POVERTY AS STATECRAFT: PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS ON AFRICAN LEADERSHIP

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Leadership exists in its most natural form among equals. It is not the same as domination or the exercise of power. True leaders respect the integrity of others.

--John Adair

When I say "politics," ... it [is] not a question of the art of governing the State for the public welfare in the general framework of laws and regulations. It is [a] question of politician politics: the struggles of clans— not even [ideological] tendencies—to place well oneself, one's relatives, and one's clients in the cursus honorum, that is, the race for preferments.

--**Leopold Sedar Senghor**

INTRODUCTION

The one thing that Africa seems to have been blessed with is the capacity to generate abundant epithets and labels that attempt to capture the essence of what is wrong with the continent. Apart from the popular, ideological and enduring "dark continent," a recent more realistic label sees Africa as an "Island of Want." In this imagery, postcolonial Africa is recognized as being confronted with a dilemma of absences: On the one hand, one needs to recover the self-esteem that suffered from the attempt by the colonizers to foist on Africans a different worldview and cultural mindset. On the other hand, Africans need to develop and be a meaningful part of the global processes and flows. The third critical absence is that of a tradition of leadership that will confront the dilemma and thus take Africa out of its debilitating condition.

The consequences of these absences, especially the third, are daily the focus of Western broadcast journalism and the inevitable summary of Africa as "a faraway place where good people go hungry, bad people run government, and chaos and anarchy are the norm."[1] Of course, one must make allowance for the process of journalistic selectivity that is concerned with the effect rather than the cause of the African situation. Nevertheless, these effects seem to give us enough justification for concluding that the fundamental problem of African states is that of leadership. We can of course mention the likes of Mobutu, Bokassa, Samuel Doe, Abacha, Mugabe, Gaddafi, Kibaki, Eyadema, Omar Bongo, and so on. This conclusion is interesting to the extent that a leader has significant influence on how any society effectively answers the question of fashioning the good life at a point in time.

Apart from the internal dimension of the leadership problem on the continent, there is a critical external dimension that, in a crucial sense, also reinforces its absence. This is important especially within the global context that displays imperial and neo-colonial characteristics. The African states and the quality of leadership on the continent have shaped and reshaped over time in reaction to geopolitical and global economic perturbations. For instance, one of the constant and recalcitrant sources of political and economic worries in Africa is the debilitating debt crisis and the political economy of grants and financial aids. It could then be seen that while colonialism left the African leadership with an intense commitment to independence, there were few ideas regarding appropriate economic policies necessary for piloting the postcolonial states. The post-independence era therefore inevitably became entangled with the problem of internal power tussle, mal-development and the alienation of the state and the people. Given the

colonial exploitation of the African economies, the leadership became forced to extrovert its economic aspirations and expectations.

I will be arguing in this paper that the concept of poverty aptly encapsulates the state of affairs represented by the alienation of the state from the people. In other words, the paucity of such good leadership on the continent is inversely proportional to the widespread poverty not only of ideas about running the societies and states, but also the impoverishment of the populace. The concept of statecraft, I will contend, provides an enlightening perspective on the operation of the state system in Africa especially within the context of the (f)ailing capacity of the African state—as lame leviathans—to participate meaningfully in global processes. My argument therefore suggests that statecraft not only reveals the nature of African leadership, but also how poverty features as a ready tool that sustains African leaders in their continual attempt to stave off the national and geopolitical interrogation of their relevance. I will be using this concept to interrogate three fundamental issues: One, the relationship between leadership and poverty; two, the moral content of leaders and rulers; and three, "why…Western societies tolerate so-called (inept, morally bankrupt, visionless and even despicable predatory parasites as) "leaders" for other societies (especially African and other third world societies) which they will not, at least openly, tolerate for themselves."[2]

The Twilight of the State? The Modern State and Its History

The obituary of the state has been written and re-written especially within the complexities of a globalising discourse. Most global undertakers justify the demise of the state (or its imminence) basically on its failed or failing capacity to confront global

challenges (i.e. ecological calamities, global criminal economy, microbes, financial transactions, etc) or local imperatives (i.e. fashioning an enabling national project). A significant example of the need for transcending state politics for a post-capitalist/non-state society emanates from the state's inability to contribute significantly to human emancipation, and hence the effective delivery of the good life for its citizens. According to a commentator, for instance, a post-state politics will look more to the public sphere, the political community and the concept of recognition for a fuller and more emancipatory understanding of *politics* and the *political*.[3]

It would seem however that such critical commentaries on the supposed demise of the state, according to Pierson, leaves out the essential issue of establishing conceptually what we mean by the "state."[4] Writing the "obituary" of the state—in terms of denying it any explanatory or existential value—is really part of the alternatives in the attempt to define what the state is, but its supposition in global discourse now cannot magisterially be assumed to be the only option. The basic issue has the significance, in this context, of determining how the idea of the state has evolved in the African context and how that evolution has in one way or the other contributed to the problem of leadership on the continent. In other words, one of the important ways of understanding the state is to understand it historically.

