for example, attempts to provide a basis for overcoming them by recommending that policy must henceforth assign primacy to the autonomy of market forces and market relations as the catalyst or engine of development. Its “main achievements have been in throwing light on relatively micro-level institutional problems” of development. [Leys, 1996:82]

Yet, as Leys [1996:95] has argued in riposte to neo-liberalism, “It is not politics that “impair” market efficiency, but market forces that conflict with social goals; and in reality what is at stake in Africa is precisely a conflict between principles of “market society” and alternative conceptions—some traditional, some
modern—of collective welfare. The assumption, then, that in dealing with “economic matters” rational people act primarily for material advantage is by no means a “natural” starting point...; it is a highly political one, which takes as “natural” what is in fact at stake in the struggle for Africa’s future.”

The weakness of neo-liberalism is, therefore, that by emphasizing the presumed allocative efficiency of market forces and their unfettered play, it deliberately overlooks market imperfections and the significant role the state must necessarily play through macroeconomic policies and political regulation or social control, especially when so-called market policies conflict with social goals that must remain the responsibility of the African state, given the reality of underdevelopment and the problem of state capacity it underscores.

To advocate a minimalist state or a “rolling back” of the state, without addressing and redressing the issue of market imperfections, especially when “the market is driven by [multinational] or big corporations rather than individual entrepreneurs” [Lowi, 2000:19], at the domestic and global levels, is to expose the African state to the vagaries of the world market, and leave it vulnerable to external manipulation. In short, the institutional weaknesses which neo-liberalism has correctly identified are due as much to the overextended reach or stretch of the typical African state as to its vulnerability to market imperfections. Removing those imperfections and reforming the world system in a manner that addresses global asymmetries must be the focus of policy at the national, regional and global levels.

At the political level, the renewed focus on democratization as a dimension of the development crisis in Africa reflects, what might be characterized as “global democratic transitions,” beginning with those in Southern Europe (Spain and Portugal) and Latin America. But the roots of these “global democratic transitions” are also deeply embedded in neo-liberal and rational choice theory and are reflected in the underlying neo-liberal argument or thesis that the ideology and practice of African Socialism, the one-party state, the single party-dominant state, military rule, and other forms of authoritarian rule, which pervaded the African political landscape in the three decades or so after independence, merely served to create market distortions and imperfections, thereby impairing, or even stunting state capacity, through their denial and suppression of individual choices, options and initiative in the political marketplace. According to this line of reasoning, it is this institutional failure or weakness, which accounts for and therefore, explains the vicious cycle of political instability, lack of accountability, prebendalism, coups d’état and in a number of cases violent ethno-religious conflicts and internal wars, and with it massive internal and external displacements of peoples or refugee flows, as prominent features of the postcolonial state, which vitiated state capacity on the continent.

The neo-liberal and rational choice theory policy prescription is, therefore, that liberal democracy or “democratic governance,” in Africa must build on individualism and self-interest, in other words, on “exchanges among rational self-interested citizens.” [March and Olsen, 1995: 6] This prescription has assumed the form of the conditionality of the African donor community for liberal democracy, defined as limited or constitutional government, based on the Schumpeterian competitive multiparty electoral model.

How much light has such a focus and prescription thrown on the political dimensions of the crisis of development in Africa? From a comparative perspective, it has directed attention to the Latin American experience with democratic transitions, as design projects over which domestic and external conjunctural social forces contend, and which are susceptible to anti-democratic or authoritarian reversals. Yet some serious and troubling problems remain to be addressed from the application of “global democratic transitions” to Africa.

A major problem is that neo-liberalism conflates the problem of democracy in Africa with that of liberal democracy and its institutions. As a result, it fails to address the critical design and political problem, which ethnicity, politically mobilized for competitive electoral politics by political entrepreneurs, poses for the simple majoritarian principle of “winners-take-all” in liberal democracy. To address and redress this problem, searchlight needs to be turned on other models of democracy or new modes of democratic governance in Asia, Canada, Europe, and Latin America, based on power-sharing arrangements at the national level, and power devolution or the granting of self-government or the right to self-determination at local or sub-national political spaces to assuage and protect minority rights.

Secondly, the neo-liberal version of liberal democracy fails to adequately relate the problem of democracy and of democratic transition in Africa to the structural problem of underdevelopment, which is due to the structural inequities and unequal exchanges created by the imperialist logic of contemporary globalization. Therefore, there is also need to direct policy focus towards removing externally driven distortions created by the imperfections of the
world system, which continue to pose a threat to the prospects for democracy in Africa. In the same mould, Andre Gunder Frank [1993:35] argues that, given the asymmetrical nature of globalization, and particularly of the economic forces driving the global economy, democratic transitions in the South “may well become... a fig leaf for continued exploitation and oppression of the South by the North.”

A third problem is that the form of liberal democracy, which the west and the donor community have put forward as a political conditionality, has led to “the democratization of disempowerment in Africa,” where “people are voting without choosing,” which reduces “democracy to governance, and governance to the political correlates of structural adjustment, particularly the rule of law, transparency and accountability,” and under which “state power is constituted in such a way as to render democracy impossible,” whereas “what is needed by way of democratization is the transformation of the state, for in the absence of such transformation elections can only be a choice between oppressors.”[Ake, 1994:1,2,8]

The point of Ake’s argument is indeed that neo-liberalism shows scant interest in focusing on grassroots-based social movements and their implications for triggering, initiating, sustaining and consolidating a people-centered democracy in Africa. What neo-liberalism is perpetuating is the type of anti-people colonial inheritance, which Fanon described as involving a deal between the metropolitan bourgeoisie and the emergent African petty bourgeoisie, creating what Ake [1994:6—7] characterizes as “a salient duality,” by which he meant the

“partial displacement of the state by informal communities, ethnic groups and nationalities...

