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Degu, W.A.

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2. THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE STATE AND THE CRISIS OF THE REAL EXISTING STATE IN AFRICA

Political analysts differ in their analysis of the state in terms of whether they take the state as given or as socially constituted and reconstituted and as never complete. They also differ whether they see it as an instrument of control and power or as a tool to solve societal problems. There has also been a difference in terms of whether to explain the state as an institutional phenomenon through a universalist as opposed to contextualist or relativist theory. Thus, if we review the literature on the state in Africa, we will find that these different approaches were used at different times. In general, Africanist scholars have studied the state in Africa with the help of at least five theoretical perspectives: Modernization, Neo-Marxist, Failure of the State, Critical and Post-Modernist theories (Chabal, 1996: 45).

The fundamental question that should be raised here is what will be a more relevant theoretical approach that should be used to study the state in Africa. This chapter will attempt to answer this question. To do so, some of the basic assumptions of and critiques on modernization and neo-Marxist perspectives will be discussed in the first part. In the second part, the failure of the state as a theoretical perspective on the study of the state in Africa will be discussed and its shortcomings will be identified. In the third part an attempt will be made to rewrite this perspective with the help of critical and postmodern theories so that it will better explain what has been and still is going on in Africa. The focus will not only be on the state per se but also on other related concepts, notably political community, political accountability, national identity, state-making and security-insecurity problematic, and the failure of the real existing post-colonial state. Finally, a modest attempt will be made to critically conceptualize the failure/collapse of the state and the various conditions for and the signs of state failure/collapse. Before going into the discussion, however, it will be helpful to make two general but important remarks. First, we must ground our political analysis of contemporary events in the deep history of Africa, that is, the history which connects the present with the colonial and pre-colonial past (Chabal, 1996: 51). Second, in analysing politics in contemporary Africa we need to try hard to overcome, among others, the three specific analytical difficulties which Chbal (Ibid.: 45) identifies as: the politics of the mirror1, tyranny of causalities2 and the implication of enunciation3.

1 By the politics of the mirror Chabal refers to the attempt that has been made by Africanist scholars in looking at Africa from the perspective of the evolution of Western society. It has been a search in Africa for an image of the African that would confirm Western developmentalist assumptions about themselves (Ibid.: 45-46).

2 By tyranny of causalities, Chabal refers to the attempt made in trying to interpret events in contemporary Africa. In this respect, many Africanist too willingly resorted to simple causalities in at least two ways. First, (ab)use of theories of historical causation. Second, the tendency to explain complex process in Africa by way of simple causalities which would never be accepted in respect of western societies (Ibid.: 47-49). Taking (accepting) tribalism/ethnicity as the sole explanation for the crisis in contemporary Africa can be one good example.

3 By the implication of enunciation Chabal refers to the difficult issue of the relations between the analysis of reality and its enunciation. For Chabal (Ibid.: 50), 'once we move away from the coded language of simple or at least well understood causal explanations, we enter the territory of greater subtlety but also greater ambiguity. Nothing is plain, nothing is entirely clear. What we see, or what we think we see, is not objectively identifiable but depends in part on how we apprehend and enunciate it.' For instance, how the colonial mind perceived and enunciated the 'fact' of ethnicity had a direct bearing both on the perception and reality of that 'phenomenon' (Ibid.). As Chabal (Ibid.: 51) points out, 'understanding the local context of political language of Africans is the first step towards relating the specifics of the case at hand with the more universal analytical concepts which are needed to explain political processes in comparative perspective'.
2.1 The African State: Different Perspectives:

As it is indicated at the beginning of the chapter this section will attempt to critically consider the different theoretical perspectives, mainly modernization, neo-Marxism and the failure of the state perspectives, employed in the study of the state in Africa. The aim is to identify which perspective will be more useful in understanding the crisis (failure/collapse) of the African state.

2.1.1 Modernization

In modernization theory, the universal character of the state as a problem solving and coordinating mechanism has been taken for granted. Given that a well-functioning state could and should make a difference for the better. The newly independent countries of Africa, which lack their own skilled work force and technical expertise, therefore, should be assisted by the rich countries so that they can perform their functions. According to this perspective, what African and other developing countries were engaged in was to ‘catch up’ with the West (Hyden, 1996: 26-27). Thus, the basic interest of the modernization theorists was to understand the prospects for the development of these societies along Western democratic lines. Moreover, they believe that the political functions performed in each society regardless of its level of development are the same. The difference is found at the level of structure: the more differentiated the structures of society are, the greater the chances that they will be open to and will foster democracy. In this respect, what was assumed was that economic development would foster political development. In this process the role of the state was taken to be crucial. The state to play its role has to perform certain functions. Accordingly, therefore, Almond (1969: 17) identified two categories of the universal functions of the state and society: (a) input functions, which includes political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, political communication; (b) output functions, which includes rule-making, rule application and rule adjudication.

