

Marxism and the State: Its Origin and Development

M. M. Fadakinte^{[a],*}

^[a]Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos, Nigeria.

*Corresponding author.

Received 6 April 2015; accepted 10 June 2015

Published online 26 July 2015

Abstract

This paper focuses on the three perspectives adopted by Marx and Engels in explaining the origin and formation of the state, and the positions of some neo-Marxists regarding the nature and character of the state. The exemplification of the state by Marxism is interpolated in Africa, where the arduous journey ahead of the continent in the process of state formation appears very obvious, precisely because, from the analysis of Marxism, Africa is yet to evolve a cohesive dominant class that will create a strong ruling class with the needed hegemony i.e. discipline, leadership and domination to bring about a meaningful state that will plan for development.

Key word: Marxism; Neo-Marxists; State; Colonialism; Capitalist social classes

Fadakinte, M. M. (2015). Marxism and the State: Its Origin and Development. *Canadian Social Science*, 11(7), 28-37. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/7358>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7358>

INTRODUCTION

The concept of state has long appeared in political thought from Plato to Marx; but modern political thought appears to be more explanatory with regards to the origin of the state. And this is where Marx and Engels have made very remarkable contributions. They came up with an explanation for the origin and formation of the state and neo-Marxists exemplified the development of the state

i.e. of its nature and character of post-colonial societies, particularly in Africa.

This paper therefore takes a look at the perspectives of Marx and Engels regarding the origin and formation of the state and the positions of some neo-Marxists and interrogates capitalism as a mode of production in Africa. The paper argues that Africa's encounter with colonialism has created a major obstacle to the process of state formation. This is because colonialism disorganized the indigenous African societies, created and amalgamated different tribal and ethnic formations that are very unfriendly and antagonistic and some quite unrelated in terms of history and culture. Thus, colonialism imposed capitalism when the colonial societies did not have the needed capitalist institutions or the capitalist social classes to manage colonial imposed mode of production. The result of the colonial encounter created a dependent economy that lacks productive capacity with autonomy and therefore cannot create the required social classes, which will be the haves and have nots, where one class will be economically so powerful that it will control the economy and political apparatus that will lead to the development of the state. Thus, Africa wallows in the problems brought about by underdevelopment because Africa is experiencing crisis of state, in the process of its formation.

The idea of the origin and formation of the state in Marxism is best understood in three ways namely, by an analysis of the way Marx and Engels have examined and critiqued Hegel's idealism, secondly, by an analysis of the intellectual genius of Marx's idea of class struggle and thirdly, by an analysis of Engel's examination of the tribal society.

1. MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM

Marx's theory of state is an idea we can only put together from his numerous works. In other words, Marx did not

specifically devote a particular volume of his works to theorize about the state. However, the starting point in the understanding of Marx's ideas about the state is his critique of Hegel's political philosophy, the critique that brings into clear contrast the concepts of materialism and idealism. Materialism here means a philosophical position, which is based on the axiom that all events in the phenomenal world can be explained adequately in terms of other events, or causes, in the world (Goodwin, 1997).

Marx takes history as his starting point in the analysis of society and starts with the most obvious and crucial fact of life, i.e. the need to survive by finding food and shelter. He explains the world of society and nature according to the material conditions of man and processes at work. This materialist standpoint negates Hegel's idealist position which postulates that events take place because of the existence of spiritual forces or ideas.

Thus, Marx refutes the claim that people were born with innate ideas of God and other absolute truths as claimed by Descartes, because ideas can have no existence without prior causes in the external world and therefore ideas can not arise independently of social context and act as causes within society (Goodwin, 1997). In the words of (Mecllellan, 1972, 1984) "Marx's fundamental ideas is to take actual political institutions and show thereby that Hegel's conception of the relationship of ideas to reality is mistaken."

Marx uses the laws of the dialectics of historical materialism to the cognition of political phenomena, to establish the link of economic, geographic and other factors to the political system, to the state, law and politics. Thus, the materialist approach to politics means that there are close relations between material conditions of society and politics. And by material condition, Marx means the economic factors that determine the methods of the production of commodities and their distribution. In essence, Marx explains that there is a relationship between politics and material conditions and the relationship is reciprocal, both affect each other (Das, 2009). In other words "in the social production which men carry on, they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will (and) these relations of production correspond to a definite state of the development of their material powers of production" (Mahajan, 2013, p.235). For example, production in the slave – owning society has its own features so also the feudal system of production and the capitalist mode of production

Thus, to Marx, the state is a product of events in the process of social production, and the form of state cannot be understood from the so-called general development of the human mind as Hegel and others will make us believe. This is because our understanding of the state must be rooted in the material conditions of life. Consequently, Marx explains that the web of interaction in the process of production and distribution necessitates a socio-economic

organization. Thus some social institutions and a dominant system of values will then correspond to the economic structure of society because they will be needed to sustain the socio-economic organization. For instance, there will be no need for a legislative assembly or a complex legal system in a small primitive tribe where people primarily interact only with nature. But such institutions as the police, army, legislative assembly, prisons, mass media, and legal system will all be required for the maintenance of a complex social organization that will emerge from a complex economic structure. Under this situation again, social classes will emerge and consequently a specialized institution will be needed with the function of maintaining order and keeping the conflicts that may arise between the social classes in the process of social production. That institution is the state (Marx, 1970; Marx & Engels, 1975).

