The Character of the State, Legitimacy Crisis and Social Mobilization in Africa: An Explanation of Form and Character

Eghosa E. Osaghae*

Résumé. La clef de l'analyse de la mobilisation sociale réside dans le caractère des rapports entre l'Etat et la société. L'Etat postcolonial africain est confrontée à une multitude de problèmes dont ceux relatifs à la crise du développement et à la légitimité sont les plus critiques. Ces problèmes paralysent l'Etat et affaiblissent sa capacité à mener la sociétgé aux objectifs désirés. Par réaction, beaucoup de régimes africains s'embarquent dans diverses formes de mobilisation sociale qu'ils perçoivent comme moyen de surmonter aussi bien la crise de développement que celle de légitimation quelles que soient les conditions dans lesquelles elles sont libellées. L'accent porte surtout sur la résolution de la crise de légitimité et c'est ce qui explique la prévalence de la mobilisation sociale autoritaire dans la plus grande partie de l'Afrique. C'est, dans une large mesure, pour cette raison que la mobilisation sociale tend à être intermittente dans la majeure partie du continent puisque la chûte d'un régime marque la fin d'une phase de mobilisation et le début d'une autre par le régime suivant.

Introduction

After development, the concept of mobilization is probably the next most popular one employed by African leaders to express their historical task of over-coming the underdevelopment of the post-colonial state. But rather surprisingly, the subject of mobilization has not received as much academic concern among African scholars as its popularity would suggest, presumably because concern with development has taken more than its fair share. It may even be that most African scholars doubt the utility of the concept in a continent where the goals of the state are often nebulous and where, even if the goals are well defined, the basic requirements of a thorough-going mobilization process-a literate citizenry that is well fed, clothed and protected from preventable diseases-are yet to be met. Yet, the zeal with which one African state after the other has embarked upon social mobilization, sometime making it a creed of national liberation, makes it deserving of greater academic concern than is presently the case. It may very well be the case that African salvation lies in social mobilization.

This paper is a modest contribution to the growing literature on social mobilization in Africa. In it, I examine, and attempt to account for, the form and character of social mobilization in Africa. The key to this examination, I believe, lies in the character of state-society relations. I begin by explicating the concept of social mobilization, with a view to formulating an operational

* Lecturer in Political Science at Ibadan University, Nigeria.

definition which best suits the African situation. Next, I consider the character of the state and society in Africa and the implications of this character for social mobilization. Against this background, I examine the forms and character of social mobilization in Africa and briefly consider how these relate to the strategies. Finally, in concluding, I argue that any attempt to understand social mobilization in Africa should situate it within the framework of the character of the state, in particular, of its legitimacy crisis, and its need to fully domesticate society under its control.

The concept of social mobilization

mobilization in general, implies a rejection of the notion of man's inability to engineer change. This notion of man's helplessness has been succinctly stated thus: "It should not be forgotten that the practice of men outstrips their reflections, that institutions change under the pressure of needs that scarcely arise to consciousness, that in the building of social structure men do not proceed like architects who have clear designs of what they intend to build, but rather like 'social animals' whose nature fulfils itself through forms they scarcely understand" (MacIver, 1964: 425-426). mobilization is precisely the antithesis of the "social animal" argument. It presupposes that those who lead society are like architects who have clear designs of what they intend to build and how to build them. For example, a leader who mobilizes people at war time knows exactly what he wants and how to get it.

Most authors who have been concerned with mobilization in general have usually treated it as social mobilization, presumably to emphasize the fact that mobilization often touches on all spheres of man's existence. Thus, although a few authors recognize that mobilization could be long-or short-term, gradual or revolutionary and that, depending on the defined goals, could be economic, political, religious, military or ethnic mobilization, social mobilization has generally been preferred as a more blanket and all-inclusive concept to describe major forms of mobilization which touch on more than a narrowly defined sphere of society.

What then is social mobilization? In general, it refers to a process of creating a new consciousness, a new way of doing things and learning new values and attitudes necessary for the attainment of certain defined goals. Several definitions have been offered, but two which are representative enough will be considered. First, there is Karl Deutsch who sees social mobilization as "the process in which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken, and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behaviour" (Deutsch, 1961: 494). second, J.P. Nettl defines it as a process which "relate(s) people tightly together in a distinct and often novel form, by evolving particular structures and by giving people common goals and reference groups. In doing so, mobilization processes either substitute new priorities for previous ones or create

conscious priorities on a general scale for the first time where none existed previously"[1]. (Nettl, 1967: 115).

From these two similar definitions, it is clear that mobilization is not only behavioural, though the process may seem so. It also involves more fundamental but less tangible elements of attitudes, beliefs, values and norms which predispose behaviour. To this extent, mobilization is essentially an accelerated and more purposive *learning* process which is more vigorous, controlled and specifically goal-oriented than the usual socialization processes[2].

