

Institutional radicalization, the state, and the development process in Africa

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The concept of “institutional radicalization” or “the changing of institutions from their roots” is put forward as critical for understanding the manner in which civil societies in most African countries have been grappling with the challenges of development. Given the well embedded precapitalist social formation in most African countries, various institutions have been radicalized around such critical identities as age, gender, land, occupation, credit, community, and rituals of solidarity to promote development. However, until the state intervenes to legitimize these initiatives of civil societies, their full impact on the development process is bound to be moot. The enormous tasks entailed in such legitimization through identifying, registering, realigning, providing incentives, directing, and monitoring these radicalized institutions remain critical and imperative for African countries if they are to accelerate and deepen the extent of their integration into the global free market economy and democratic governance.

One of the most intriguing features of the development scene in sub-Saharan Africa in the second half of the 20th century has been the collapse of virtually all of the national economies irrespective of the ideological posture of their governments, the degree of emphasis put on economic planning, or the commitment to rigorous policy implementation. All over the subcontinent, the period witnessed a progressive decline in economic performance such that, by the turn of the century, widespread deprivation had become pervasive, and poverty was the overarching problem of national development.

Various reasons have been adduced for how the continent quickly slid into this parlous situation. There have been a technocratic set of reasons, which suggest that the situation has all been the product of poor planning or poor policy implementation capacity. These reasons have been suggested in spite of the fact that the 1960s and 1970s were the period of rigorous central planning whether of the socialist or the mixed economy type. Indeed, most African countries hired teams of foreign experts to help appraise and plan their economies on a medium-term basis. Leadership weaknesses have also been given as reasons for the failure. The caliber of African leaders, their autocratic tendencies, and their less than enthusiastic concern for the discipline of the plan or for effective administration have been pointed out. The situation here had not been helped by the penchant for one-party rule or for military dictators to take over the governance of one African country after the other. More recently, pervasive corruption along with lack of transparency and accountability in governance has been put down as a major factor in the failure of African economies to play host to those growth-inducing forces that have transformed the situation in a number of southeast Asian countries.

However, the reasons given by the World Bank for poor performance all over the continent deserves special attention. According to the World Bank (1),

The postindependence development efforts failed because the strategy was misconceived. Governments made a dash for “modernization”, *copying*, but not *adapting*, Western models. The result was poorly de-

signed public investments in industry; too little attention to peasant agriculture; too much intervention in areas in which the State lacked managerial, technical, and entrepreneurial skills; and too little effort to foster grassroots development. This top-down approach demotivated ordinary people, whose energies most needed to be mobilized in the development effort. . . .

Posing the Question. The questions to ask, therefore, are as follows. What were the “Western models” that African countries should have been “adapting” rather than just “copying?” What forms should such adaptations have taken? What different strategies should these adaptations have necessitated? How would such strategies have served to mobilize “ordinary people” behind the development effort rather than “demotivating” them? If, as Cairncross (2) observed, “the key to development lies in men’s minds, in the institutions in which their thinking finds expression and in the play of opportunity on ideas and institutions,” other questions must also be posed. These include asking in which institutions does the thinking of the ordinary man in sub-Saharan Africa find expression? What opportunity has had the privilege of playing on these institutions and on ideas of the type that are likely to foster and promote national development?

In a preliminary and general way, it can be argued that the Western models to which African countries were aspiring were those projected to them by their former colonial masters, notably Britain, France, Portugal, and Spain. These countries have had the opportunities to impact on African institutions and ideas during the period of colonial subjugation when they attempted to integrate the economies of different African societies into the global capitalist economy. Those years of colonial rule witnessed growth but not development in the economies of these colonial territories. In some instances, this growth was the product of introduced crops such as cocoa, coffee, tea, oil palm, cotton, sisal, and rubber, which the peasants were encouraged to add to their repertoire of crops or which European settlers or colonial commercial agencies cultivated as plantation crops. In other instances, growth was largely due to extractive minerals for which colonial companies brought massive investments in machinery and equipment into the countries. In very few cases was the colonial economy based on manufacturing. To evacuate all of these surpluses, the colonial authorities invested heavily in transportational infrastructure, notably the railway and later a rudimentary road system. They also instituted an administrative and judicial system to ensure that economic production could be undertaken everywhere in peace and under some semblance of law and order.

However, it was the postindependence era that revealed the weaknesses and fragility of this colonial economic system. No doubt, the system could bear the vagaries of the international commodity market, because the economic well being and social welfare of the colonial population were only of marginal concern to

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the colonial powers. However, to the extent that these vagaries began to affect negatively the motivation and output of peasant producers, they could not be totally ignored; hence, marketing boards were instituted in most African territories in the closing years of colonial domination. However, because the colonial economy was largely an extractive economy, skimming off surpluses, its health depended very much on the world prices for export commodities. When these were high, the economy flourished; when they fell, the economy plummeted into depression. The colonial administration, other than making African economies supply some of the needs of the global capitalist production through such extractions, did not engage in any real structural transformation of the type that could have adapted these economies to a capitalist system of production or enabled them to sustain economic growth and development through thick and thin.