Marx's critique of Hegel's idealism in respect to state formation can be summed up as follows that the state arose not because the man wanted it but because man needed it.

2. CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE STATE

Our explanation of state formation will proceed by an analysis of class and class struggle. Class struggles, their nature and character being historically determined arise out of a form of production which divides society into classes (Burns, 1957). In other words, mode of production creates two classes one of which carries out the actual process of production, slave, wage workers while the other; slave owners and capitalist employers, enjoy a part of the product without having to work to produce it (Ibid.). In such a stratified society, the means of production are owned and controlled by a minority i.e. the ruling class. By virtue of their ownership of the forces of production therefore, the ruling class also possesses power and they hold power at the expense of the rest of the society (Haralambos, 1980). Again, in a system of production, especially where the system is based on private ownership of the means of production, a situation is created for wider relationship in which the principle of hierarchy and inequality are the main features. The social groups that are created in the process will then give rise to complex structures that will affect all aspects of society (Comforth, 1977).

From the foregoing, two features of society clearly become discernible namely that there exists appropriation of labour and that there is participation in the labour process. Consequently, the dominant class in the process of material production will need to organize a power to enable them to consolidate their domination, with the organization of the power involving the totality of the society. The paraphernalia of this organization will include the political, economic and legal systems. The power will then be the instrument which the dominant

class will use in subjugating the property less class in order to maintain the status quo. Society then becomes an arena of oppressor and oppresses, i.e. two classes that will stand in constant opposition to one other. Thus, a battle will ensue between the social classes that are engaged in social production because as the dominant class organises a power to perpetuate domination, so the dominated class prepares, not only to resist domination but to turn the table. A situation is therefore created where the organisation of class which wins the struggle becomes the state (Nnoli, 1986). Thus, this class exploits the rest of society which is subjected to its domination. As a result, the dominant class alone has freedom and in order to preserve the “freedom” it creates an executive ruling class (government) by the use of which it hopes to maintain its position. Therefore the state came into being “with the origin of classes and class struggle in society and the state is merely an instrument of exploitation in the hands of the dominant class” (Mahajan, 2013, p.236). So,

the capitalist economy rests on a fundamental dichotomy between capital and labour, the two sides of the contradiction of capitalism and this is transmuted at the level of social relations into the opposed and potentially antagonistic relations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. (Goodwin, 1997, p.71)

Thus, the power base of the capitalist state is the control of productive resources and a very microscopic fraction of society rules the state and controls the entire economy. In other words, the machinery of state is controlled by a minority (Das, 2009). Thus, “there is usually tension between society and (the) state” (Shively, 2013, p.66).

The emergence of the state, as described, is then used, with its political and legal systems and of the corresponding ideologies, to firmly establish and consolidate a system of economy (Comforth, 1977).

3. TRIBAL SOCIETY, CLASS FORMATION AND THE STATE

The third perspective in the theory of state formation is the development of classes in the tribal society. This is the starting point of Engels’ analysis of state formation. To Engels, there is no need for a state in the tribal society because “the need for the state arises as the division of labour increases and society divides into classes.” (Plamenatz, 1963, p.540) In other words, there will be no need for the state in the tribal society because the development of classes will not arise, in view of the absence of complex division of labour. Also, there will be no social classes whose conflicting interests will need to be mediated by an organized power.

Consequently, the maintenance of social discipline the peaceful settlement of disputes between individuals, in the tribal society, is still too simple a business to require that it should be the whole time occupation of a hierarchy of

persons clearly marked off from the rest of the community as its rulers (Plamenatz, 1963). As argued by (Jalee, 1977) in the distant past, people came together in families, clans and larger groupings and the organization of labour flowed from general agreement founded in customs, being experienced and respected by all. The community did not depend on specialists or specialized organizations for the coordination of its functions and no one was a full-time specialist. However, things changed, when complex division labour set in and exploitation appeared.