Most of the contemporary discourses on the history and nature of the modern state work basically within the theoretical purview of the Enlightenment epistemological and positivist framework. Within this limit, we have the representation of the state, ontologically and epistemologically, as "the theoretical boundary for the conception of the whole". Thus, in International Relations, for instance, the territorial state in neorealist

perspective becomes a unitary political actor on the world stage "fully present, absolute and epistemically complete." We will see the epistemological implication of this conception later. Suffice to say that the state is the paradigmatic *modern* concept in the sense that it developed at an epochal juncture in European history—between fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries—when there were critical and transformative changes in Western social structure and relations.

These include, for instance, industrialisation (the transition from an agrarian to an industrial society), the commercialization and commodification of economic relationship, the subsequent rise of capitalism (occasioned by the transition from a feudal to a capitalist mode of production), an economic specialisation (occasioned by a growing social division of labour), the rise of scientific modes of thought in response to industrial production, secularisation and other transformation in the conceptions of rationality, urbanisation (and the consequent transformed relationship between city and country), the transformation of the modes of communication, and the expansion of political participation referred to as democratisation.[5] Thus, to qualify the state as modern is already to place it in a particular historical milieu.

In this respect, Max Weber serves as the paradigm reference for the characterisation of the state in its modern locale. According to him, and unlike the classical political philosophers especially Aristotle, the state should be understood in terms of its *means* rather than its *end*. For him,

> The state cannot be defined in terms of its ends. There is scarcely any task that some political association has not taken in hand, and there is no task that one could say has always been exclusive and peculiar to those associations which are designated as political ones…. Ultimately, one can define the modern state only in terms of the specific *means* peculiar to it,

as to every political association, namely, *the use of physical force*.[6] (1970a: 77-8; second emphasis added).

This essential characteristic comes together with the other features that have come to be associated with the idea of the modern state: sovereignty, territoriality, constitutionality, impersonal power, the public bureaucracy, and citizenship.[7]

Hobbes' part in the conceptualization of this idea of the modern state is also significant. His specific contribution is in regard to the fact of plurality that requires an appropriate political authority to achieve effective consensus. To achieve such a political consensus, Hobbes created a "quasi-rational" fictional narrative of the leviathan necessary for the unification of the diverse wills and interests in the state. In this sense, power becomes the constitutive condition for the possibility of the commonwealth:

> For by this Authoritie, given him by every particular man in the Common-Wealth, he hath the use of so much Power and Strength conferred on him, that by terror thereof, he is inabled to forme the wills of them all, to Peace at home, and mutual ayd against their enemies abroad.[8]

A logical step implicit in the Hobbesian theory of the contract is the abstract, impersonal conception of the state. This follows the elimination of the personality of the people which, for Hobbes, could only be found in the personality of the ruler. This is the initial expression of the state's status as an impersonal, legal and ontological entity conceptually different from the state's equivalence with the monarch. Thus, we arrive at Hobbes' scheme of state sovereignty as "unlimited, illimitable, irresponsible and omnipotent…necessarily concentrated in a single centre and…armed with power."[9]

The further implication of Hobbes's argument is that this empowering of the Leviathan necessarily undermines the dualism that sees the rulership as a joint venture between the ruler and the ruled. Since the sovereign was not a party to the contract, it

would be absurd to see the contract as binding on him. It also follows for Hobbes that since the individuals resigned their will to the sovereign, then the actions of the sovereign could only be the *expression* of the will of the people. Therefore, the destruction of the theoretical dualism leads to the elimination of every right the people were initially conceived to possess.