On the other hand, North (4) stated that many Third World countries today, as well as much of world's economic history, is a function of institutional frameworks that

overwhelmingly favor activities that promote redistributive rather than productive activity, that create monopolies rather than competitive conditions, and that restrict opportunities rather than expand them. . . . The organizations that develop in this institutional framework will become more efficient—but more efficient at making the society even more unproductive and the basic institutional structure even less conducive to productive activity. . . .

In short, conditions under such institutional frameworks result in redistribution, not rising productivity. Although, on the surface, the above characterizations have some validity in explaining the low-level development of most African countries, they provoke equally challenging questions. If low-level development had been the norm for much of world's economic history, how have some societies escaped from its thrall? How have these societies changed from activities that favor redistribution to those that promote increased productivity? How did the change occur? What lessons can countries such as those of sub-Saharan Africa learn from the experience of such countries?

Three propositions are central to the thrust of this article. The first is that, at different periods in the history of a society, an institutional framework is established appropriate to the prevailing societal objective and preoccupation. The second proposition is that when this objective and preoccupation change to favor wealth creation, increasing productivity, and development (as distinct from simple quantitative growth), the major institutional framework of the society is usually transformed from within (or from its roots, hence "radicalization") such that the majority of the population concerned can still relate to the "transformed" institutional structure. The third proposition is that the state is crucial to such a transformation especially in its role as institutional designer, regulator, and sustainer.

The remaining portion of this article is divided into five parts. The first reviews the concept of "institution" and the increasing understanding of its role in the development process. The second describes the precapitalist social formations over much of Africa and examines the societal objective and preoccupation that determined the nature of the institutions that came to predominate over most of the continent. The third discusses the continuing attempts by civil societies and the populace in the colonial and postcolonial periods to radicalize these institutions and the extent of their success, and the fourth draws on the lessons of international experience to emphasize the role of the state in the radicalization process. A fifth and concluding section examines the developmental implications of institutional radicalization in an age of increasing globalization.

Institutions, Institutional Radicalization, and the Development Process. Since the last quarter of the last century, an impressive literature has emerged on the role of institutions in the development process. This literature spans virtually all of the fields of the social sciences including law and is providing an integrating focal point for reevaluating our understanding of the development process. Within economics, for instance, significant differences have been identified between the old institutional literature of the early 20th century associated with the names of Veblen (5) and Commons (6) and the present new interest deriving from the work of economic historians such as Ronald Coase (7, 8), Oliver Williamson (9), and Douglass North (4). The new institutional approach enables greater attention to be placed on transaction and information costs, on organizations, and on the role of the state in the development process. Consequently, in constructing a theory of institutions, North (4) indicated that he has had to draw from the theory of human behavior, the theory of transaction costs, and the theory of production.

On the basis of this eclectic literature, institutions are defined as "rules, enforcement characteristics of rules, and norms of behavior that structure repeated human interaction" (10). Put so blandly, this definition enables us to appreciate that just as one can talk of the family as an institution, one can also talk of a system of property rights as an institution. Similarly, one can recognize a hierarchy of such institutions going from the constitution of a country, to its statute and common laws, to specific bylaws, and finally to individual contracts and relationships. The role of these institutions in every case is to reduce uncertainty in human interaction through helping to form expectations that each person can reasonably hold in dealing with others.

The "formal rules" element of institutions thus refers to prescriptions that are commonly known and used by members of a given society to order repetitive, interdependent relations and to determine which actions are required, prohibited, or permitted (11). Formal rules include political (and judicial) rules, economic rules, social rules, contracts, and so on. Political rules, for instance, relate to the hierarchical organization of decision making in a country and the explicit characteristics of the operation of each level of the governance system. Economic rules, on the other hand, relate to property rights or the bundle of rights over the use of a given property or the income derived from it as well as the right to exchange or alienate the property. All of these rules are designed to facilitate social transactions and exchanges and resolve the problems of coordination and cooperation that are central to the development process.

The enforcement characteristics of rules refer to whether the rules are "voluntarily" accepted through custom or tradition or need to be enforced and policed through a coercive incentive system or an external authority through agents such as the police, judges, and other law enforcement organizations. Because the interests of the principals and the enforcement agents are not always identical, enforcement is typically imperfect. Nonetheless, with increasing specialization and division of labor, institutional structures for enforcement have had to be developed to enable individuals to engage in complex relationships with others far removed from their personal knowledge and extending over long periods of time. Such complexity in societal interactions necessitates the presence of a third party, usually the state, with its tremendous coercive capacity to oversee and legitimize an exchange or enforce contractual relations.

Formal rules and their imperfect enforcement characteristics are, however, not the complete story and are, therefore, not a sufficient condition for determining social outcomes. For such a determination to happen, we have to be aware of norms of behavior. Norms are informal constraints on behavior that are in part derivative of formal rules. They are codes of conduct, taboos, and standards of behavior that are informed by individual perceptions and evaluation of their environment. These

perceptions are shaped and molded by organized ideologies such as religious, social, and political values. Others are the product of experience resulting in the reaffirmation or rejection of earlier norms. Nonetheless, because they are not legal rules, norms of behavior are enforced by the attitudes and behavior of others in the society. Although some norms or informal constraints are externally enforced, others like honesty and integrity are internally enforced codes of conduct. For this reason, they provide the most important sources of stability in human interaction. And because they are extensions, elaborations, and qualifications of formal rules, these informal constraints have become integral part of habitual behavior of individuals and exhibit tenacious survival ability in societal relations.