In other words, what the modernization theorists tried to do was to show how countries move from one stage of development to another. Walt Rostow’s writing on this subject was perhaps the most influential. According to Rostow, based on his five-stage model of growth (traditional, precondition for takeoff, takeoff, modernity, and high mass consumption), a possible solution for the promotion of Third World modernization would be external assistance. As a result, millions and millions of dollars have been given each year to Third World countries to build their infrastructures and manufacturing sectors. Hundreds of thousands of technicians have also been sent to help them reach the takeoff stage (So, 1990: 30-31).

In addition to economic development, cultural and political development have also been taken as the best way towards the modernization of developing countries. Pye’s (1965) attempt to illustrate the relationship between political culture and political development; Verba’s (1965) politi-

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4 In pursuit of their objective they found it necessary to develop a terminology for their own. In the words of Almond (1969: 4), “instead of the concept of the ‘state’ limited as it is by legal and institutional meanings, we prefer ‘political system’...”. ‘Political system’, according to Almond (Ibid: 7), ‘is that system of interactions to be found in all independent societies which performs the functions of integration and adaptation (both internally and vis-à-vis other societies) by means of threat of employment, more or less legitimate physical compulsion. The political system is the legitimate, order-maintaining or transferring system in the society’.

5 The takeoff, according to Rostow (1964: 275), ‘is defined as the interval during which the rate of investment increases in such a way that real output per capita rises, and this initial increase carries with it radical changes in production techniques and the disposition of income flows, which perpetuate the new scale of investment and perpetuate thereby the rising trend in per capita output.’
cal culture approach in analyzing political development and modernization; and Coleman's (1968) political approach to modernization are some of the major works in this tradition. For Pye (1965: 10), the concept of political culture provides a useful basis for examining the links between social and economic factors and political performance. Based on these assumptions, 'the key elements of political development involve, first, with respect to the population as a whole, a change from wide-spread subject status to an increasing number of contributing citizens, with an accompanying spread of mass participation, a greater sensitivity to the principles of equality, and a wider acceptance of universalistic laws. Second, with respect to governmental and general systematic performance, political development involves an increase in the capacity of the political system to manage public affairs, control controversy, and cope with popular demands. Finally, with respect to the organization of the polity, political development implies greater structural differentiation, greater functional specificity, and greater integration of all participating institutions and organizations' (Ibid.: 13). In other words, development can be conceived as being the replacement of the particularistic norms, functionally diffuse relationships, and aspirative considerations of tradition-based societies with a more universalistic, functionally specific, achievement-oriented patterns of action of more modern societies (Ibid.: 19).

Verba (1965: 513) in analysing political development and modernization points out that 'the political culture of a society consists of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which define the situation in which political action takes place. Political culture of a society is a highly significant aspect of the political system'. Accordingly, the most important political beliefs that are relevant for the problem of political development are those which focus around the nation-state, for it is the nation-state which is the key unit in understanding most political problems, and especially the problems associated with change and modernization in the contemporary world (Ibid.: 528). In conclusion, Verba (Ibid.: 560) argues, in the new nations of the world the overwhelming burden is to create new political cultures in order to solve their problems.

Coleman's (1994) political approach to modernization has also been an important contribution to the modernization perspective. 'Political modernization', for Coleman (Ibid.: 172), 'refers to those processes of differentiation of political structure and secularization of political culture which enhance the capability - the effectiveness and efficiency or performance - of a society's political system.' He argues that political modernization can be viewed from three perspectives (Ibid.). First, historical political modernization refers to the totality of changes in political structure and culture which characteristically have affected or have been affected by those major transformative processes of modernization (secularization; commercialization; industrialization, accelerated social mobility; etc.). Second, typological political modernization refers to the process of transmutation of pre-modern 'traditional' polity into a post-traditional 'modern' polity. Third, evolutionary political modernization refers to that open-ended increase in the capacity of the political man to develop structures to cope with or resolve problems, to absorb and adapt to continuous change, and to strive purposively and creatively for the attainment of new societal goals.