Engels argues that in the tribal society, as time progressed, the productivity of labour increased thereby expanding the structure of society which hitherto was based on kinship groups. The increased productivity led to increasing volume of private property and exchange, with differences of wealth and the possibility of utilizing the labour power of others which marked the beginning of class antagonism (Engels, 1972). Thus, the incompatibility of these new social elements with the old social order brings about a complete upheaval (Ibid, 1972), and the increased productivity with the concomitant division of labour that turned society into a complex collectivity of individuals resulted in the cleavage of society into classes. A new relation of production then began when relations in the production process took the form of some people exploiting others. In other words, a social class emerged that could accumulate surplus and amass wealth because of their access to the means of production. This class was therefore able to employ the means of production to exploit others by appropriating the products of others. The class structure of society began to be shaped by the division of labour and the system of production which engender a society that is divided into classes. The classes that arise from this system will find it difficult to have their conflict of interests settled by the old method employed by the tribal society. And because of the need to settle such conflicts between the classes, the state emerged as an organized power to keep the social classes in their respective domains. Consequently, the state came into existence for the protection of private property. And that was because the stage/level of economic development which coincided with the division of society into antagonistic classes and the consequent emergence of the state is characterized by the beginning of private property. In other words, “the state arises when a tiny class of property owners creates an organization in order to preserve its superior status and property” (Mahajan, 2013, p.237). So, the state emerged in order to keep the peace between social classes whose interests are irreconcilable. Therefore, the state, being a class – state, is always controlled by a particular class in whose interest it is to keep on ruling (Jhingan, Girija, & Sasikala, 2012). Thus, to Engels, “the state is an organisation of the possessing class for its protection against non-possessing class” (cited in Mahajam, 2013, p.236). The state being a product of class society, became necessary in order to

maintain the dominance of one human group over another, and therefore cannot be for the benefit of all but only as an instrument in the hands of the oppressors (Jalee, 1977).

In sum, Marxism account of state formation is in two broad perspectives namely that the state arises when society divides into classes and that the state is an instrument of class rule. That indeed means that the state is an organized power, employed by the dominating class for class hegemony. Against this background therefore, Lenin argues that the doctrine of the state serves to justify social privileges and to maintain the existence of exploitation (Lenin, 1982).

4. LENIN AND THE STATE

It is important to state that Lenin did not propound a theory of state. He is a Marxist who used Marxism for a socialist reconstruction. Indeed, Lenin can be regarded as a great tactician, who, having modified Marxism, used it to quicken the emergence of a socialist state. As expressed by Nibset, Marx and Engels supplied the philosophy, dogma, myth, rationalization and vision and Lenin translated these into actual military - revolutionary tactics. In a sense, Lenin is the Saint Paul of Marxism (Nibset, 1982, p.84).

The significance of Lenin in the theory of state lies in his works, wherein he gives Marxism the structure and the rationalization of revolutionary tactic's and politics, thereby transforming the principles of Marxism into an essential style of revolutionary action. Perhaps it is pertinent to state that Marx and Engels could be described as evolutionists in their approach to society. For example, they see capitalism as emerging from preceding stages of society, leading to socialism and then to communism. But Lenin took a stand which opposed the evolutionist and gradualist theory of Marx and Engels. He advocated for an organization, in form of a tightly knit revolutionary party. This is because Lenin believes that a revolutionary party is likely to be most effective if it is composed, not of workers alone, but of intellectuals, dedicated to pursuing the interest of the working class (Rodee, Christol, Anderson, & Green, 1983). Lenin argues that the revolution of the user in a socialist state can only succeed when the bourgeois state machinery is smashed and power is taken from the bourgeois parliament and held by the people. This is because Lenin believes that state power is the most crucial thing for a socialist reconstruction and indeed for state transformation. Lenin's obsession with party activities and organisation is informed by his definition of the state and in the method of state exercise of power. To him, the state is a special organisation of force; it is an organisation of violence for the suppression of some classes (Lenin, 1982). The party therefore has to be well organised to serve as an instrument that can play the historic role of leading a revolution and transforming the state (Blackburn, 1978). To Lenin, the "state is a

product and manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonism. Thus, the state arises where, when, and in so far as class antagonisms objectively cannot be reconciled. Consequently, the existence of the state is what proves that class antagonism is irreconcilable" (Lenin, 1977, p.242). To Lenin and also as argued by Marx, the state could not have arisen nor maintained itself had it been possible to reconcile classes (Lenin, 1977).

Marx and Engels, in their description of socialist reconstruction did not articulate the role of the party as did Lenin. For example, in his reference to the party, Lenin declared that educating the workers party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat which is capable of assuming power and of leading the whole people to socialism, of directing and organizing the new order and of being the teacher and the guide (Lenin, 1982).

The ideas of Marx and Engels, especially as stated in the communist manifesto and the significant contribution of Lenin in terms of the strategy and tactics of struggle which he elaborated and used as the proletariat party in the first Russian resolution is today referred to as Marxism-Leninism.

However, Marxism has become a challenging theory to scholars and in an attempt to define and redefine the theory; Neo Marxists emerged who debate the concept of the state and its position to society. It is however to be noted that Marxists and Neo Marxists alike agree on the basic premise of Marxism, namely, that history is properly understood as the working out of tensions and contradictions between nature and man over more efficient and opposing ideologies (Thompson, 1985, pp.130-143; Knox, 1964). What then are the positions of the neo Marxists?

5. NEO-MARXISTS AND THE STATE

The contributions of the neo Marxists to the theory of state formation centre on their arguments, which can be summed up in three parts. First, is their argument as to what really is the role of the state especially in a capitalist society? Second, it will be recalled that Marxism takes the state to be an instrument of class rule but neo Marxists ask questions as to what should be the relationship between the state and classes in society. Third, Marxism attributes the emergence of the state in the development of classes in society and the state therefore mediates between social classes that are in conflict. In this regard, again, neo Marxists debate the autonomy of the state. In other words, can the state act independent of the influence of any of the social classes? These are the elements of the theory of state formation which, when put together makes up the constituent elements of the ongoing theorization about state information processes. These are also the elements that are of concern to us as students of society who pays particular attention to state formation in post-colonial societies.