In trying to understand how institutions function, we must also distinguish between institutions and organizations. The former provides the framework or “the rules of the game,” whereas the latter defines the operators or “players” of the game within the framework. Thus, organizations include political bodies such as political parties, the legislature, the local government, and a parastatal authority; economic bodies such as firms, cooperatives, and farming enterprises; and social bodies such as clubs, churches, mosques, and schools. Each of these organizations comprises groups of individuals bound by some common purpose to achieve certain objective. The manner in which they come into existence and develop is fundamentally influenced by the institutional framework within which they operate.

There are other aspects of the theory of institutions that are not of immediate relevance to the thrust of this article. The issues of transaction costs and of collective action in the way institutions function have received tremendous attention in the literature but are not of immediate concern. What is of concern here are the following questions. How do institutions change? Do these changes occur through an evolutionary or revolutionary process? Can change be induced, in which case would it have features of revolutionary change? North (4) argues that institutional change typically consists of marginal adjustments to the complex of rules, norms, and enforcement that make up the institution. He, however, recognizes discontinuous change or radical change in the formal rules that usually occurs as a result of conquest or revolution. I argue that what happened over most of Africa during the colonial era starting from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century was not just a conquest or subjugation of African peoples to various imperial powers. It was truly the initiation of a revolution in the mode of production and social organization whose logical conclusion was too threatening to the colonial venture of these powers for them to contemplate or accept. Hence, everywhere on the continent, the revolution was either aborted or left uncompleted.

In trying to complete the revolution, I argue that we can learn a lot from a better understanding of the nature of discontinuous or revolutionary institutional change. In this connection, we must recognize the three constitutive elements of any institution: its formal rules, its enforcement characteristic, and its informal constraints. Because rules are generally devised with their compliance (or enforcement) costs in mind, we can reduce the critical elements in institutional change to two. Although formal rules may change overnight as a result of political or judicial decisions, informal constraints are much more impervious to deliberate policies. Because they are usually cultural in form and essence, informal constraints not only connect the past with the present and future but also provide a key to explaining the path of historical change. Or, as North (4) puts it,

Although a wholesale change in formal rules may take place, at the same time there will be many informal constraints that have great survival tenacity because they still resolve basic exchange problems among the participants, be they social, political or economic. The result over time tends to be a re-structuring of the overall

constraints—in both directions—to produce a new equilibrium that is far less revolutionary. . . .

Consequently, discontinuous (or revolutionary) changes are never completely discontinuous as a result of the imbedded nature of informal constraints in societies.

It is to emphasize the importance of these imbedded informal constraints for the development process in Africa that the concept of institutional radicalization is being introduced. Institutional radicalization refers to a process of fostering institutional change through changing the formal rules in the context of accepted imbedded informal constraints. The emphasis here is to preserve the roots (radix) or the essence of the institution while changing its purpose or objective. The key is to initiate changes that preserve the obvious form of an existing institution while radically transforming its substance. Institutional radicalization thus entails changes that do not immediately abolish and replace existing norms of behavior but that circumscribe them in a manner to make them more accommodative of new rules and enforcement characteristics of those rules. The rationale behind institutional radicalization resides in the problem of mobilizing a large mass of people behind a new complex of ideas, concepts, values, and standards that are critical for promoting and sustaining a robust development process. It seeks to achieve considerable economies of effort through implanting new rules within recognized indigenous institutions whose informal constraints can be expected to nurture the acceptance of the new rules over the period of transforming the institution in the direction of modernity and new norms of behavior (12).

The Precapitalist Social Formations in Africa. In explicating this process and showing its relevance for a better appreciation of the developmental challenges in African countries, it is important to start by recognizing where these countries are coming from. At the time of the Berlin Conference of 1884, which heralded the era of European colonization of the continent, the mode of production over most of Africa was largely precapitalist. Societal progress had been disrupted during the preceding four centuries by the Arab and trans-Atlantic slave trade. The precapitalist economies of most of the countries were essentially peasant-based. Unlike elsewhere in the world, the feudal mode of organization was poorly developed except in a few areas such as in Uganda, Ethiopia, and part of northern Nigeria. The fundamental point to remember about the various colonial economies that the colonial powers tried to integrate into the global capitalist economy at the beginning of the 20th century was thus the fact that they were essentially prefeudal, peasant-based economies.

Nonetheless, Moore (13) observed that the road to modern society everywhere had been completed at the expense of the peasantry. In the industrialized world, other social classes had taken control of the instruments of state and used these to curtail the freedom of the peasants and to reform, “marginalize,” or “proletarianize” their claims to primordial societal assets especially of land and labor. In Africa, however, peasants have remained socially virtually independent not only by their positions as producers with direct access to land and the labor of their family members but also by their ability to secure their own reproduction without significant dependence on other social classes. It is this independence that has provoked the argument that there can be no serious understanding and resolution of the development crisis in Africa without a recognition of historical uniqueness of the African peasantry. According to Hyden (14),

Nowhere in the world have other social classes risen to power without making the many small and independent rural producers subordinate to their demands. . . . Africa is the only continent where the peasants have not yet been captured by other social classes. By being owners of their own means of production, the many small-holder

peasants in Africa have enjoyed a degree of independence from other social classes large enough to make them influence the course of events on the continent. . . .