The modernization perspective, in general, represents a multidisciplinary effort to examine the prospect for Third World development. Each discipline contributes in its own way to identifying the key issues concerning modernization. Thus sociologists focus on the change of pattern variables and structural differentiation, economists stress the importance of speeding up productive investment, and political scientists highlight the need to enhance the capacity of the political system. However, as So (1990: 33-34) correctly summarizes, modernization theorists share at least two fundamental assumptions. First, they believe that social change is unidirectional, progressive, and gradual, irreversibly moving societies from a primitive stage to an advanced stage, and making societies more like one another as they proceed along the path of evolution. Second, they emphasize the interdependence of social institutions, the importance of pattern variables at the
cultural level, and the built-in process of change through homeostatic equilibrium. Moreover, authors of the modernization school adopt a similar methodological approach. They tend to anchor their discussions at a highly general and abstract level rather than focusing on unique cases and historically specific events, since they aim at explaining general patterns, universal trends, and common prospects for Third World development (Ibid.: 35).

The modernization perspective has a number of fundamental problems in analyzing the state in Africa. In taking the state as given-for-granted, it failed to analyze how the state in Africa has been socially constituted and reconstituted in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. As a result, it missed the point that the state in Africa has been constituted and reconstituted in a very different internal and international environment and exposed to influences which are different from those of Europe. Consequently, it failed to explain the role that the European exemplary model played in the process not only of state constitution but also the (re)construction of political communities and identities. Furthermore, the state has been wrongly taken as a problem-solving and coordinating mechanism, whereas in reality the state as a territorial sovereign entity has also been part of the problem. Another more serious problem is modernization's fundamental assumption that the Western state is the ultimate and the only model that should be copied everywhere on earth. This implies that African countries have to abandon whatever they had, which is taken to be traditional and backward, and copy the modern and the only best type of state, the Western territorial sovereign state.

The modernization school is also deficient because it offers an 'internal' explanation of Third World development. It assumes that 'there is something wrong inside Third World countries - such as traditional culture, overpopulation, little investment, or lack of achievement motivation - and this is why Third World countries are backward and stagnant. ... by ignoring the history of the Third World countries, the modernization school assumes that these countries are now at the early stage of development according to the experience of Western countries, and therefore they need to look to Western countries as mentors and follow their path of development in order to reach modernity' (So, 1990: 96). As the historical records show, however, it has been hardly possible for Third World countries to follow the Western path because they have experienced something that Western countries have not experienced: colonialism. The colonial experience fundamentally restructured Third World countries and has drastically altered their path of development. The historical experience of colonialism and foreign domination reversed the development of many Third World countries and forced them to move along the path of economic backwardness (Ibid.: 96-97).

2.1.2 (Neo)Marxism

Far more than with the modernization school meaningful attempts have been made from the neo-Marxist perspective in the study of contemporary African politics. It is, therefore, important to consider at least two of the major assumptions of this perspective without going into the details. First, the state is seen as an instrument of domination. It is neither an arena nor an impartial moderator of conflicting interests as assumed in the liberal paradigm underwriting much of modernization theory. Therefore, critical to understanding the state is the question of who controls it. According to the neo-Marxists the control of the state in developing countries is being exercised not by an independent and assertive domestic class of capitalist, but by a comprador or bureaucratic bourgeoisie, which uses its control of the state to feather its own nest with the help of its access to public funds (Hyden, 1996: 28). As Leys (1975: 9) argues, these new social strata and ultimately social classes were either brought (through colonial settlement), or created from among the indigenous population, which had an interest in organizing and facilitating the new economic activities (trade, mining, crop production, and so on). In other words, the com-
Prador elements which were produced under colonialism, and which subsequently acquired a large measure of political power, generally play an integral part in maintaining the existing patterns of trade and industrial dependency (Ibid.: 12-13). Similarly, Shivji (1976: 63-64) has also pointed out that, in an underdeveloped African country with a weak petty bourgeoisie, its ruling section, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, which comes to posses the instruments of state on the morrow of independence, relatively commands enormous power and is therefore very strong. However, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie is not an independent class. In so far as the economy remains structurally linked with the capitalist world and within the world capitalist system, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie is a dependent bourgeoisie, dependent on the international bourgeoisie (Ibid.: 85).