The similarity in Deutsch's and Nettl's definitions and indeed, most other definitions offered by Western scholars requires some brief comments for reasons which I will make clear. The definitions are offered from two perspectives which make it necessary to reformulate them if they are to be applicable to African and, indeed, third world countries. First, they are derived from the heavily criticized modernization perspective which sees development in terms of approximating Westernization, and assumes an evolution from tradition to modernity[3]. (Cf. Black, 1976). Indeed, Deutsch says that social mobilization "is a name given to an overall process of change which happens to substantial parts of the population in countries which are moving from traditional to modern ways of life" and, futhermore, that these changes are "concomitant" with certain historical situations and stages of economic development (1961: 493-514). In fact, the indices of mobilization he identifies-higher percentages of people living in towns, exposed to the mass media, literate, changing residence, exposed to modern life, and so on - are an apt description of Western societies. In the case of Nettl, his mainthrust is to compare and contrast social mobilization in 'developed' and 'developing' states and, not unlike Deutsch, he labours to demonstrate that certain types

1 Nettl offers this as a general definition for the three processes of a social mobilization-military, religious and political-and insists that, in the long-run, they all have the same effects. Nevertheless, he proposes three ways by which political mobilization can be distinguished from social mobilization by: (1) the sub-system emphasized; (2) the introduction of politics at an upper stage of the progression of value-addition in forms of collective behaviour; and (3) the definition of the political context broadly or narrowly and taking any part of any given social action or situation which we think is political. See Nettl (1967: 115ff).

2 In a sense, the social mobilization process can be said to be a highly specialized form of socialization, depending on what the specific goals of mobilization are.

3 The same point has been made by Lars Rudebeck (1974) who points out that Deutsch's conception presupposes that the process of mobilization, although not possibly identical with the process of modernization, always involves movement in one and the same direction, movement away from "traditionalism" to "modernity" in functionalist language. As such, Rudebeck argues, Deutsch confuses degree or level of mobilization with the level of modernization.

of social mobilization are consistent with certain historical epochs and desirable at certain levels of development and not others[4].

Second, Deutsch and Nettl complement their modernization framework by drawing from Parsonian sociology in which the functioning and structure of a social system are differentiated: the functioning of a system is the adjustment of that system to environmental exigencies (in this case, the demands of modernization) while structure, by contrast, consists of those stable elements that may be treated as constraints to radical changes over time (Persons, 1937, 1951, 1961). Following this distinction, it can be argued that, since structure limits system capability and system adaptability, in response to changing demands, the system will change as little of its structure as possible. This is necessary if the system is to remain stable! For this reason, Deutsch and his collaborators define social mobilization in gradualist or evolutionary terms, and take revolutionary mobilization (even as "mild" as mass political participation) as foreboding political decay and instability (Cf. Huntington, 1965, 1968, 1976). Most African leaders who have been persuaded by this conception of social mobilization, believing it should retain the *status quo*, have only succeeded, more or less, in getting people to do basically the same things differently. This is cosmetic, rather than purposeful mobilization.

Surely, social mobilization defined within the modernization framework appears ill-suited to the African situation. It points to a 'branch' approach which deals pragmatically with problems as they become manifest, rather than the far-reaching 'root' approach which seeks to deal with problems from their hidden roots[5]. Considering the gigantic task of overcoming underdevelopment, any social mobilization process which does not aim at fundamental changes, can hardly be useful to African states. As a minimum requirement, structures more than functioning should change as a necessary and sufficient condition for meaningful social mobilization since these structures (operators of the state and the state machinery as well as the normative order within which they operate) are expected to lead and direct mobilization. But what we find in African states which have embarked on social mobilization

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4 This much is clear from the distinction he makes between "stalactite" and "stalagmite" mobilization which I discuss later.

5 'Branch' and 'root' as used here, are different from their usage by Huntington (1976) in relation to mobilization strategies. The 'root' or 'comprehensive' approach for him involves a mobilization situation in which the reformer clearly sets all his goals and targets at the beginning and seeks to achieve as many of them as possible. The 'branch' or 'Fabian' approach, on the other hand, involves a situation where the reformer conceals his goals and separates them, hoping to achieve one at a time.

is that structures have sought to mobilize within existing normative orders[6]. The result is very well known: leaders say and not do because their primary interest is to strengthen their hold on the reins of power and, all too soon, even the few mobilized people easily return to their old ways.

Having exposed the inadequacies of the prevalent western notions of social mobilization, I shall offer a definition which I consider more appropriate to African circumstances. Social mobilization refers to a process of socio-political engineering which aims at achieving defined goals through fundamental changes in societal structures, institutions and processes, as well as the existing normative order. It is difficult to point to any African country whose attempt at mobilization fits this "revolutionary" conception. At best, most of them are satisfied with mobilizing people to become more aware and efficacious. This, however, is more of "politicalization" than mobilization (Sahlin, 1977: 65ff)[7]. As it is difficult to point to African states whose attempts at mobilization strictly fit into my definition, the definition should be seen:

1 - as an 'ideal construct' to the extent that it is not a description of 'reality'; and

2 - as a criterion by which mobilization efforts in Africa may be assessed.

The definition I have offered here assumes that the goals of social mobilization are clear and well-defined. This assumption may be said to be unnecessary since it is difficult to conceive of any mobilization process without defined goals. This is not quite so because, in most African cases, even where the goals are identifiable, they may be so poorly articulated or so diffuse that mobilization becomes the magic solution to all problems and a trap for identifying the enemies of the state or, as is quite often the case, they are not upheld with any high degree of honesty or commitment on the part of the leaders. If this point is well taken, then the assumption becomes important because, unless the goals are clearly defined and upheld, mobilization is not worth its name.