Such a recognition of the fundamental peasant-based foundation of much of the economies of sub-Saharan Africa not only compels a better understanding of the basis of the prevailing developmental crisis of the continent but also enables a clearer appreciation of the nature of the institutional challenge for dealing with it. It underscores the necessity of examining whether the institutions in which the thinking of the majority of Africans finds expression (2) are compatible with the present aspirations of these elites and leaders for democratic governance and participation in a free market economy.

A first step in such an examination is to recognize the dominance and persistence of kinship relations as a major coordinating principle of societal life in most African countries even today. Kinship still determines for the majority their access to all of the critical factors of production, namely land, labor, capital, and entrepreneurship. Kinship governs access to productive land as well as to residential sites especially in the rural areas where the majority still live. It controls access to labor of family members, kinsmen, and women; whether in urban or rural areas, it facilitates access to capital and credit and determines what crafts or skills people can acquire or in which enterprises they can engage. Given this emphasis on kinship, it is no wonder that there is in most African countries no formal or organized market for each of these factors of production. Except in those areas where Europeans have settled in significant numbers, there are no effective markets even today for land and labor and, to some extent, for capital and entrepreneurship. Indeed, outside of these countries of eastern and southern Africa, the colonial institutions (or attempted institutions) of formal land registries or labor exchanges have since fallen into disuse. The result is that these production factors, critical for economic progress, have remained largely untransformed, uncapitalized, and outside the mainstream of economic aggregates in various African countries.

Kinship relationship as a coordinating principle is complemented by social values that have both ethical and philosophical aspects to them. On the ethical side, the values discount individual competitiveness and emphasize collective survival and cooperation. They ensure that no one is without access to the critical means of sustenance, notably land. This ensured access is fostered through an inheritance system (known as partible inheritance) whereby all of the children or sons of a man on his death have a share of his movable and immovable property. On the philosophical side, the values regard life as a passage in which the living are no more than a link between past and future generations. Consequently, with regard to societal resources such as land, the living are no more than trustees with rights only of beneficial use (or usufruct) but with no power to alienate the land from the ownership of the family or the community at large. This philosophy not to alienate land to nonkinsmen was also bound up with notions of allegiance to one's community in an era of frequent communal hostilities.

Within such a social formation, apart from the kinship principle, the need for community-wide coordination and cooperation as well as some degree of group competition gave rise to the emergence of various institutions. Because coordination, cooperation, and competition are essential for the survival and progress of the different polities, it is of interest to note that, in precolonial times, these institutions had evolved around the following basic identities: age, gender, land, occupation, credit, community organization, and rituals of solidarity.

With respect to age, one finds that in most African societies, successive cohorts within, say, a 3-year span are grouped together and regarded as age grades or age sets. Each age grade is given a special name that helps to define its position in the society relative to other age grades. Members of each age-grade are meant to know

one another fairly well, to choose leadership group from among their members, to meet to discuss issues of mutual or communal interest, and to be willing to help one another if the need arises. Ottenberg (15) notes that

in addition to the integrative and regulatory functions of systems of age groupings for a society as a whole—such as social training, defense and government—they also have internal functions for their members irrespective of their relation to outside groups. Among age mates or members of the same age set, there is usually a strong bond, and age sets serve in some respects as mutual aid societies for their members.

Gender is a fundamental identity for the division of labor in most African societies. The prerogatives of one gender to an economic activity, such as trading, growing certain crops, or dairy farming, are set by custom and reinforced by technology, prestige, and even by supernatural sanctions. Thus, in some African societies especially in West Africa, women play a critical role in marketing and have established quite formidable organizations to this end. Similarly, in some societies, especially those where women enjoy a substantial degree of economic independence, a parallel but complementary institution of governance for women has evolved over time.

Land tenure or the institution defining ownership, access to, and the use of land is perhaps one of the most critical institutions in African societies. The partible inheritance system and the absence of any major land-owning aristocracy over large parts of the subcontinent have led to the predominance of small, scattered, and often intermixed holdings owned by lineages or subunits of a lineage over which individuals can claim only a right of use rather than one of ownership.

Occupational associations, especially craft guilds, are found in many African societies. To some extent, these craft guilds operate as closed professions often with centralized controls and hierarchies of rank and grade usually involving apprentices, journeymen, and masters. Entry to them is often determined by kinship ties, although this rule is not often enforced rigorously. Masters accept economic and quasiparental responsibility in the training of apprentices and attempt to inculcate relevant moral codes in the discharge of the obligations of the guild to its clients and to the community.

Credit provisioning has also encouraged the forming of short-lived associations whose members come together to pool financial resources; credit is then offered to individual members in rotation or sometimes on the basis of need. Such rotational credit-provisioning arrangements generally operate on the basis of kinship or associational relation.

Most communities are usually organized territorially to facilitate locational coordination and cooperation. Among rural communities, such organization may be a function of kinship or age sets in which individual spatial segment is occupied by households of members of one or more lineages or kinship units. In those groups with an urban tradition, the towns are organized into quarters or wards, each of which is also an amalgamation of lineages. Usually, each of these locational subdivisions has a leader or chief who is responsible to the traditional head of the whole community for the peace, order, and environmental sanitation of his area.