The third manifestation of the state in modernity is due to neorealism. The neo-realist's conception of the state ontologised the Hobbes-Weber paradigm sketched earlier. This conception of the state, especially in International Relations, assumes the centrality of the state as an objective, transhistorical *given* (contrary to the historical development of states as modern phenomena). Its positivist's "hardheaded politics" begins by separating the "is" from the "ought". On the basis of this, it assumes the existence of an objective external reality independent of our observation and understanding. The "pre-existent state" represents this value-neutral fact which forms the starting point of theoretical explanation. We are therefore confronted with the picture of the state as a "unitary political totality": a rational actor, bounded, complete and fully formed.

There is a fundamental implication that can be drawn from this synoptic analysis of the development of the state in modernity. This implication is that the emergence of the modern state represents the initiation of the *what*-definition of the state rather than the *who*-definition. According to Aristotle, ethics played such a huge role in the pursuit of political goals that the latter could only be conceived as the end of ethics. That is, politics has a significant role to play in the realization of human happiness. Thus, Aristotle contends, the practice of politics is the medium for the realization of freedom in the public space and the achievement of the good life. This teleological framework places

politics within the realm of human relations which animates states institutions. Put in other words, the question of "who the state is" is represented by the equation of the political acts with the acts of the members of the political class (that is, the class of those who participate in politics).

On the contrary, it has become absurd in contemporary times to ask the question of who the state is. This is simply because *modern* politics can actually be described as a system motivated by its own internal logic and capacity, "a set of roles and institutions having peculiar drives, compulsions and aims of their own."[10] It is this opacity and complexity of modern mass politics that determines the content of *what* the state is. In this respect, the modern state itself represents the victory of the theory of *rule* and *dominance* (rather than that of leadership, as we will see later), and of the idea that there is a final and absolute political authority in the community. Its emergence ensured the eradication of the theoretical boundary between the state and the need of the community. This theory of rule demands that the state and the society must not only be integrated to a certain extent, but also significantly that the state must impose itself on the society as the instrument of a power that is alien to those natural ways of the society. That is, the psychological and moral coercion which emanates directly from the community is sharply contrasted to the structure of command which the state imposes as a condition of rule.

This could only be the consequence of the development that ensured the "social closure" of the public sphere as an ethically responsible space for social change and human emancipation. The logic of this impersonal individuality of the state therefore requires that the state begins to side with itself in the public sphere as a "vulnerable,

greedy, self-righteous and, above all, judgemental or opinionated creature."[11] It further

requires that it abdicates all form of obligation, political or ethical, to its constituents

except the bare necessity of security. Indeed, Dunn has argued that

> It is important to recognize that the modern state was constructed
> painstakingly and purposefully, above all by Jean Bodin and Thomas
> Hobbes, for the express purpose of denying that any given population, any
> people, had either the capacity or the right to act together for themselves,
> either independently of, or against the sovereign. The central point of the
> concept was to deny the very possibility that any *demos*… could be a
> genuine political agent, could act at all, let alone with sufficiently
> continuous identity and practical coherence for it to be able to rule itself…
> The idea of the modern state was invented precisely to repudiate the
> possible coherence of democratic claims to rule, or even take genuinely
> political action….[12]

On its own, the Aristotelian reduction of the state to the sum total of its citizens promises

the enlargement of the citizenry to the category of politically active class that opens up

the public sphere as an ethically responsible space for fashioning an idea of the good life

for which the state was conceived initially.

Statecraft and the curse of statehood in Africa

In spite of the attempt to delineate the essential characteristic features of the state in

modernity, it is still a difficult issue to bring it under one universal and generally

acceptable definition. This is because the concept of the state has become rather baffling.

I will be arguing in this section that this bafflement is compounded in the African

political situation where the transplantation of the modern state was effected in

colonialism. This is because the state as a modern phenomenon was engrafted on a

continent which had been forced into an accelerated transition from the traditional to the

modern. Thus, unlike the European context where the state evolved out of historical

necessities, it was a colonial imposition adapted deliberately to colonial calculation rather than the sociopolitical aspirations of the African people. It follows logically therefore that its manifestation could only weakly approximate the West's.

This would then explain why such labels like "weak," "failed" (or failing) and "quasi" are used as characterisations these states. These characterisations give us an insight into, say, the marginalisation of Africa in the global world. Indeed, one can argue that it is the African rather than the Western states whose demise is imminent. This is largely because, contrary to protestation, the global processes are mediated through the strong, developed states in the West.