Second, the African state and that of the Third World at large is not really controlled by domestic forces in the first place but by agents of international capital, who in the 1960s had extended their influences across boundaries both in the industrial world and into the developing countries. As a result, the forces of international capitalism are dictating state policies (Hyden, 1996: 28). Walter Rodney (1972) and Samir Amin (1976) supported this argument, among others, in maintaining that developing countries lacked clout in global relations because they constituted the periphery of the world economic system. For Rodney (1972: 25), “throughout the period that Africa has participated in the capitalist economy, two factors have brought about underdevelopment. In the first place, the wealth created by African labor and from African resources was grabbed by the capitalist countries of Europe; and in the second place, restrictions were placed upon African capacity to make the maximum use of its economic potential, which is what development is all about”. In other words, according to Rodney (Ibid.: 27), the question as to who, and what, is responsible for African underdevelopment can be answered at two levels: (a) the operation of the imperialist system bears major responsibility for African economic retardation by draining African wealth and by making it impossible to develop more rapidly the resources of the continent; and (b) those who manipulate the system and those who are either agents or unwitting accomplices of the said system. The capitalists of Western Europe were the ones who actively extended their exploitation from inside Europe to cover the whole of Africa. Thus, in the postscript to Rodney’s work, A. M. Babu has correctly summarized, with regard to what happened to Africa and its people:

For too long we have left their fate to be determined by the kind of production which is not based on the satisfaction of their wants but rather on serving external interests as expressed by the accepted laws of supply and demand of the so-called world market. We have twisted their education in such a way that the ‘skills’ we direct them to develop are geared towards serving the same ends of world market rather than towards the development of internal material base, with the result that, technologically, and in relation to the developed world, we move backward rather than forward. We have e
tamely accepted the so-called international division of labor on behalf of our masses, and in doing so we have condemned them to specialize in primary commodities whose production is conducive neither to the development of technological skills nor to the invention of advanced machinery, both of which are the preconditions to real economic development” (Ibid.: 286)

Amin (1976: 198-202) also argues that the role of monopolies of international capital was to prevent any local capital in developing countries that might arise from competition. The development of capitalism in developing countries was to remain extraverted, based on the external market, and could therefore not lead to a full flowering of the capitalist mode of production. Rather the transition in these countries is into peripheral capitalism. The peripheral formations all tend to converge upon a typical model, characterized by the dominance of agrarian capital and ancillary (comprador commercial) capital. ⁶

⁶ What this entails is that ‘the domination by the central capital over the system as a whole, and the vital mechanism of primitive accumulation for its benefits which express this domination, subject the development of peripheral national capi-
Two conclusions were made from this general assumption. The first, which was advocated by Walter Rodney and Samir Amin (cited in Hyden, 1996: 28, see also Amin, 1976: 382-383), was that the Third World countries which constituted the periphery of the world economic system have no choice but to disengage from the dominant capitalist system if they wanted to enhance their position in the world and to develop their countries by more effectively using domestic resources. The second, which was suggested, among others, by Swainson (cited in Hyden, 1996: 28), was that in the shadow of international capital it is possible to see the emergence of a viable and increasingly assertive national bourgeoisie. However, what the record has shown is that African states have not been able neither to delink themselves from the dominant capitalist world economic system and to develop their countries by effectively using domestic resources, nor did a viable and assertive national bourgeoisie emerge in the shadow of international capital. This has been so for a number of reasons. First, the colonial and later the post-colonial state was constituted in such a way that its structures are duplicates (distorted duplicates) of the European style and its economy strongly attached to that of the colonial powers as a source of raw materials and market. Second, because of their weakness in generating sufficient domestic resources and the declining prices of their exports African countries became increasingly dependent on foreign aid (both financial, know-how and technology). Third, even if African countries have been able to increase their production for export, they are dependent on the world capitalist market for their foreign exchange earnings. Fourth, and it is related to the second, inter-African or for that matter South-South trade has been very weak because the countries are exporters of primary goods and importers of manufactured goods and technology. Fifth and more important, the domination of the Western political discourses, state and development theories prevented the development of a meaningful alternative. Rather, African and Third World leaders in general were forced to think and act along the same Western line.

Though the neo-Marxist perspective is strong in its economic analysis it has its problems with regard to its political analysis. It failed to bring to light the exemplary model of the European-styled state which shaped the colonial and later on the post-colonial state, both in its economic and political aspects. Its emphasis on class analysis also has its own shortcomings. It gives less attention to the factors other than class: sub-national movements, nation-building, the construction of different identities, religion, etc. Moreover, the usefulness of its class analysis as a major instrument of analysing states in Africa, where the class division has not been as clear as it has been in the European context, is also questionable. Another more important weakness is its emphasis on the purely external factors. It should be noted that internal factors have to be taken into account in analysing African politics, for they are major players in the development of underdevelopment in the continent.