Community rituals of solidarity need to be distinguished from personal, family, or lineage rituals in that their essence is to reaffirm community solidarity and identity. Such rituals tend to occur each year, usually at the beginning of the harvest season. They bring people home for their celebrations and thus serve to recreate and strengthen a sense of community.

Civil Society and the Radicalization of Institutions. The reaction of African societies to the colonial attempts to integrate their

economies into the global capitalist economy has been a mixture of resistance to these efforts of the colonial and postcolonial state and acquiescence and acceptance of the inevitability of these changes. The resistance can be perceived in the persistent alienation of the majority of Africans from the realm of state affairs, whereas their acceptance of the inevitability of change is manifest in their continued and instructive adaptations of their own institutions for mediating the demands of the capitalist economy. All over Africa, both in colonial and postcolonial times, one witnesses examples of how civil society changes the formal rules of critical institutions while preserving their informal constraints and their enforcement characteristics. A few examples from different countries in respect to the seven identities mentioned above will help underline how pervasive such institutional radicalization was and how it is still being undertaken by civil society all over the continent.

The institution of age grades has been radicalized and used in many African societies to cope with problems of mobilization and cooperation. In the city of Bonoua, Ivory Coast, the age grades make a complete list of their members each year. As a result, the traditional ruler's office has a level of information about the citizens that the Mayor's office cannot hope to match (16). Melinda Smale and Vernon Ruttan (17) also provide a very detailed description of how the traditional age-set associations, the *kombi-naam* of the Mossi of Burkina Faso, have been adapted to form the "*groupements naam*," a movement of youths dedicated to promoting the construction of contour dikes all over the country.

Gender organization in African societies is often seen in the context of the gender division of labor. In most of these societies, apart from their reproductive roles, women are seen as farmers, traders, and artisans. Because the segmented nature of activities in these their different roles, women are hardly conceived of as central to any major societal institutions. However, whenever opportunities do present themselves, such as among trading women in societies in Ghana and Nigeria, their ability to organize themselves, develop a hierarchy of authority, and insist on transparency and accountability of their officers has always been impressive. Indeed, the solidarity that then develops among them, often overspilling into different social spheres, led Staudt (18) to observe that "Africa is the world region with the most extensive female solidarity organizations."

The situation with respect to land is very instructive in showing not only the doggedness of civil society in radicalizing its institutions but also the tardiness or downright deliberate unwillingness of the colonial state to facilitate such changes especially when it clashes with vital colonial interests. In this connection, one must distinguish between rural and urban land. Colonial interests defined the city as essentially a European abode to which Africans were admitted on sufferance and, if possible, only temporarily. As a result, although with increasing mobility and the presence of migrants in cities seeking land on which to build residential accommodation, African societies were prepared to embrace a new regime of land alienation or sales; however, the colonial administration preferred to ignore the trend or, as in the case of the Gambia, to pass the Land (Provinces) Act (1946), specifying that land occupied by Africans was to be governed by customary tenure rules. In the Belgian colonial territories such as Zaire, Burundi, and Rwanda, Africans were deliberately prevented from holding freehold or leasehold titles registered under the Torrens Act; these titles were reserved only for Europeans (19). Instead, urban land was declared state land, ostensibly leased from the state. Leases were for 3-year periods, renewable twice for 2-year periods on the basis of a document invented for that purpose and known as *livret de logeur*. In French-speaking colonial territories such as Burkina Faso, Congo, and Mali, there was a similar contrivance known as *permis d'habitation*, and in British colonial territories such as in Tanzania Africans were simply offered a *certificate of rights* and confined to particular sections of the city (20).

Examples of institutional radicalization with respect to credit provisioning are replete on the continent. Haggblade (21) for instance, reports from Cameroon that an indigenous system of credit mobilization—a rotating fund for savings and credit—was on its way to becoming a modern banking institution. The system was so successful in mobilizing large deposits that the risk of default was a source of growing concern. Consequently, in 1975, the association proceeded to register as a formal bank—the *Banque Unie de Credit*—thus becoming the sixth bank in the country. The success story, however, turned sour 4 years later (22), because the government, which saw the new institution as simply another opportunity for rent-seeking or reaping where they have not sowed, insisted on appointing the managing director of the bank. Rather than give up its autonomy and capacity for enforcing accountability, the association decided to close the bank and revert to its previous "informal" status.

The traditional community organization, especially among societies that are urban, is one that has been of considerable interest for ensuring neighborhood security in recent times. In Nigeria, for instance, the long period of military rule had impaired the effectiveness of the police force to protect the lives and property of citizens. This impairment has enabled armed robbers, burglars, and other agents of the underworld of crime to harass the society almost with impunity. Several communities were thus forced to fall back on their traditional community organization, with each quarter or ward setting up its own "vigilante" groups to provide protection for its members especially at night. Some state governments have had to acknowledge the necessity of these new institutions and have passed covering legislation to empower neighborhoods to establish and operate vigilante groups alongside the police. Similarly, in the example already cited of the city of Bonoua, Ivory Coast, the quarter chieftaincies numbering over 33 exercised the function of surveillance over the population. This function enabled the chiefs to help stamp out in good time conflicts or activities that are considered illegal. This job of surveillance, according to Attahe and Ousmane (16), was shown in a concrete manner in 1985 when the city was the theater of repeated acts of robbery. The traditional ruler of the city, the Abouré, called together a large council of all of the group representatives to discuss the issue, after which a permanent urban surveillance committee was set up. The management of this organ was entrusted to the heads of the age groups who arranged guard duties. In this way, the population took the problem of their security in their hands before the central government saw fit to station a police brigade in the city.