The colonial attempt to transplant the state to the African political soil was confronted by the African "Other" in its stark plurality. Their reactions to this unwieldy plurality had the consequence of undermining the vitality of the postcolonial state. In the first instance, the British confronted the extant pre-colonial advanced state formations deliberately without any regard for plural intersubjectivity. In other words, it was in the interests of colonialism that these traditional political formations be developed in isolation from one another. Thus, when amalgamation eventually happened, the stage was already set for the vitiation of the state.[13]

In the second place, the centralised nation-state also confronted a political contradiction in the African context. This is because it attempted to espouse the principle of equality within an institutional context of centralisation and political boundedness that comes with the idea of sovereignty. Mazrui captures this essential clash between moral egalitarianism and political hierarchisation:

> On the one hand, it championed almost as much equality as the so-called "primitive" and stateless societies which did not have kings or identifiable rulers. On the other hand, the new nation-states explicitly expected identifiable rulers, and asserted what Max Weber called the state's "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force….The new nation-state was supposed to be as morally egalitarian as the stateless societies of Africa: but politically as structured as the nation-states of Europe."[14]

Thus, given these colonial conditions, the postcolonial African leadership which inherited the colonial legacy was already on its way to being alienated from the teeming masses on whose shoulder it effectively interrogated colonialism. It was not long, in other words, to discover the political schism between the *national* and the *social* questions. It soon became obvious that the colonial state could not in any way "deliver the goods" of social-economic transformation that the African nationalists promised the people.

In fact, it could be said that to maintain their hold on the national heritage, the African leadership subordinated the social question to the national question in other to be better able to maintain their hold on the state apparatuses and the status it conferred. This idea takes us close to the problem of poverty in Africa and the statecraft that utilises it. According to Clapham, the African leadership began to respond to the logic of the "foreign policy of state preservation." Within the context of this political logic, *maintaining a strict control over the fabricated colonial borders possesses more significance for third world states elites than responding to the existential demands of the populace*. This is because such a policy

> …provides the *raison d'etre* of governing elites and the base from which their power derives. The more successful they can establish their position as gatekeepers…the stronger is their brokerage position, the better are the bargain they can strike on one side or the other, and the greater the "commission" they can extract in terms of personal benefits or freedom of political action.[15]

At this juncture, the African state becomes morally precarious; it thus requires a condition for its permanent possibility. That is, it exists "almost exclusively as an exploitable treasure trove devoid of moral value….Moreover, the typical African state's apparatus of power is not effectively organized."[16] In this weak state, the necessity of statecraft becomes obvious as the means by which the "lame leviathans" can strengthen their myth of legitimacy and effectiveness.

Statecraft is a political strategy that becomes meaningful only within the context of the *what*-definition of the state. That is, it makes sense in a political situation where the state is not only separated from its constituents, but also colonises the public sphere as the sole epistemic overlord. The centralisation of the state's authority therefore constitutes an epistemological signature of the state's colonisation of the public space of will-formation. The contour of the *episteme*, in Plato's theory, necessarily excludes, especially those Gramsci calls the *populo minuto* (those who do not know).[17] In other words, the doxastic is excluded basically because it constitutes a threat to the infallible constitution of the space of the episteme. For instance, in the *Republic*, Plato's curious conception of justice ensures that the guardians (who supposedly have access to the Forms, and thus possess the knowledge of the Good) are institutionally and politically separated from the other classes in the state.

The instrumental strategy of this epistemic completeness is that it seeks control by restricting ontological and epistemological considerations to the logic of its own construction.[18] The state therefore reproduces ways of knowing that is "reductionist, ahistorical and static."[19] To use a Foucaultian terminology, the state effectively becomes a *discursive regime*: the institutionalisation of a set of rules and ideological practices

which epistemically orders political arrangements according to its own criteria of right and wrong, true or false. This epistemological praxis thus establishes, revises and interprets rules in a framework entirely removed from local, popular mechanism of control. In this regard, for instance, the Platonic arrangement gives an authoritarian answer to the question: Who decides what knowledge is? Thus, the myth of epistemic completeness or infallibility of the state as a unitary political actor speaks critically to the "interests the state privileges and excludes, the identities it supports and marginalizes and the moral choices it permits or discourages."[20]

The state therefore needs a boundary-producing strategy to consistently maintain this epistemic myth. According to Devetak, "statecraft constitutes the state in whose name it operates."[21] In traditional political thinking, statecraft supposedly stabilises the already fixed boundaries of the completed state. It in other words ensures that the state is firmly ensconced within its delineated space and against any deconstructive or destructive threat:

> Statecraft is a "practice of differentiation" which relentlessly attempts to separate, enframe or totalize a political space…. It is a practice operating at the borders, and marking those borders to produce the effect of the state as bounded and complete…. Statecraft embodies the interminable attempt to constitute or frame the state's identity against difference, its inside against the outside, its sovereignty against anarchy.[22]

We are thus compelled to examine the various strategies, tactics, techniques, practices and policies that go into the attempt to continually produce and reproduce the state as an epistemically complete entity. In the next section we will examine the instrumentality of the idea of poverty as a policy of reproducing the state. We will also draw the implications of this on the attempt to construct a theory of African leadership.