6. ANTONIO GRAMSCI

Among the neo Marxists, Gramsci stands out clearly as a protagonist and one of the most influential Marxist thinkers of our time. To Gramsci, the state is an instrument for conforming civil society to the economic structures. The theme of Gramsci's idea is that the state is located between the "political society" and the "civil society." For example, he says that the state is a "balance between political society and civil society" (Haore & Nowell, 1971). In his explanation on state formation, Gramsci opines that a social group (the working class in case of socialist transformation) must struggle not only for its own interest, but must be able to present itself as the guarantor of the interest of society as a whole. Explaining the state as manifesting class action, Gramsci says that a social group can, and indeed must, already exercise leadership before winning government power thus making it become dominant when it exercises power (Naore & Nowell, 1971). Gramsci thus sees the role of the party as very crucial, as viewed by Lenin. In this regard, the party should be an educational institution whose aim is to gain ascendancy in most aspects of civil society before the attempt is made to state power. The party should be deeply committed to an ideological and cultural struggle as well as to the seizure of state power. Therefore for a social group to be successful in the task of maintaining hegemony, according to Gramsci, the role of the intellectuals must be employed within a party so as to ensure the economic organization and political power of their class. It is again this background that Gramsci says that control of state power without hegemony in the civil society (Naore & Nowell, 1971), becomes an insecure enterprise. Perhaps hegemony is unavoidable because the ruling class is itself not cohesive, nor the exploited class in society.

Thus, Gramsci believes that the state is coercion combined with hegemony, in that hegemony is political power that flows from intellectual and moral leadership, authority or consensus as distinguished from armed force. In this regard, hegemony is made up of three elements, intellectual, moral and political. And why both intellectual and moral aspects of hegemony constitute leadership and consent, the political aspect represents domination, subjugation, force and coercion (Arora, 2014).

However, the consent of the dominated groups is not just from fear or force, used by the dominant group but through the efforts of the intellectuals who, acting on the agents of the dominant group help to gain consent from the dominated group. Consequently not only does the bourgeoisie control all social relations, it also dominates society at all the levels of thoughts (Goodwin, 1997).

Gramsci uses capitalism and hegemony to complement his theory of state; and he says that capitalism maintains and controls the subordinate classes not just through violence and politico-economic coercion, but also

ideologically through hegemonic culture in which the values of the capitalists become the values of all. In addition, the hegemonic culture, which becomes the general culture, will be the culture, with which the working class will identify, which to them will be the good culture because it is the culture of the capitalists. Thus, by identifying with the dominant culture of the capitalists, the working class becomes part of the system which they will uphold, maintain and perpetuate and by implication, maintain the status quo and therefore they will be unable to change the system until there is a revolution (Arora, 2014).

The state according to Gramsci, should, not be understood in the narrow sense of the government, but should cover the whole arena of political society. He makes a distinction between the state as a political organization and the state as merely a government (Arora, 2014). Thus, Gramsci says that Marx superstructure is made up of the "political society", and the "civil society." And while the civil society is composed of all those "private organisms", viz schools, churches, clubs parties etc, which contribute to the formation of social and political consciousness of the people, "political society" on the other hand, is composed of those public institutions, the government, courts, police, army, which exercise direct domination (Arora, 2014).

7. THE STATE, SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

One thing is clear from the presentation of the state by Marxism and that is that we can only see the connection of society and the origin of the state in economic basis. Thus, Marxism is emphatic about social production, work and practice and their unity as being the basic determinants of human survival and social actions. So, the concept of social production, work and practice states that it is people themselves who produce their relationship to nature, to other people and their forms of thinking (www.thur.de/phil/emanc.htm). To Marxism, the essential characteristic which differentiates the human species and gives it a generic identity is manned productive activity. Thus, from the centrality of economic activity to mankind, Marx infers that the way in which that activity is organized determines all other aspects of social life. (Goodwin, 1997).

In any society, therefore, the socially determined production of individuals, naturally constitutes the beginning of every society. Thus, each stage of production has its own characteristic features, even though various stages may have some features as well (Arora, 2014). Consequently, Marxism believes that

the social practice of individuals is substantially the basis of all history, but as long as this practice runs in a spontaneous – natural fashion, i.e. the social individuals are not conscious of themselves as social beings or of the social responsibility of their actions, what they created and create will be experienced

as if it were the consequence of a natural law, having become so by necessity, and rules over them. (www.thor.de/philo/emanc.htm)

Thus, the state did not originate in the will of society nor is it maintained for the benefit of all (Mahajain, 2013). And that is because the state does not come into existence for the fulfillment of a moral purpose because it is not a product of the will of the people but that of conflict and thus, it operates as an instrument of domination (Ibid.). Again, to Marxism, a class society is one that creates antagonistic classes, a society that thrives on individual and private laurels, a society where private property reigns and a society in which the possessing class enslaves the non-possessing class (Arora, 2014). A class society, therefore, produces a state that serves the economically dominant class and becomes, in the process, an instrument of exploitation which exploits the economically weak class. However, the two antagonistic classes have their origin in the institution of private property and of division of labour (Arora, 2014). To Marx therefore, the state is an engine of class rule.