[Thus] the state has not become a reassuring presence but remains a formidable threat to everybody except the few who control it. It is largely regarded as a hostile force to be evaded, cheated, defeated and appropriated as circumstances permit.

Accordingly most people have turned away from the state to seek safety and fulfillment in their community, ethnic group or nation.

The demands, which they make on these social formations have turned them into informal polities, in competition with the state.”

The political conditionality of the donor countries and institutions is, on this view, a major impediment to democratization in Africa. Indeed, the argument of Gill and Rocamora [1992:502] is that the neo-liberal version of liberal democracy “is in danger of becoming a term of political mystification or obfuscation, serving as a euphemism for sophisticated forms of neo-authoritarianism.”

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Globalization and state capacity in Africa: The way forward?

Given the perspective that informs this paper and its analysis of the relationship between globalization and state capacity in Africa, what is or should be the way forward?

External and domestic material political conditions for state capacity: A starting-point in answering this question is to focus more critically on the external and domestic political conditions for state capacity. Politics at the global and domestic level are about power relations and how the contradictions they throw up are to be mediated to serve the res publica, or the common interest of humanity. This will require the following:

(e) Reforming, restructuring and transforming contemporary globalization in all its facets, on the basis of mutuality, recognition and reciprocity. This will require new Afrocentric epistemological foundations for thinking about African and global development, and a combination of short-, medium-and long-term strategies of moral suasion and struggle to emphasize issues of global asymmetries, and how they can be redressed on the basis of global social justice, global income redistribution, and related issues of economic and socio-cultural rights, global inclusion, global democracy and sustainable global environment.

(f) Re-designing or re-inventing new Pan-African approaches to state capacity, with emphasis on strengthening the collective capacity of African continental and regional institutions to respond to the challenges of globalization, turning its negative implications for Africa into opportunities to reform globalization, and make it truly global, while also turning its searchlight inwards, through the African Peer Review Mechanism, among other Pan-African institutional processes, towards nurturing, strengthening and sustaining conditions for democracy, development, peace and stability within African countries.

(g) Reconceptualizing democracy, to take into account the positive role which culture can and should play in generating and institutionalizing new modes of governance on the basis of power-sharing; political and social devolution; respect for human rights broadly defined to include cultural, economic, political and social rights; broad-based participation and social, including
gender inclusion; accountability, ethics and transparency in governance; “the democratization of political information and opinions as a public investment in the democratic knowledge enterprise,” to use an expressed borrowed from India, as part of a broader, wider and more inclusive process of popular participation; separation of powers; establishment of independent horizontal oversight (accountability and transparency) institutions, like Ghana’s Serious Fraud Organization, and the Commission on Human Rights and Justice, or Nigeria’s Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, to fight, check and aggressively prosecute corruption, impunity and related abuses of political power; and the emergence of a robust civil society and a socially responsible private sector.

Given these political conditions, which, as indicated earlier, define state capacity in a broad sense, how should the problem of state capacity narrowly defined as capacity building and enhancement be addressed?

A framework for state capacity as capacity building or enhancement? A useful way to address this question is to highlight and underscore a number of “major policy issues for governance,” in the presentation to African Ministers for Environment at the Regional Prep COM for Africa at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2001, entitled “Making the Concern of Africa the First Concerns of Africans.”[African Forum for Strategic Thinking, 2002 17—20]:

(i) Enhancing the capacity and efficiency of the State through—retooling the state and ensuring that necessary human capacity is not tapped away from government.
(ii) Ensuring a stronger role for the State in economic management for development—to promote corporate social responsibility; subordinate economics to social/political agenda and promote economic heterodoxy beyond neo-liberal policies.
(iii) Promote gradual regional integration based not only on economic factors, but people to people cooperation to enhance development and reduce poverty especially—regional cooperation on information and communications technology.
(iv) Incorporation of vertical and horizontal participation of civil society organizations in the formulation, development, implementation and monitoring of new policies, programmes and strategies for sustainable development.
(v) Effective application of the principle of gender mainstreaming in all spheres of development in the short term, but also working at redesigning society to eliminate practices that discriminate against women and other marginalized groups.
(vi) The concept of security... should be broadened to encompass security of the environment, economic, food, cultural, and individual human rights.
(vii) There is need to respect traditional knowledge with respect to the management of biological diversity and its use, including the use of natural medicine and indigenous food products.
(viii) There is need for research in all aspects of natural resources, particularly with respect to agricultural resources for enhancing food security.
(ix) Training of youths and adults in information technology is urgently needed

(x) Scientific research and development need to be increased, especially with respect to agricultural technology. National science and technology policies warrant start up and further development.

To conclude, what all this demands is a fundamental shift in the political culture of the African political leadership, particularly the political will and cultural gestalt so vital to nurturing a people-centered democratization process as a condition for developing and enhancing state capacity in Africa.

The exhortatory words of Fanon [1968:311] are still as relevant and pressingly urgent today, as they were when he wrote them over 40 years ago:

Come, then, comrades; it would be as well to decide at once to change our ways. We must shake off the heavy darkness in which we are plunged, and leave it behind.”

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