The political economy of poverty and the morality of leadership

It is not in doubt that in most third world countries, poverty manifests as the undeniable consequence of underdevelopment. According to the World Bank (1990), in 1985 an estimated 1, 115 million people (corresponding to about one-third of the total population) in developing countries were poor. Furthermore, thirty-two of the forty-seven poorest countries of the world are in sub-Saharan Africa alone. What is in doubt, however, is how the dynamics of the concept of poverty intersects that of the state especially in Africa.

There are three approaches that can assist us in the attempt to delineate the characteristic of poverty as a significant concept in the analysis of the performance of the state in Africa. The first approach is a numerical one which defines poverty in terms of income through the ratio of declared poor to the total population. In other words, those who are poor are the families or households whose income or consumption is discovered to be below a set poverty line. For Destremau, "the level of the poverty line varies, mainly depending on which goods and services are included in the basket, their relative weight and the price chosen for them."[23] The second approach sees poverty in social and human terms. This definition enlarges the initial basic needs beyond food and shelter to include also health, education, sanitation, etc satisfied on a collective basis. The third approach defines poverty in terms of social exclusion. This approach according to Destremau is built on the hypothesis that social and economic well-being constitute rights on their own, and thus social exclusion refers essentially to a "process of social disintegration."[24] The difference between this approach and the other two is that social exclusion does not attempt to measure poverty but rather seeks to understand how it

represent a dynamic process in its production and reproduction, "how people fall into and get out of deprivation and social marginalization, and which are the institutions that regulate exclusion."[25]

In all these approaches to poverty, the state holds a very crucial place in providing economic assistance to "vulnerable individuals and families" especially when this support is not forthcoming from regular economic means. In other words,

> Each of these approaches is linked to different stakes, as far as the state function is concerned: the incomes view on poverty favours the state that establishes and maintains conditions favourable to the functioning of markets, avoiding distortions, and establishing conditions for the exercise of individual freedom, that is formal democracy and institutional accountability. The state should be involved in human capital upgrading as far as it constitutes an investment for economic growth, will allow 'the poor' to find employment and thus not depend on social assistance…. The state that acts in the context of social exclusion discourses is political in essence. [Such a non-exclusionary state] possesses the capacity to take decisions and act according to the national interest, within international relations, in particular in so far as 'the relative role of the State and markets as allocation and accumulation mechanisms; the policy for growth, poverty reduction and structural transformation are concerned'…[26]

While all these may be granted within the definitional expediency of the concept of poverty, the paradox, however, is that the attempt at offering such a definition itself constitutes a strategy of statecraft that further entrenches poverty. This assertion is based on the status of the state as a discursive regime, as we earlier noted. It emphasizes the point not only that the definitions, measurements and approaches to poverty consists of certain stakes that are linked directly to the political arena, but also that the state is actively involved in the production and reproduction of such discourses and definitions. This is especially when the discourse of poverty threatens the constitution of the state.[27]

We therefore come to the unimaginative conclusion that the notion of poverty is inextricably tied in with that of power nationally and globally.

How does this analysis reflect on the evolution of what we call the "state" in Africa, and on national action in these states? The most immediate focus of analysis, it would seem, lies in the dynamics of the global political economy from which the logic of poverty emanated. This dynamics is especially reflected in the mounting debt crisis that entangles most third world countries in persistent creditor-debtor relationship with the industrialised nations. The ethical fallout of this situation is the necessity assumed by these nations to bail the underdeveloped ones out of their predicament. This necessity serves as the basis not only for foreign aids and grants, but also for the idea of *poverty alleviation*.