In summary, Marx believes that there are more than one class in any society of which two classes are powerful and these powerful classes are at loggerheads, due to conflict of interests. Again, of the two powerful classes, one class is economically more powerful and by virtue of that superior position, the economically more powerful class controls the other class, which, though numerically greater, but is economically weak. Also, the economically more powerful class uses political power to perpetuate its domination and strengthen the domination in all possible ways (Das, 2009). Thus, political power is central to the state and political power, in general, with the state, expresses the way or the system of exercising full domination (Ibid.).

8. NEO- MARXISTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE

There is an agreement among neo Marxists that the state in capitalist society represents ruling class interest, but there is some disagreement about the exact relationship between the state and the bourgeoisie (Haralambos, 1982). In other words, is the dominant class a united class, conscious of its class interests and whose efforts are always aimed at preserving those interests of the class, or can it be argued that even among the dominant class there exist a considerable divisions and frictions? Marx however, recognized factions among the dominant class and a thorough analysis of the phenomenon is what he did in his Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonapart (Marx & Engels, 1975).

From the classical Marxist theory of state, scholars have emerged with attempts to explain the specific nature of the capitalist state and the state in the emerging (post-

colonial) societies. Among such scholars are Poulantzas, Miliband, Alavi and Ake.

9. POULANTZAS AND MILIBAND ON THE STATE

Poulantzas and Miliband have made useful contributions about how the state should be analysed. The subsequent debate between the two of them on the issue of the state has been very remarkable.

The theme of their arguments is whether there exists a kind of relative autonomy of the state to society. Poulantzas argues that the relative autonomy of the state is essential if it is to effectively represent capital. Poulantzas's argument hinges on his belief that freedom and independence are necessary prerequisites in order for the state to serve ruling class interest. He goes further to support his argument for the relative autonomy of the state by saying that first; the bourgeoisie is not free from internal conflicts and division of interests, which limit the state from being able to represent the bourgeoisie as a unified class. Second, and arising from the above, that the bourgeoisie cannot rule as a class because doing so will weaken it due to internal conflict. Third, the bourgeoisie will, from the foregoing, be unable to present a united front in conflict with the proletariat. Fourth, that the relative autonomy of the state allows it to rise above sectional interests even within the bourgeoisie and is able to represent them as a class (see the following works of Poulantzas, 1969, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1978).

However, to Miliband, a theory of state is also a theory of society. The state, to him, resides at the level of anthropomorphism i.e. it is not a tangible thing. For Miliband, the state stands for a number of particular institutions which together constitute its reality and which interact as part of what may be called the state system (see the following works of Miliband, 1962, 1970, 1973, 1977). Consequently, he identified two features with the state. First are the dominant class nature of the state and the superiority of the state in relation to social classes in the society. In his analysis of industrial society, Miliband shows that there does remain a coherent propertied class of the reins of government (Giddens, 1982). This is because; to him the autonomy of the state does not preclude the state to remain for all practical purposes the state of the ruling class (Miliband, 1983, Bottomore, 1964).

From the above arguments of Poulantzas and Miliband, three features of the state become discernible. First is that the state is an agent of transformation, providing for order, organisational principle and cohesive factor, thus maintaining the unity of the social order. In this regard, the state becomes cement for the civil society. Second the state becomes the arena for the interpretation of class domination and transformation. Third, it is at

the state level that structural transformation takes place. (Onuoha, 1988). The above observations manifest themselves in the policies relating to the allocation of resources and in the determination of policies that verge on social relations and also in the production of social capital. It is when the state does all these that we are able to see clearly that it preoccupies itself with the interests of dominant class. And which has as its ultimate the perpetuation of its control of state apparatus, of state power and of state coercive force.

So far, we can add two principal features of the state as being extremely crucial to us because of their relevance to our analysis. First is the identification of state actions as those to protect the interest of the dominant class. Second is the fact that even among the bourgeoisie, there are conflicts and divisions.

However, how do Alavi and Ake see the state in post-colonial societies?

10. ALAVI ON THE STATE

In his examination of the post-colonial state, Hamza Alavi, drawing examples from Pakistan and Bangladesh argues that the state is the product of the historical specificity which arises from structural changes brought about by the colonial experience and alignments of classes at the super structures of political and administrative institutions which were established in that context and also, from radical realignments of class forces which have been brought about in the post-colonial situation (Alavi, 1982, p.38). The main thrust of Alavi's argument is that the pre-colonial states possess an outstanding feature i.e. of being characterized by relative and highly over developed state apparatus/institution. And this is because the origin of the state is rooted in the metropolitan countries, which, having dominated the classes in the colonies became overdeveloped and autonomous with a strong bureaucratic military oligarchy. In, other words, the apparatus of state were transplanted from the metropolitan state (Onuoha, 1988). Thus, to Alavi, "the super structure in the colony is therefore 'verdeveloped' in relation to the structure in the colony, for its basis lies in the metropolitan structure itself, from which it is later separated at the time of independence" (Alavi, 1979).