To insist that the goals of social mobilization should be clearly defined and

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6 Actually, to ask the leaders to destroy existing normative orders which give meaning to their privileged positions, is probably to ask them to commit "class suicide" which, naturally, they fear to do.

7 According to Sahlin, politicization has three related aspects: politicization (of problems and issues); political mobilization (of groups, collectivities or social categories, moving from groups -in-themselves to groups-for-themselves); and political involvement of the individual. In sum, politicalization implies "a general increase in the level of political consciousness, political interest and (where permitted and unrestrained), political activities and participation on the part of increasing numbers of the population" (Sahlin, 1977: 65).

honestly upheld by the leaders is probably to suggest that social mobilization meaningfully takes place only within an ideological framework. There is little doubt that mobilization is most likely to be effective if it is propelled by an ideological force, an ideology being an explicit or implicit ideational framework which sets out societal goals and requires values and orientations consistent with these goals[8]. The ideological framework seems particularly necessary in African states as a way of guaranteeing that the goals will be clear and that both leaders and their followers will be committed. But many African leaders mainly because of their persuasion by the western-inspired conventional conception of social mobilization referred to earlier on, are apprehensive of ideological mobilization because the word ideology conjures in their minds, an image of "radicalism", especially of the socialist communist genre. For leaders who are, for the most part, obedient disciples of the Western school of anti-communism, and eager to retain power, this is not surprising. But, in relation to social mobilization, opposition to ideology is very costly, as it makes far-reaching and long-term mobilization difficult. African leaders seem to be contented that however diffuse the goals of mobilization may be, they are a necessary part of the progression towards development. To the extent that development itself is indeed an "ideology" of a sort, mobilization still takes place within an "ideological" framework. I shall argue later on that this insistence on development as the primary goal of mobilization is only a rationalization of the more unwavering but less obvious goals of legitimization.

To conclude this section, the point should be emphasized that the identification of desired goals is an integral part of the definition of social mobilization. It is within the framework of such goals that members of the society can then be mobilized by leaders who are convinced that the goals are indeed desirable. It is necessary but not compulsory that the goals be situated within an ideational framework and it matters less whether this framework is explicit (as in 'socialism') or implicit (as in 'development').

The Character of the State and Society in Africa

There is virtually no subject that one considers in Africa without emphasizing the role of the state. The state not only leads, it also, in a sense, embodies the society in Africa[9]. This point cannot be undermined in any examination of social mobilization, and serves to differentiate social mobilization in Africa from that in Western Europe. In the latter, mobilization is often

8 This definition is broad and all-inclusive enough to take charge of the often disarticulated ideological strands in Africa.

9 The meaning sought to be conveyed here is that in most spheres, the state 'domesticates' the society, and that the civil public dominates and seeks to control the primordial public.

undertaken by political parties, interest groups and other non-governmental agencies sometimes for ends which are not necessarily in consonance with those of the state. Such luxuries, African leaders believe, cannot be afforded at the present level of development where sectarian mobilization easily dissipates the national will and energy. It is for this reason that mobilization is undertaken by the state whose leaders are opposed to any form of counter-mobilization. The state therefore, is central to any analysis of social mobilization in Africa because, afterall, the operators of the state initiate and direct mobilization; they, like Plato's 'guardians' determine how society is to be organized, what the goals should be and what changes are desirable. As a way of providing a background for understanding why African leaders mobilize, I shall examine the character of the state and society. This is discussed under the following headings:

The Dependent Character of the State

This is probably the most conspicuous character of the state in Africa, and it underlines most of the problems which bedevil state-society relations. In terms of theoretical framework, this dependent character is best discussed within the dependency/underdevelopment perspective which sees African underdevelopment as a consequence of its integration into, dependence on, and unequal relationship with the centres of power in the world capitalist system (Rodney, 1972, Arrighi and Saul, 1973, Amin, 1981, etc). The emphasis in this perspective has been on a historical materialist framework, the concern has been to demonstrate how the development and outward expansion of Western capitalism led to colonialism and the unequal relationships between the Western capitalists and the underdeveloped states. The critical point is that the developed countries have successfully led African states into accepting them as the images of their own development mainly in economic terms, but also in political, social and cultural terms. Having accepted the Western model as the quintessence of development, African efforts at developing have largely been externally-oriented and manipulated, and they have had little independent will (notwithstanding what has come to be known as their flag independence) which in the face of their weak material base, makes them heavily dependent and marginal part of the world system.

In relation to social mobilization, the crucial point is that the institutions and structures of the state were imported, and that the normative order within which these exist is a (mal) adaptation of their metropolitan pedigrees to local conditions. Although, as Ekeh (1975, 1983, 1985) has argued, these imported structures have tended to remain fixated and lack the moral context of their existence in the metropolitan countries, the major effect of the failure to create indigenous structures is that mobilization is carried out within the framework of dependency, of externally-oriented and inspired values and goals. The creed is: develop (become like the West) fast but, to do so, you require a disciplined citizenry. The quickness with which African leaders

refer to disciplined and orderly Western societies as models to emulate, is symptomatic of the dependency problem.