Finally, the community ritual of solidarity and identity has been radicalized and provides the basis for the formation of "hometown voluntary associations" whose branches are found in different parts of a country and sometimes in foreign countries. Treager (23) observes, for instance, that the hometown, in Yoruba as elsewhere in Africa, is

essentially the birthplace of one's father, or where one's father's lineage is from and is a place of great social and cultural significance. [This] city or town of origin provides a web of connections, involving both obligation and opportunity; it is not simply a place with which one has emotional ties, or the place where one's family resides. . . . [Rather, it is] a place that those who are successful feel obliged to assist; as a Nigerian university lecturer said to me several years ago, "what else is development other than helping your hometown?" . . .

Hometown Voluntary Associations or *associations d'origine* as they are referred to in French-speaking African countries (24, 25) have been, in many cities, not only the agents of modernization but also the protectors of tradition. Honey and Okafor (26) observed, that "arguably, the most important tradition upheld by hometown associations is identity: people's core

identity with their place of origin, an identity even more important than ethnic and national identity.” It is for this purpose that these associations have been instrumental in providing many of these places with primary and secondary schools, health centers, roads, electricity, water supplies, churches and mosques, town halls, and so on. In this respect, the associations have been crucial in changing the attitude and world view of community members both at home and in their place of sojourn.

The Role of the State. Against the background of so much radicalization of traditional institutions by civil society itself, it is pertinent to ask what is the role of the state. In this connection, it is instructive to present one or two examples of institutional radicalization in present-day developed countries and to note the role of the state in their legitimization. With respect to the development of building societies as formal institutions for mass housing provision in 19th century Britain, for example, Carter and Lewis (27) observed that,

Before the 1800s artisans and craftsmen had clubbed together in friendly societies and self-help groups to alleviate hardship among the participants, and it was this spirit of co-operation and mutual aid which was harnessed in newly formed building societies to provide houses for their members. . . . From the 1770s onwards, building clubs and societies were set up by small numbers of workmen, usually not more than 20, with the specific aim of building houses for themselves. Each society was a savings club into which the members paid a regular subscription; the savings were then used to acquire building plots and to erect houses. In many societies the members themselves performed the building tasks, using materials purchased from the funds; otherwise, builders were used. Building proceeded as and when funds allowed, and members drew lots for the completed premises. When all members of a club had been provided with a house, and when all liabilities had been settled, the subscriptions ceased and the society was terminated. To safeguard the savings of their members, these terminating societies operated according to strict rules of conduct which were enforced by elected officers. When a member failed to meet his commitments his share was sold. . . .

The important point to make about these informal developments by people who, at the time, would have been regarded as operating in the context of “traditional” institutions is that the state, by 1836, began to introduce some rational (albeit imprecise) controls into the activities of these “friendly societies.” In that year, the government passed the Building Societies Act, which required that the constitutions or rules of operation of each friendly society must be approved by a certifying barrister (later given the title of Registrar of Friendly Societies). Soon afterward, some of these societies, under the inspiration of a James Henry James, an actuary, began gradually to change their formal rules so as to admit anybody who, in return for actuarially computed interest and perhaps bonus payments, could provide capital, which, in turn, the society could loan to borrowers who became mortgagors of the society (28). The registration and consequent legalization of these informal initiatives was thus pivotal for their development and final emergence as permanent building societies that have today become a major factor in the provision of housing to the masses of the population in Britain.

Another example, this time with respect to the radicalization of the institution of land, comes from France in the period of its transition to a full-blown capitalist society. This transition coincided with the period of its political revolution when the government was forced to sweep away all of the feudal dues to which the peasants were subjected, carve out the commons into

individual holdings, and in many areas consolidate scattered holdings. The final transition to capitalism with respect to land came in the context of having to establish a new system of taxation in place of the one that had just been destroyed. Because the formal rules of the old land tenure system was based on individual communes, institutional radicalization under Napoleon required that the new system be established on the same basis. Holtman (29) described the situation as follows,

In an attempt to make sure that these obligations were equitable, Napoleon Bonaparte. . . ordered the formation of a commission to determine how to allocate real estate taxes with the greatest possible equality. The Commission demanded a survey of ownership. Its recommendation was in keeping with the feeling of the Revolutionaries that only a cadaster, or general survey of the whole nation for appraisal purposes could make sure that everybody paid his fair share; the Convention had ordered a general cadaster in 1793 but, despite increasing evidence of the need for one, it was begun only after the Consulate. A survey of the communes, *treating each as a whole*, made no attempt to uncover assessment discrepancies within an individual commune. . . . [However], until the survey was completed in a commune, the value of a parcel of land was to be determined by acts of sale or by the amount charged for leases. . . .