From Alavis' analysis of the post-colonial state, the following pertinent observations can be made. First, the classes that were formed in African societies were without a dominant and ruling class but a complex and multiclass relationship, thereby giving the military bureaucratic oligarchy a special role of mediating the competing interests of the social classes. Second, the strong influence of the metropolitan bourgeoisie still continues even after independence and as a result the subordination of local bourgeoisie automatically turns them weak. Third, because the local bourgeoisie are weak, they become unable to subordinate the relatively highly/developed colonial state

apparatus and again because the metropolitan power still exercises dominion over it. Fourth, the state is therefore no longer an instrument of a particular class and it becomes relatively autonomous.

On a critical analysis, Alavi's analysis is not an examination of how social classes relate to the mode of production and in the case of African societies, how the social classes relate to peripheral capitalism in their societies. It is from this perspective that Ake differs from Alavi.

11. AKE ON THE STATE

Ake begins his theory of postcolonial state with the development of productive forces. To him, the state has very limited autonomy and the limited autonomization of the state reflects the rudimentary development of commodity production and exchange.

The state, to Ake, is a

specific modality of class domination, one in which class domination is mediated by commodity exchange so that the system of institutional mechanism of domination is differentiated and disassociated from the ruling class and even the society and appears as an objective force standing alongside society. (Ake, 1978, p.1)

Ake argues that the state cannot be class neutral even with its autonomization of the mechanism of domination. In other words, the state may appear to be independent of the social classes, including the hegemonic class, it is not independent of the mode of production and by consequence, those who own the means of production invariably are those whose interests are best served by the state. Thus, because the state appears to be neutral and autonomous of social classes, its element of class domination is not apparent but all the same, state domination, according to Ake, remains class domination not just in spite of autonomization but precisely because of it (Ake, 1981, 1985). However, in post-colonial societies a unique feature of the socio-economic formations is the limited autonomy of the state, which makes Ake to argue that it can be said that the state has not emerged in Africa because of its non-autonomization since autonomization is the very essence of the state as a modality of domination. Although, in spite of the non autonomization of the state such institutions as government and those of coercive apparatuses, police, army, prisons, etc., exist and are used for the subordination of some social groups (Ihonvbere, 1989). In other words, African societies are in the process of state formation and this is because in Africa, pre-capitalist relations of production still exists and the societies are without individualism, competition, freedom and equality and these are the requirements for the autonomization of class domination as the state. And because the African state lacks the relative autonomy, it becomes extremely weak to perform adequately the essential functions of the state (Ihonvbere, 1989).

Ake concludes that the development of the state in Africa remains at a low level of the primitive accumulation with massive intervention of force in the labor process. Consequently, because of the low level of the development of the state, it is unable to mediate the struggle between classes and the struggle within the dominant class. Thus, the struggle to control, and the use of state power, becomes warfare (Ake, 1982, Chapters 1&2). Consequently, power in Africa is over-valued and securities lie only on getting more and more power. As a result, there is hardly any restraint on the means of acquiring power, on holding it and on using it. Hence, there is political instability because political competition becomes norm less and is carried to the extreme thereby turning political competition into warfare and the political class thus operates in a state of siege (Ihonvbere, 1989).

The following observations can be drawn from Ake's argument. First, that the level of state formation is very low in Africa to the extent that it can be argued that the state has not emerged. Second, that political domination is not autonomised and the class differences become sharper and class alienation deeper. Third, due to the intense and norm less nature of political competition, the political class becomes preoccupied with politics, that is, with securing power and does not function as the capitalist, or ruling class and is not effective as the leader in the processes of transformation. As argued by Ake, the faction in power does not bother to engage in entrepreneurial activity because, the economic sphere has no autonomy while in the context of political struggle, and the tendency is to incapacitate and to liquidate opponents.

In conclusion, Marxism has become a dominant and a highly challenging theory in the social sciences. It is perhaps the most enduring ground theory in the same areas. Marxism has explained man society in their totality, from politics, sociology, education, poverty, economics, to science and technology.

Although, Popper argues that Marx's theory is not scientific because it has been reinterpreted to explain falsified predictions and that a theory which can be stretched to explain anything has no explanatory power (Popper, 1962, 1971). Marxism has however, become a formidable grand theory in the humanities and has remained the most profound for on its explanations of the crises of development and underdevelopment.

In sum, our efforts in this paper have been to examine the theories of state formation from the Marxian perspectives. And we can argue that Marxism has succeeded, not only in analyzing the nature and character of the state, but it has explained its emergence. And with particular reference to the post colonial state, Marxism tries to highlight the inextricable link between the continent's historical experiences, the implications of the experiences and their relationships to deepen contradictions, conflicts and crises. Marxism explains the consequences of imperialist onslaught on the African

continent, particularly in the areas of politics and political instability, class and state formation and in the generally development and solidity of productive forces.