Arguably, one cannot suppose or suggest that complete autarchy is the only necessary and sufficient condition for meaningful social mobilization. Nevertheless, I should emphasize the point that dependent structures do not suit the requirements of African liberation. This point is easily lost when and if fundamental changes do not take place in the structures and normative order, as a prelude to mobilization. Such changes become the more necessary if we accept that the state is a set of organizing principles and an autonomous actor which sets the framework for action in society (Mozaffar, 1985).

The Dominance of the State Over Society

The prevalent western liberalist view of state-society relations is that although the state is a machine of control and is primarily responsible for leading society to desired ends, the public realm within which it operates is quite distinct from the private realm, and its intervention in society should be minimal (Cf. MacIver, 1964, Macpherson, 1966). This viewpoint is particularly true of pluralist and group theorists (Cf. Dahl, 1961, 1967). The major reason for this prevalent notion is historical. The nation-state and the civil society emerged in Western Europe as parts of the same historical epoch and products of the national bourgeoisie. In Africa, by contrast, the state was created by the imperial colonial regime whose task, it has been pointed out, was not merely to replicate the super-structure of the state which it had established in the metropolitan country itself, but also to create state apparatus through which it could dominate *all* the indigenous social classes (Alavi, 1979: 40-41).

On this basis, Alavi proceeds to formulate the 'overdeveloped state' thesis which, though developed in the light of the experiences of Pakistan and Bangladesh, is highly applicable to Africa. Briefly stated, the thesis is that in relation to the social structure of the colonies, the (state) superstructure was 'overdeveloped' as it was based on the metropolitan structure itself and equipped with a powerful bureaucratic-military apparatus and mechanism of government which the colonial state required so as to establish law and order. It is this overdeveloped state apparatus, which the post-colonial leaders inherited and perpetuated, primarily to consolidate their powers, that is responsible for the domination of the state, and its reliance on force and violence as instruments for compelling political obligation:

> *The post-colonial society inherits that overdeveloped apparatus of state and its institutionalized practices through which the operations of the indigenous social classes are regulated and controlled. At the moment of independence, weak indigenous bourgeoisies find themselves enmeshed in bureaucratic control by which those at the top of the hierarchy of the bureaucratic-military apparatus of the state are able to*

> *maintain and even extend their dominant power in society... (Alavi, 1979: 41).*

The domination of the state in Africa is not in doubt. It is particularly manifested in the control of productive forces, from which flow the social relations, and the coercive nature of rule, especially the repression of the enemies within. So powerful is the state that its control is the most sought - after prize of political competition especially because, for the fledging bourgeoisie, it is the only avenue to create a material base (Cf. Ake, 1978).

But when the overdeveloped state thesis is contrasted with the "soft state" thesis propounded by Gunnar Myrdal (1968) in the light of the Asian experience, we come to grips with the paradox of the post-colonial state: in spite of its overdeveloped structures and strength, it is incapacitated by the amoral milieu within which it operates, which renders it too weak to translate its power into a moral right to claim obedience from the citizens. This paradox has long been recognized, from another angle, by authors of the "praetorian state" which they say is 'over-politicized' (in terms of mobilized political participation) but "under-institutionalised" because of "the absence or weakness of effective political institutions in the society" (Huntington, 1968). The soft state thesis is however of a different perspective because its explanation of the weakness of political institutions is mainly a moral one. A soft state, no matter whether it is democratic or authoritarian, is unable to institute fundamental reforms and enforce social discipline and its policies are enforced with difficulty where they are enacted at all. Even when framing policies, the authorities are reluctant to place obligations on the people, especially in matters of corruption (Myrdal, 1968: 101 ff). In effect, a soft state:

> *is one in which formal rules (laws, officially stated administrative rules and practices, etc.) are applied copiously and in a lax manner rather than vigorously and consistently... it is one in which private advantage can be gained and private bargains struck concerning the enforcement or non-enforcement of the rules, as when a business man bribes a tax official... Besides money, another inducement is kinship sentiment and another is the favour of superiors (Goldthorpe, 1975: 265).*

How can we account for this paradox of a supposedly 'powerful' and dominant state being soft at the same time? One view is that the "overdevelopment" of the state does not imply that it is strong and this is true[10]. But, as the paradox has to do more with the moral foundation of the state, a more adequate explanation is that the state structures in Africa are divorced from

10 Rather, overdevelopment must be seen in terms of the superimposition of metropolitan bureaucratic and military structures on relatively underdeveloped social structures.

the moral context which attends them in the metropolis from which they were imported. This argument has been competently made by Ekeh in his theory of the two publics in Africa. According to Ekeh (1975, 1985), while the state and society evolved as aspects of the same national entity and morality in the West, they lacked such common basis of origin in Africa. To be sure, the distinction between the private realm and the public realm which exists in the West is replicated in Africa, but, while the private realm in Africa enjoys a moral basis, the morality of the public realm is seriously distorted and weakened by its peculiar existence as two publics rather than one.

First, there is the *primordial public* which is governed by societal morality, and "including in its sphere, activities and behaviours that are of personal, sentimental, and primary value to individuals, but which nevertheless enclose their existence in a network of town, clan and ethnic groups, and which however impinge on the public interest" (Ekeh, 1985: 20). Second, there is the *civic public* which includes the vast paraphernalia of the state-bureaucracy, military, police and local government. Its major character is that it does not operate on the principle of societal morality and is, therefore, divorced from the morality complexes in the world of religion, family, and class. It is governed by the principle of *amorality*, on the basis that morality does not count in the conduct of state affairs (Ekeh, 1985: 20-21). The result is that, as the same actors operate in the two publics, the state apparatus is employed to restrain the primordial public, thereby making corruption, nepotism and ethnicity to mention a few, hallmarks of the civic public. This weakens the ability of the operators of the state to translate their "power" into a moral right to claim obedience to rules and regulations (Osaghae, 1988).