Undertaking the cadastral survey of the country *commune by commune* was critical for the overall success of the program. Although Napoleon devoted 55 million francs to the cadaster ordered in 1807, it was far from complete at the end of his regime. By that time, a maximum of 6,000 communes of a total of 44,000 had been surveyed. The cadaster did not lead to truly equitable results until 1821 when the law began to deal with individuals in each commune rather than simply with equity for all communes in a canton. Indeed, as Knowles (30) observed,

the result of the reforms and the land distribution was such that the French peasant was freer and better off and fought valiantly for the Revolution. He submitted to conscription and formed the backbone of the finest army in Europe because he was fighting for the land that was now really his own and wherever he went he carried not merely the tricolour but his gospel of personal equality resulting in the freedom of the individual and the land. . . .

From the two examples above, it is clear that until the state formally recognizes, registers, and legitimizes the numerous initiatives of civil society, these cannot enter the mainstream of the development process. Of course, the process of recognition, registration, and legitimization of such initiatives provides the state tremendous opportunity for improving on the formal rules of the various institutions and enhancing the quality of their radicalization. Because the thinking of the majority of the populace of individual African countries is still enmeshed in precapitalist institutions, taking a hand in their radicalization could be a very significant way of strengthening the capacity of the state to govern effectively. According to Midgal (31), the strength of a state is a function of the social control it can exercise over its society. The higher the level of this social control, the more the state can mobilize all of its peoples, skim surpluses effectively from them to promote overall development, and gain tremendous strength in facing external foes.

It is, however, important to distinguish between a state legitimizing trends within civil society so as to attain greater social control and a state imposing structures of social control in the guise of promoting development. The term *Ujamaa* derives from the African tradition of living and working together, but this state-sponsored version in Tanzania envisaged the pooling

of existing owned land into large-scale socialist production farms ignoring problems of traditional property ownership and those of joint labor supply. Consequently, after 10 years of forced villagization, total agricultural output declined drastically because of the disruption and dislocation that accompanied it. As Middleton (32) observed, “a good number of people who were forcibly relocated have since moved back to their original homesteads. *Ujamaa* villages no longer exist. The policy turned out to be a strategy of redistribution without growth.”

Hyden (14) aptly concludes on this experiment, which seems like a state-sponsored effort at institutional radicalization, in these words,

Ujamaa as a radical strategy of development at the national level could not be reconciled with its objective of promoting development from within the peasant mode. As a result of this conflict, party and government officials were inclined to discard traditional peasant institutions in favour of the official stereotype of *ujamaa*. This did not make their task of convincing peasants to adopt *ujamaa* easier. The peasants believed they were already practising it, and in those areas where there existed a rich network of social institutions, generated within the peasant mode, the official version of *ujamaa* remained a strange concept. . . .

The challenge for African development, especially of seriously enhancing productive capacity in agriculture, is thus not simply a matter of state-sponsored structural imposition nor of improved technologies, appropriate price incentives, and realistic macroeconomic policies, important though these are. Rather, it is a matter of helping the farmers break out of the structural constraints of their production through legitimizing their various efforts at radicalizing the institutions of their peasant mode of production. As Turner *et al.* (33) observed,

the various strategies designed to involve the African farmers in the market have often failed to take into account distinctive African circumstances, such as community and kin obligations and the poor development of security mechanisms beyond them, gender responsibilities and constraints and resources allocation. . . . Land tenure. . . must be considered a key institutional factor in agricultural development in sub-Saharan Africa. . . .

Most African governments, however, shy away from confronting the particular challenge of land reform. Their responses have been either to treat the matter with benign indifference or to claim that they have “nationalized” all land instead of supporting and legitimizing trends already set in motion by their civil society. In spite of these responses, the problem will not go away. Land reform remains the Gordian knot of Africa’s agricultural and national development. It is central to bringing the land assets of the majority of the population into the mainstream of the free market economy and enabling them to use this asset effectively in their effort at wealth creation and their battle against poverty. Modern technological development in satellite photography, remote sensing, photogrammetry, and geographical information system management can all be called into service by the state in support of the trend, but it must be as part of a supportive rather a coercive strategy, for only in this way can the state achieve a higher degree of social control over development in civil society.

From this perspective, it is easy to appreciate not only why most African countries remain poorly developed but also why their governments remain weak. The dissonance between the institutions within which the thinking of the majority of the population continue to find expression and those that their postcolonial states impose on them in their quest for development is such that no sustainable achievements can be secured on this basis. The result, in many cases, is the emergence of the well known phenomenon of a dual system

whether one looks at the economy, the society, the politics, or the culture of each country. The developmental dilemma and behavioral tensions arising from this duality is well captured in Peter Ekeh’s (34) concept of the “two publics” to which the average African has to respond. The first is a state-created public or civic realm that tends to be amoral and where there is little transparency and accountability in transactions. The second is a historically developed “primordial” public of one’s community or ethnic group where trust and accountability are strongly articulated and valued. The result is an increasingly palpable distinction about the corruption and malfeasance that often surround the state realm and the relative probity and integrity that are found among those who choose to provide leadership in the informal or community realm. Removing or reducing this poignant dualism or parallelism especially in governance at the local level could be the beginning of a more people-centered, development-oriented administration in most African countries.