12. CONCLUDING REMARK.

Thus far, it can be argued that Marxism has succeeded in explaining the origin of the state and its development, using capitalism and the development of social classes, with its concomitant conflicts. However, what are the lessons for us, from the origin and development of the state as enunciated by Marxism, particularly in understanding the idea of the state and crisis of development in Africa?

The main lesson to us is to understand that there is crisis of state in Africa, which makes the state to be the main issue with regards to the crisis of development in the continent. And this is so because, going by the postulations of Marxism, there is no doubt that the state, being in crisis, is with considerable difficulty in the process of its formation. For example, the development of capitalism is essential, to the creation of social classes as the haves and have not, where the more economically powerful class will impose domination on other classes.

But can it be argued that there is capitalism in Africa with the main social classes being in antagonistic relations? In Africa, colonialism succeeded in imposing capitalism as a mode of production which was what obtained in the colonizers' society. But when the imposition was made, there were no capitalist institutions or capitalist class to grow and manage capitalism. Thus, colonialism created a dependent economy for Africa because at the time colonialism imposed capitalism, Africa was still at the stage of feudalism and at the time of flag independence, Africa had not evolved the institutions and capitalist social classes that can grow autonomous capitalist mode of production. As a result, African economy was not only tied to western imperialist economy but was dependent on it. So, today, Africa does not have a productive and independent economy that is devoid of external intervention and control. Therefore, by the nature of the African economy, there are no social classes in the Marxian sense and therefore, we cannot talk of class hegemony or class struggle. The two classes colonialism created in Africa are the political elites and the mass of the people, with the political elites without wealth and property but are political leaders because the old political leaders championed the agitation for self-determination and the younger ones succeeded the older ones.

Thus, what we had at independence, and even till now, are political leaders those who succeeded the colonial masters and inherited colonial political apparatus, but not a class with property and wealth and therefore, African political leaders, who do not have property are now busy using their political positions with the instrumentalities

of the state to acquire wealth. As a result, the political class is in factions, all fiercely struggling to gain access to the state in order to be in position to acquire property. Consequently, those in position of authority in Africa do not have the peace to be creative and develop property which they will protect. The African society is, therefore, class-amorphous, devoid of the capitalist class structure and stratification that give meaning to the Marxian concept of social classes. So, there is no one class as the oppressed class and another as the oppressor class. Thus, power and position in Africa still follow the traditional and ascribed statuses (Eriksen, 2011). And this is precisely because the African society of today is still not far from the traditional society, which was a community in which the positions of the participants are fixed from birth and organically linked to a series of mediating groups. In other words, the participant usually does not choose his status (Pellicani, 1994).

Although there is always a government and a regime in Africa, but there is no ruling class, because there is no capitalist or property-class and therefore, as argued by Ake, it can be said that the state is emergent. However, those in government have no property to protect but their official positions and private interests. As a result, pillage becomes rife and the struggle for public office is so much valued which transform politics, the struggle for power, to war fare. Thus, in Africa, there is no ruling class, a class that can be described as one that is most powerful economically; and there is no hegemony which will embody leadership, discipline and domination. Consequently, no class has been able to emerge, to evolve a state that will protect capital and the interests of the capitalist class. Again, there is no situation where a class will be in control of the economy and the political apparatus, possess discipline, leadership capabilities and domination. The absence of hegemony in Africa, therefore, makes the emergent state to be weak and lacking the relevant ideology to subordinate other periphery formations.

Although there are urban towns in Africa, which resemble complex societies, but most of them are composed of tribal groups, creating ethnic formations which are not the result of the division of labour that was created by capitalism but such urban towns are only responding to colonial arrangements and activities, left behind by colonialism. The urban centres are therefore centres of state bureaucracy and commercial activities and as the centres that link the ex-colonial societies with the metropolitan bourgeois. Indeed, the urban centres in Africa are not composed of the Marxian social classes but tribal and ethnic groups which are not the creations of capitalism but of colonialism.

However, there are social conflicts in Africa, but the conflicts are not the consequences of class antagonism but tribal/ethnic conflicts, as a result of the struggle for power. And that is because majority of Africans, today, live in

communities, as tribal groups and not as social classes in a complex capitalist society, with the social structure that will engender class struggle. Therefore, there is no class struggle in Africa. But Lenin argues that the state is a product and manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonism, because the state arises where and when class antagonism cannot be objectively reconciled. And also to Engels, "there will be no need for the state in the tribal society because the development of classes will not arise in view of the absence of complex division of labour". Therefore, if there are no social classes standing in antagonistic opposition, the state will not evolve but that does not preclude the existence of a government and a regime even though a government does not equate the state. Tragically for Africa, development is articulated by the state which makes the state so central to development (Fadakinte, 2015). However, as the state is wobbling to emerge in Africa, any wonder why the continent is not developed?