So it is that even as the state dominates society, a fact which leads one to expect that it is very strong especially as it dominates and controls the economy, it is hamstrung by the distorted growth of the public realm which renders it incapable (morally) of converting power into a right. It is therefore rendered too soft to enforce its will. This has grave consequences for the legitimacy of the operators of the state apparatus, to which I now turn.

The Legitimacy Crisis

This is the major consequence of the distortions in the public realm which weaken the state apparatus. As Ekeh 1985:25 puts it "It is essentially *endemic* to the system of African statehood and arises mainly from the poverty of the moral linkages binding state operations with societal injunctions". If legitimacy is defined as the belief in the moral right of government to be obeyed, do amoral operators of the state who perceive it as one huge money-bag to be pillaged by all comers who are opportuned to do so, have a moral

right to demand obedience from the citizens?[11]. Although the crisis manifests largely in moral terms, it is a historically long-drawn one which owes its origins to the nature of the colonial state and the ineptitude of the rulers in the post-colonial state.

The colonial state, being essentially a law and order state as was consistent with the colonial enterprise, was built on the monopoly of the instruments, but not the legitimate use, of *force* and *violence*. The nationalist vanguard cashed on this illegitimacy to vandalise the colonial state, painting it as an alien and enemy institution to be conquered for the good of the people. In some cases, they even encouraged the natives not to pay taxes. By the time independence came, this conception of the state - as one to be exploited to further partisan interest had become so firmly established that the leaders themselves found it difficult to convince citizens that the state was deserving of obedience. Two other factors contributed to worsen this situation. First, the legal-rational basis of legitimacy which the colonial state bequeathed-constitutionalism, rule of law, political parties, elections, etc. - were not sufficiently grounded to stand the test of time. Not surprisingly, succession to power became disorderly and volatile. Second, perceiving traditional rulers as competitors for power, the post-colonial *civil bourgeoisie* with their control of the instrument of power, dislodged the traditional basis of legitimacy indigenous to Africa[12], although a few of them found it expedient to have chieftaincy titles. The combination of these factors produced a *legitimacy vacuum* in the post-colonial state and, unable to devise any effective alternative, the rulers fell back on the violent and forceful character of the state which they inherited from the colonial state.

A few rulers in the post-colonial state nevertheless tried very hard to build solid legitimacy bases, using the instruments of charisma and the one-party state. Nkrumah, Kenyatta, Obote, Toure, to mention a few indeed adopted these strategies. But the force of the primordial public proved so overwhelming in many instances that not even the arguments of national integration, nation-building or national unity proved enough to stem the erosion of the credibility of these leaders. They proved incapable of developing their states as they promised and it did not take too long for the people to recognize that personality cults were the ends of leadership. They created everywhere a leviathan, but one which was too large for them to control and put to the betterment of the citizens. Gradually, disenchantment and frustration set in... and the end of the government, any government, was only a matter of time.

11 As the followers also see their leaders in the same light, the support-base for government tends to be quite fragile indeed.

12 In most parts of Africa today, traditional rulers have either been effectively conscripted as client-members of the ruling classes or they have been relegated out of the power matrix and given amorphous roles in state administration.

In many cases, the military took over, but the problem of moral credibility enough to compel obedience remained. This explains the problem of disorderly succession to power which is at the heart of the legitimacy crisis, as well as the retention of the forceful and violent character of the colonial state. Legitimacy, let it be said, is not a moral issue in Africa; it is a matter of translating power (better through the machine guns) into right. But would this last? This is the nature of the legitimacy crisis in Africa.

Abject poverty

When we turn from the state and its structures to look at the peoples over whom state power is exercised, we find the worst face of the African predicament: the mass of the people are ignorant, poor, hungry, malnourished and unhealthy, and barely manage to eke out a living. Indeed, man's basic needs - food, clothing and shelter - are so acutely short in supply that one hesitates to use the concept of well-being as a directive principle of state policy in Africa. Side by side with this mass squalor, we find droplets of affluence of a few who are either major operators of the state apparatus (the so-called national bourgeoisie), or clients of patrons in government or, if they are in the private sector, local representatives, agents and salesmen of multi-national corporations. Here again, lies another debilitating paradox of the African society.

Without doubt, the base level at which the majority of the peoples live their daily lives, and the necessity of overcoming it, lay a heavy stress on the capacity of governments to perform. Unfortunately, governments have proved mostly incapable of liberating the people from their sufferings. The major reason for this lies in the wrong perception of governments that industrial-based development which is externally-induced will solve all the problems. This perception is wrong because as it is tied to foreign capitalist impulses, it misses the point that development is man-centred. As one author has put it:

> ... *development is not just a statistical concept of inputs and outputs, nor a mechanical process which has only to be put in motion. It is a matter of organic growth-in essence, the process of allowing and encouraging people to meet their own aspirations (Sen, 1976: 68).*

If development has meant anything in Africa, it is that the state has precisely refused to allow the people to meet their aspirations. The people have been led into believing that the task of even developing themselves is a monopoly of the government. The inability of government to make good this belief has not only led to greater frustration but also, to an erosion of the credibility of government and this, in turn, further compounds the legitimacy crisis. I shall have more to say on this when I consider the form and character of social mobilization in Africa.