It is, of course, important also to appreciate that in most African countries even the state itself is an institution in the process of evolving. Soon after independence, it was assumed that development and unity required strong, highly centralized state and that local governing institutions were mainly of distracting significance. The state, thus, saw itself as “the one which designs institutions so that the center can dominate all other organizations. Whether they be markets, schools, universities, local or regional governments, trade unions or political parties, the center seeks control. Unity is confused with uniformity and all opinions contrary to those expressed by the state and its officials are regarded as threatening” (35). In such a situation, the state began to seem irrelevant to the major interests and aspirations of the citizen whose characteristic response to its dictates is one of resistance and alienation. Hindess and Hirst (36) describe the situation graphically as one in which “the state has no necessity; [but] appears suspended over society as a given without conditions of existence in society.”

In the closing decade of the 20th century, with the increasing failure of most of the highly centralized African states, whether under a one-party or military regime, the trend toward decentralization and democratization is gaining momentum and promises to compel a reappraisal of the role of the state in relation both to civil society and to development. The growing number of African countries where democratic elections have been conducted with relative success and a peaceful change of government has been effected is starting to raise hope that the continent may be at the beginning of a new era both with respect to its governance and its economic development. The challenge for African states is thus how to provide an overall structure and appropriate incentives to integrate the dual system of governance and economic operations in their countries through strengthening, harnessing, and directing all of the radicalized institutions with which their civil societies have been striving to adjust with the internal and external innovations and opportunities to which they have been exposed since colonial times.

Such a new agenda would require that African states embark on a vigorous process of documenting among their diverse ethnic groups critical institutions of cooperation, coordination, and mobilization; taking stock of changes going on within these various institutions; articulating the basis for registering them; engaging in creative policy design to align these institutions and make them compatible with the state’s own developmental objectives; providing necessary incentives to induce them toward these goals; and monitoring their further evolution especially with a view to strengthening their capacity for promoting greater development.

In all of this effort, it is of interest to note that beyond macroeconomic management, sectoral investment planning and the programming of foreign aid, grants, and loans, the state has the responsibility of realigning its societal institutions to the task of effective democratic governance and efficient market econ-

omy. Karl Polanyi (3) reminds us of the enormous task that a state has to undertake to achieve such a realignment of institutions. According to him,

The road to the free market was opened and kept open by an enormous increase in continuous, centrally organized and controlled interventionism. To make Adam Smith's "simple and natural liberty" compatible with the needs of a human society was a most complicated affair. Witness the complexity of the provisions in the innumerable enclosure laws; the amount of bureaucratic control involved in the administration of the New Poor Laws which for the first time since Queen Elizabeth's reign were effectively supervised by central authority; or the increase in governmental administration entailed in the meritorious task of municipal reform. And yet all these strongholds of governmental interference were erected with a view to the organizing of some simple freedom—such as that of land, labor or municipal administration. . . .

Conclusion: Globalization, Liberalization, and All That! The main thrust of this article has been to emphasize that states in Africa must increasingly pay attention to the institutions within which the thinking of their populace with regard to sustained and sustainable development continues to find expression. They must take cognizance of the changes that the people themselves have been making to these institutions and be willing and ready to radicalize these institutions through articulating their formal rules in a manner that make them consistent with the overall goal of societal development. In short, the article seeks to underscore the fact that for a sustainable development process, African states must take stock of where they are coming from and where they are presently and be more determined to achieve the goals of their development by using their own historical and cultural resources as expressed in the numerous institutions being radicalized by their civil societies.

It might, of course, be argued that this recommendation might be a case of looking backwards when the challenge is to look forward and that—in a new millenium that is already being characterized as the globalization era, an era in which the tremendous advances in

information technology are impacting on global relationships—such an insistence on building on institutional resources of historical and cultural vintage is a way of further "delinking" Africa from the enormous technological and organizational strides being made elsewhere in the world. However, there is no denying the fact that without tidying up its own cultural foundation, African countries cannot derive maximum advantage from the numerous innovations and opportunities coming with the globalization era. Africa, as the Chinese would say, must learn to run with two legs: one related to its own indigenous although radicalized institutions; the other deriving from the institutions and usages of the modern democratic and free market economy.

The concept of institutional radicalization as a major constitutive element of the development process poses its own challenges to the social sciences. It demands from the academic community more information about the institutional resources of the multiple ethnic groups that typically inhabit the African national space not only in static anthropological terms but importantly in the dynamic context in which they operate and are constantly being changed in the lives of the people. Such social knowledge is critically needed for empowering civil society to appreciate its rights in relation to those of the state in a democratic context. It is also critical for enhancing the capacity of the state to be more responsive to the felt needs and interests of the society at large and for promoting democratic culture and a concern for transparency and accountability at all levels of governance.

As Africa moves into a new millenium in which fresh hopes are being expressed about its developmental capabilities and issues are being raised about an "African renaissance," it is important to stress that such hopes can be realized only when built on a sure foundation of those basic institutions deriving from its history and cultural heritage. Both the state and the academic community must be entrepreneurial in the manner in which they use these institutional resources in promoting their social, political, and economic agenda. African states must deepen their own knowledge of their institutional resources and use these not only to restore their nations to sound social and economic health but also to reinvigorate the individual and collective self-esteem of their people as to their own distinctive heritage of history and culture.

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