This concept features prominently in the Western development discourse in the category of the "trickle-down" theories of the 1960s. The assumption of these theories that national development modeled on the Western paradigm would eventually improve the economic well-being of the entire populace turned out false. This failure, according to Mafeje, led to the convergence in the policies of the World Bank and the UN agencies especially in their recognition that poverty alleviation is really not something different from the pervasive problem of development in underdeveloped countries. It is itself a "development objective."[28] This convergence broke down with the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programmes at the beginning of the 80s. These programmes effectively substituted the concern for market forces for the initial trend towards "equity and solicitude for the poor."[29]

The unmitigated failure of the SAPs in Africa is one of the basic constituents of Afro-pessimism. However, this attitude in most cases is not always so realistic in its analysis of the causes of the failure of the African continent. In Afrocentric discourses, it is almost the convention now to load all the blames on the colonial intervention in African development. In this case, the consensus seems to be that SAPs and other exogenous developmental paradigms failed simply because they attempted to apply Euro-American development models without respect for Africa's peculiar social environment. While this is crucial, the problem with this kind of attribution is that it fails to recognise the critical role the state plays in developmental policy making.

The state stands at the interstice of mediating the utility of any development paradigm especially with its understanding of the dynamics of national development within its borders. This was the case with the evolution of the idea of poverty alleviation within the European context. It reflects the social imperatives in developed countries which culminated in the emergence of the welfare state after the great depression of the 30s. If in this context, poverty alleviation developed as what Mafeje calls a "mopping up operation, namely, guaranteeing a decent livelihood for the lowest 20 per cent of the lower 20 per cent of the population i.e. 4 per cent…"[30], then we are confronted with certain conceptual and moral implications that reflect negatively on the analysis of leadership in Africa.

The pertinent question is: Can we alleviate poverty? The significance of this question is acutely revealed within the African postcolonial predicament. This is because an answer to the question must give allowance for the precarious balance of governance reflected in the gross mismanagement and privatisation of public funds by the national

elites. In the first place, as we have noted earlier, the idea of poverty alleviation reveals the inadequacy of a concept whose originary impulse emanated from a neoliberal context operating on an affluence level. Within this context, according to Mafeje, to alleviate means to lessen with *the assumption of the existence of the means of doing so*. Is this an assumption that is tenable within an underdeveloped situation in spite of the assertion that Africa, in all respect, is in the best position to push for poverty *eradication* and not *reduction*? In the second place, the question of poverty alleviation also shows the ideological tutelage in which the postcolonial African national elites have placed themselves especially within the global political economy. This is the consequence of the inability of these elites to fashion an authentic model of development that correspond to postcolonial economic and political realities in Africa.

The final implication reveals the deliberate acquiescence of the national elites in their own oppression in the global scheme of things. This is referred to as the "self-active nature of subjectification."[31] This assumes, critically speaking, that the process of dependency which operates in globalism is not a passive one (that is, something that happened to third world countries, in dependency theories). Here, the analysis of the fundamental separation between the state and the citizens becomes crucial. We argued earlier that with the Weberian and Hobbesian elements, the state became itself an important actor in the public sphere where it was supposed to mediate the conflicting interests of the citizenry. In other words, the logic of the state's impersonal individuality requires that the state begins to side with itself in the public sphere as a "judgemental or opinionated creature." This meant therefore that in the hands of an imperial and amoral

elites, the state only respond to those issues and policies that favour those in control of government.

The African national elites, in this context, are constituted as "subject as agent"; those who are "self-active in their constitution as subjects."[32] This self-active participation in oppression is revealed in Nigeria under the Abacha regime. In 1995, the Abacha junta executed Ken Saro-Wiwa, and eight other environmental activists. This concerned the activity of the multinational oil corporations in Ogoniland. Saro-Wiwa and the others had been involved in a vigorous campaign against the operation of Shell in the environmental degradation of their region. Shell was very vehement in denying the allegation of moral complicity in the "judicial killings". In spite of the suspension of its operation in Ogoni, it was obvious that the Abacha junta wanted Shell to continue its activities in Nigeria. This is because the bulk of the income of the state derives from oil-export revenue. For James, "such regimes need the corporations, just as the corporations are constantly searching out new markets and sites of production, but it is not clear that the state-corporate interdependence is benignly balanced."[33]

It takes little reflection to conclude that the idea of poverty alleviation constitutes only a political sleight that surreptitiously smoothen over the larger problem of development which, in the long run, holds the threat of activating the deconstruction of the state. However, to conclude with Mafeje, the failure to recognise the significance of development means that African governments have thereby forfeited their legitimacy.[34]

ENDNOTES

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