What are the Implications of these Characteristics for Social mobilization?

Undoubtedly, the foregoing characteristics of the state and society in Africa have serious implications for, and effects on, social mobilization. Many of these would have been obvious, but they still need to be clearly spelt out. They include:

1 - the state, being dominant over society, is the major agent of socio-political engineering in Africa. Agents like political parties, interest groups and other non-statist institutions which are quite popular in the West, have little relevance except when they mobilize in the name of the state;

2 - because of the dependent character of the state, meaningful social mobilization can only be undertaken if the state apparatus itself undergoes fundamental changes. The minimum requirement here is that the state minimises its dependence on the world capitalist system and emphasizes autochthonous changes. If this does not happen, mobilization merely amounts to doing more of the same thing probably in different ways. The changes I refer to here, I should emphasize, are not a mere "change of guards", but those of a more fundamental nature, especially in the normative order within which the state exists;

3 - mobilization may not necessarily require that peoples basic needs - of food and freedom from ignorance and disease - are completely met, but it is doubtful if a frustrated citizenry that has little or no hope of a better life can be reasonably mobilized. It follows then that social mobilization should aim first at liberating the people from hunger, disease and ignorance, if not poverty;

4 - social mobilization presents one way of resolving the legitimacy crisis. This would require, not force or a reign of terror, but making the people themselves a part of the solution, of the national will, to end the myriad of problems which face the post-colonial state. Painting a picture of affluence which, as the international market of primary products dictates, can only be ephemeral amounts to deceiving the people. They can only be mobilized to contribute their inputs to the solutions if they are aware of the problems;

5 - the problem of disorderly succession to power reduces the scope for long-term mobilization. What we find is marked discontinuity as successor regimes often try to discredit the efforts of the previous regime. Since mobilization, in the face of pervasive illiteracy and poverty, must be long-drawn and sustained to have any effects, it must involve a realization that the only way to prevent coups or, before them, dissatisfaction and calls for action (military intervention) is for the operators of the state to be people-centred, committed and exemplary in their actions and policies.

The Form and Character of Social mobilization in African States

The key to explaining the form and character of social mobilization in Africa, as I have pointed out, lies in the character of the state and its relations with society. Although the goals of mobilization tend to be generally poorly articulated, two prevalent goals (and, therefore, types) of mobilization can be identified in Africa, namely, development mobilization and legitimation mobilization. From my analysis of the character of the state and society in the previous section, it is not surprising that these are the two major forms of social mobilization. The dependent character of the state and the low level of material well-being of the vast majority of the people, necessitate mobilization for development, while the legitimacy crisis necessitates legitimation mobilization. Before I proceed to examine the two forms of mobilization, I should emphasize that they are closely related, in fact, mutually reinforcing, because it is believed that the success of one will aid that of the other.

1./ Development mobilization

If any ideology could be said to be prevalent in Africa, it is that of development defined here mainly in economic terms, as involving technological revolution and industrialisation. In fact, development means attempting to close the gap between the African states and their developed counterparts in Europe and America. With technological growth and industrialization, it is believed, the other concomitant indices of development-urbanisation, higher literacy and per capita income in short, a better life, civic culture, and the military industrial complex, to mention only a few - will follow. These goals of development mobilization are easily discernible from Karl Deutsch's conception of social mobilization which, as we saw earlier, entails societal growth from traditionality (underdevelopment) to modernity (development).

Yet popular, if not religiously upheld, as the creed of development in African states, the attainment of this much desired goal has proved elusive. The reason for this is not really far-fetched. It is that most African leaders have not *meaningfully* sought to involve or mobilize the people towards this end. The few attempts that can be pointed to in this direction (Cf. The Arusha Declaration in Tanzania, The Common Man's Charter in Uganda, and Sekou Toure's l'Afrique et la Révolution) have not been too successful in part because they were informed by a morbid ideology derived from African pre-colonial social formations[13]. At best, the closest these attempts have made to *meaningfully* mobilize the people is to emphasize the need for them to be self-reliant, without actually creating the conditions conducive for this.

13 In particular, there is the ideology of African socialism which aims at reorganising the 'modern' society according to the communaucratic principle of the pre-colonial African society.

This is not what is required. What is required, Nnoli (1981: 244) argues:

> *is a development policy which includes the satisfaction of the needs and demands of each and every citizen for a minimum of biologically and socially reasonable standards of nutrition, health, clothing, housing, employment, education, entertainment, and effective participation in national activities - to which he should be entitled as a matter of social rights. Without such a social policy, the vast majority of the population will remain psychologically unwilling and physically unable to maximize their potential capacity for development.*

In general, development strategies in Africa have not been people centred. Instead, the state and its operators have assumed almost total responsibility, and the result is that even where "people-centred" development is pursued, it ends at indigenisation and distorted nationalization of the economy which clearly favour members of the privileged classes and increase their collaborations with international capitalists. Worse still, given the dependent character of the state, the prevalent development strategies (mainly variants of transfer of technology and import substitution industrialisation), have predictably been outward-looking, externally oriented and dependent for their successes, on the goodwill of the developed capitalist centres and institutions which give sundry aids, and on the fortunes of their primary produce in the world market. Largely because the people were not mobilized for a long time to feel and be a part of the African predicament, economic boom periods usually created unrealistic hopes of better life and arrival in the promised land. At such periods - as happened in the era of cocoa boom in Ghana and the era of the oil boom in Nigeria - the leaders greatly fuelled this illusionary sense of "arrival".