REFERENCES

- Ake, C. (Ed). (1985) *Political economy of Nigeria*. London, Longman.
- Ake, C. (1981) *A political economy of Africa*. London, Longman, 1981.
- Ake, C. (1978) *Revolutionary pressures in Africa*. London, Zed Press.
- Alavi, H., & Shamin, T. (Eds). (1981). *Sociology of developing societies*. London, MacMillan.
- Alavi, H., & Shamin, T. (Eds.). (1982). *Introduction to the sociology of developing societies*. London, MacMillan Press.
- Arora, N.D. (2014). *Political science for civil service main examination*. New Delhi, and McGraw Hill Education (India) Private Ltd.
- Blackburn, R. (Ed). (1978). *Revolution and class struggle: A reader in Marxist politics*. Sussex. The Harvester Press.
- Bottomore, T., & Rubel, M. (1961). *Karl Marx; Selected writing in sociology and social philosophy*. London, Penguin Book
- Bottomore, T. (1964). *Elites and society*. London, Penguin Books.
- Burns, E. (1957). *An introduction to Marxism*. New York, International Publishers
- Cornforth, M. (1977). *Historical materialism*. NY, Inter Publ. 5th Printing.
- Das, P. G. (2009). *Modern political theory*. Delhi, New Central Bork Agency Ltd.
- Engels, F. (1972). *The origin of the family, private property and the state*. New York, International Publishers.
- Erikson, T. H. (2011). *Small places, large issues. An introduction to social and cultural anthropology*. London. Pluto Press.
- Fadakinte, M. M. (2015). State and society in Africa: An exploration of African development crisis. *Scottish Journal of Arts, Social Sciences and Scientific Studies*, 25(1), 3-19.
- Giddens, A. (1972). *Politics and sociology in the thought of Max Weber*. London, MacMillan.

- Giddens, A. (1982). *Sociology, a brief but critical introduction*. London, MacMillan.
- Goodwin, B. (1982). *Using political ideas*. Chichester, John Wiley and Sons.
- Haralambos, M. (1980). *Sociology: Themes and perspectives*. London, University Tutorial Press.
- Hoare, Q., & Novell, G. (Eds). (1971). *Gramsci: Selections from prison note books*. London, Longman.
- Ihonvbere, J. (Ed). (1989). *The political economy of crisis and under-development in Africa: Selected Works of ClaudAke*, Lagos, Jad Publishers.
- Jalee, P. (1997). *How capitalism works*. New York. Monthly Review Press.
- Jhingan, M. L., Girija, M., & Sasilcala, L. (2012). *History of economic thought*. Delhi Vrinda Publications Ltd.
- Knox, T. M., (1964). *Hegel's political writing*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Lenin, V. I. (1977). *Selected works (Vol.2)*. Moscow, Progress Publishers.
- Lenin, V. I. (1892). *Selected works (Vols.1-3)*. Moscow, Progress Publishers.
- Lenin, V. I. (1972). *Imperialism: The highest stage of capitalism*. Moscow, Progress Publisher.
- Mahajan, V. D. (2013). *Political theory: Principles of political science*. New Delhi, S. Chand Company, PVR Ltd.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1967). *The communist manifesto; with introduction*. Taylor repr., London, Pengium.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1977). *Selected works (Vol.3, 4thed.)*. Moscow, Progress Publishers.
- McLellan, D. (1984). *The thought of Karl Marx, an introduction (2nded.)*. London, Macmillan.
- McLellan, D. (1972). *Marxbefore Marxism. Middlesex*. Penguin Books.
- Milliband, R. (1969). *The state in capitalist society*. London, Winfield and Nocoison.
- Milliband, R. (1977). *Marxism and politics*. Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press.
- Nibset, R. (1982.) *The social philosophers: Community and conflict in Western thought*. New York, Books.
- Nnoli, O. (1986). *Introduction to politics*. Lagos, Longman.
- Pellicani, L. (1994). *The genesis of capitalism and the origins of modernity*. New York, Telos Press Ltd.
- Plamenatz, J. (1963). *Man and society (Vols. I&II)*. London, Longman.
- Popper, K., (1966) *The open society and its enemies*. Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press.
- Poulantzas, N. (1973). *Political power and social classes*. London, New Left Books.
- Poulantzas, N. (1973). *Classes in contemporary capitalism*. London, New Left Books.
- Poulantzas, N., (1974) *Fascism and dictatorship*. London, New Left Book
- Poulantzas, N. (1976). *The crisis of dictatorship*. London, New Left Bk.
- Rodee, C. C., Christol, O., Anderson, T. J., & Green, T. H. (1983). *Introduction to political science*. London, McGraw Hill Inter. Books, US.
- Shively, W. P. (2012). *Power and choice: An introduction to political science*. New York, McGraw Hill Company.
- Thompson, D. (Ed.). (1985). *Political ideas*. London, Pengium Book. Retrieved 2012, July 11 from <http://www.thur.de/philolo/emanc.htm>.
- Onuoha, O. B. (1988). *Indigenization in Nigeria:1972-1983 resources and income re-distribution* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis). University of Lagos.