The cataclysm in the world economy in the eighties, attended as it is by depression in the developed countries themselves (even the USA has had to engage in some form of structural adjustment) and an unparalleled downturn in the prices of primary products, many of which are increasingly becoming only marginally relevant, what with the development of alternative raw materials by the developed countries, has greatly worsened the African predicament. The illusion of arrival has thus been unveiled and for once, African leaders have finally risen to the challenge and the worsening conditions of living which it forbodes, by collectively deciding to shift emphasis away from externally-oriented and dependent strategies of development to inward looking and meaningful self-reliant strategies. To be sure, the often repeated

argument of 'neo-colonialism' being responsible for the African predicament remains[14], but now, "the people have their fate in their own hands and if they cannot be persuaded towards a better future, they might have to be compelled" (Minoque and Molloy, 1974:9).

The mainstay of this alternative development strategy is the emphasis on the input of the people who, it has finally dawned on the leaders, are the main object and agents of development. They have to be mobilized towards this goal. As general Ibrahima Babangida, the Nigerian President put it in his 1986 budget speech:

> *(We are) conscious of the reality that all the problems of underdevelopment cannot be solved at once. We must therefore recognize that the foundation of true development lies in the human labour of our farmers and workers. That labour will therefore be properly mobilized so that the nation's creative energies are maximally utilized. There is need for systematic mobilization of farmers, workers and youths for production community governance, and widespread national consciousness (Babangida, 1986).*

So, it has taken externally induced economic recession for African leaders to re-examine their development strategies. Knowing the disastrous effects worsening material conditions and the necessary austerity measures would have for their credibility and support from the people, they have spared no effort to ensure that the people are aware of their economic woes, of their under development and of the role they can play to overcome this predicament. In one word, people are being told that government alone cannot take responsibility for development; it is a *common good* of all, and requires the *partnership* of the rulers and the ruled. This is the essence of development mobilization which involves the setting out of new objectives in phrases which accord more with social reality and which are generally more pragmatic than idealistic. Nigeria's 'Mass mobilization for economic recovery, self-reliance and social justice" (MAMSER), comparable to the 'Common Man's Charter' in Uganda in the sixties is a case in point.

It remains to be seen just for how long this people-centred phase of development will last. If previous experiences are anything to go by, it is likely to end once the recession ends[15], and the leaders feel comfortable enough to

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14 Since independence, African leaders have habitually concealed their own failures by alluding to the forces of "neo-colonialism" and "neo-imperialism as the major causes of Africa's problems.

15 To take a Nigerian example, 'Operation Feed the Nation' was launched in 1976 to mobilize farmers and workers to produce enough food to feed the nation, at a time when economic depression had set in. By 1979, the mobilization had all but fizzled out.

reckon only with state expenditures on the people, rather than the peoples' input. If this becomes the case, then the essence of mobilization for development would be negated. It may very well be the case that if periods of recession do not exist, development strategies will be pursued without the people. At least, this is one conclusion that can be reached from what I have said so far. This being so, it is easy to see that mobilization for development during periods of recession especially is meant to complement mobilization for support (legitimacy) for the rulers. Just how this is so will become clear as I examine legitimization mobilization.

2./ Legitimization mobilization

In examining the character of the state in Africa, I emphasized that the state has weak legitimacy structures. This is the greatest problem faced by the post-colonial state, and most policies pursued by African leaders have, more or less, aimed at solving it. In this regard, the social mobilization strategy has been found to be particularly useful and the various forms this has taken-social, economic, political - have been geared towards strengthening the legitimacy structures.

Within the African context, legitimization mobilization may be defined as the process of infusing in people a supportive political culture which emphasizes "rationality" (as Weber, (1977) conceives of "discipline"), loyalty and national commitment. Alfred Stephan (1978) has provided a useful framework for analyzing the mobilization strategies employed by the "strategic elites" in third world states to overcome the legitimacy crisis. These take the form of installation of new patterns of support which produce one or more of three possibilities. First there is the installation of new state structures to achieve what Antonio Gramsci would term "hegemonic" acceptance in civil society. This pattern usually results from mobilization aimed at increasing loyalty to the nation, or what Nettl (1967: 27ff) calls "Stalactite" mobilization which, as distinct from "stalagmite" mobilization, is "intended to provide a basis of structural support in terms of commitment and orientation on the part of those mobilized. It also seeks to countermobilise, where applicable, against established or nascent cleavage mobilization based on regions, tribes, ethnic communities, religions, etc.". Stalagmite mobilization on the other hand, "represents cleavage-based mobilization against or towards an existing authority, and is more typical of the Western situation".

Second, there is the installation of new structures in which the civil society is conditioned to obedience only because of the overwhelming power of the state. Here, the people are coerced to support the regime and are not sufficiently mobilized to recognize the gains of national unity. Finally, there may be failure of installation of new patterns due to the effective resistance within civil society to the hegemony of the state. This often occurs when the new patterns do not align with the social realities or when the mobilizing regime is overthrown.

From the patterns of legitimization mobilization identified by Stephan, it is clear that the end of this mobilization is the installation of state hegemony. Given the violent character of the state in Africa, especially the legitimacy vacuum which usually attends it, it is not surprising that force is heavily relied upon to install state hegemony. But, at the same time the leaders realize that even the highest dosage of force cannot successfully install support if it is not complemented by a commitment on their part to improve the material well-being of their peoples. In fact, where the leaders succeed in doing the latter, support is most likely to be more enduring and national loyalty, less cosmetic. It is for this reason that governments are increasingly emphasizing people-centred development strategies. This is expected to achieve two results. First, by making the people aware of the intricacies of under-development and of the limited alternatives open to government, government hopes to elicit greater sympathy and support. Second, by emphasizing the role of the people in the development process, government hopes to deflect demands on it and transfer the responsibility for failure to develop from itself alone to the people (who have their fate in their own hands) mainly. This tendency is mostly true of periods of economic recession as I pointed out earlier on but is not restricted to them. The fact that mobilization programmes often increase during such periods is however an indication that development mobilization is, in reality, a complement to letigimisation mobilization. In a sense, as I have argued, all forms of social mobilization in Africa can be said to be directly aimed at strengthening the weak legitimacy structures of the state. This explains why they are always closely controlled and hinge on what *governments can do for the people* rather than *what the people themselves can do*. The general feeling is that, for the present, African states cannot afford the luxury of any mobilization other than that initiated and executed by the state. If this point is well taken, then the character and direction of social mobilization in Africa is easy to understand.

A Word on the Mode of Social mobilization

Given the centrality of the state in social mobilization in Africa and the fact that mobilization is mainly intended to strengthen the legitimacy structures of the state, the strategies of mobilization may be examined within the framework of "authoritarian" mobilization in which the regime is assumed to be authoritarian to the extent that it employs coercive means to strengthen its support base. Depending on the nature of the authoritarian regime, three mobilization strategies can be identified (Davis, 1983: 422-448). First, exclusionary authoritarian regimes typically seek to repress all forms of mobilization and eliminate all opportunities for mobilization by legal and extra-legal means. This tends to be generally true of dictatorship-prone military regimes which view all forms of mobilization with suspicion.

Second, inclusionary authoritarian regimes permit mass mobilization, but seek to contain it through the party or military machinery and control of

interest associations through corporatist means. This is arguably the commonest form of mobilization in Africa, especially in ideologised ones as in Nkrumah's Ghana, Eyadema's Togo, post-Sellaise's Ethiopia, Buhari's (and to a large extent Babangida's) Nigeria. The need to contain the mobilization process underlies the emphasis on mobilizing people primarily to support the regime. Finally, decentralized mobilisational authoritarian regimes seek to deflect mobilization away from the making of demands upon central government elites by providing opportunities for relatively autonomous mobilization at the grassroots level. Most regimes which embark on mobilization in Africa are reluctant to pursue mobilization this way for reasons which I have already identified. The closest they ever get to this variant of "stalactite" mobilization is mobilization at periods of economic depression, but even this is closely controlled so that it does not engender the creation of opposition centres.

Within the authoritarian framework of mobilization processes in Africa, very little room exists for voluntary mobilization. This could be said to be inevitable, considering the widespread illiteracy of the vast masses of people, a fact often used by the leaders to justify the emphasis on coerced mobilization, what government does on the people rather than what they do for themselves.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to explain the form and character of social mobilization in Africa. In doing so, I have not focussed on particular cases of mobilization but rather, on the nature of the predicaments which the state and society face in Africa, and which alone can explain the authoritarian framework within which mobilization is undertaken. I have argued that no matter the terms in which mobilization is couched, it is mainly aimed at strengthening the support base of regimes which embark on it. Largely because of this, social mobilization tends to be intermittent for the most part, as the downfall of one regime marks the end of a phase of mobilization and the beginning of another by the successor-regime. This is the major problem which, in part, explains the failure of well articulated and managed mobilization processes to make enduring impacts on the people. In Nigeria for example, since 1980, at least three forms of social mobilization have been initiated. First, there was the "ethical revolution" which terminated with the overthrow of the Second Republic by the military. Next, there was the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) under General Mohammed Buhari (1983-1985) and finally, today, there is the Mass Movement for Economic Recovery, self-reliance and Social Justice (MAMSER). The problem with this is that where similar goals of mobilization are identified, as they certainly have been, new values and orientations are easily lost and forgotten as one regime is replaced by another. Meaningful and enduring social mobilization it seems, requires regime stability, and this point should be emphasized in the

African case.

Without doubt, social mobilization presents a useful tool for overcoming the legitimacy crisis and the development crisis, but it can only be expected to do so if, in addition to being long-drawn and relatively enduring, it is not treated as an expedient only in times of economic depression and other emergencies. The implication of this is that social mobilization must be directed beyond the legitimizing goals, to be really society - and people-based in the sense that both the regime and the people develop common goals, hopes and aspirations. This is the challenge of social mobilization in Africa.

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