2.1.3 The Failure of the State as a Theoretical Perspective

After focusing almost for three decades on the capacities of the state in its effort to mould society, the state debate has shifted to the state’s incapacity, its functional decline, instability and inability to bring about intended changes in society. Thus, the state has been variously characterized as ‘soft’, ‘weak’ or ‘overdeveloped’ by scholars seeking to explain its apparent failure to meet...
the aspirations not only of the civil society at large but even of those occupying a central political position (Azarya, 1988: 3). African states have been marked by many scholars as an arena of conflict, turmoil and stagnation. In other words, it is widely believed that African states have been unable (or have failed) to solve their internal (in some cases interstate) conflicts, unable to exercise effective control over their territory and population under their jurisdiction. They have even been unable to meet the very basic needs of their society. Therefore, it has been argued that what has maintained them as states is a more juridical definition, which identifies them as the recognized territorial units of the international community. They have been relevant in the international arena rather than within their territorial borders (Jackson and Rosberg, 1986a). Even in cases where political control has not been completely lost and states have maintained some sort of monopoly over organized means of coercion, they have been unable to solve basic economic problems or prevent the emergence of alternative systems which flout their laws and principles and circumvent their inefficient channels (Azarya, 1988: 3-4). In short, many African states have been states more in a juridical rather than in an empirical sense of the term. In this respect, it is important to make clear what proponents of this perspective mean by African states in both a juridical and empirical sense.

To begin with, let us consider Max Weber's influential definition of the state. For Weber, the state is a corporate group that has compulsory jurisdiction, exercises continuous organization, and claims a monopoly of force over a territory and its population, including all actions taking place in the area of its jurisdiction (cited in Jackson and Rosberg, 1986a: 260). The emphasis here is the empirical rather than the juridical, the de facto rather than the de jure conception of the state. The basic test of the existence of a state is, according to Weber's definition, whether or not its national government can claim a monopoly of force in the territory under its jurisdiction. Accordingly, therefore, many of Africa's governments would not qualify as states - at least not all of the time - because they can not always effectively claim to have a monopoly of force throughout their territorial jurisdiction.

There are also scholars that give priority to the juridical rather than the empirical attributes of statehood. For instance, Ian Brownlie (cited in Jackson and Rosberg, 1986a) describes the state as a legal person, recognized by international law, with the following attributes: (a) a defined territory, (b) a permanent population, (c) an effective government, and (d) independence, or the right to enter into relations with other states. As is true with regard to the empirical conception of statehood, Africa's states also have problems to meet at least two of the attributes of juridical statehood: a permanent population and effective government (I will return to these attributes later on).

Young (1988: 29-31) also identifies similar primary imperatives which govern a state's behaviour: (1) A state has territoriality: a precisely demarcated domain within whose boundaries the claim to exclusive ultimate authority is asserted. (2) A state is vested with sovereignty which quiets it with a doctrine of inherent absolute, indivisible and unlimited power and authority. Its real exercise may be limited by constraint of state capacities and resources or circumscribed by law or constitution. (3) A state possesses nationality. However important the cultural pluralism or class cleavages which divide civil society, the doctrine of indivisibility and oneness, of membership as citizens, have commanding normative forces. (4) The state is a participant in a global system of juridically equivalent units. (5) The state is a set of institutions of rule in which a 'government' is its most readily perceived aspect. (6) The state is a legal system. Its commands are codified into uniform, predictable and impersonal rules. (7) The state is an idea, deeply implanted in the minds of its citizens and officials. For Young (Ibid.), these elements, taken cumu-
latively, constitute a 'reason of state' embedded in the 'official mind' of the human agents who staff its institutions.

It is important to note that these attributes are the reflection of the European styled sovereign territorial state. However, they are used as universal criteria to determine whether political entities qualify as state or non-state everywhere. This clearly shows how the dominant political discourses and the exemplary model have shaped our understanding of the state.

To further grasp how this exemplary model shaped our understanding of the state it is important to raise the same question which proponents of the failure of the state perspective raised and then look into their respective explanations. The question that has usually been raised is: do we find all these elements in the real existing African states? The answer given is, in short, we do not, for a number of reasons. Let us consider some of these reasons. Many African states have not been able to claim exclusive ultimate authority in their territorial jurisdiction. Some parts of African countries have been outside the control of the state. Anti-government forces like in southern Sudan and northern Ethiopia have effectively controlled parts of the country for a long time. In the case of Somalia almost everything is controlled and run by warlords and clan leaders (this will be discussed in more detail below).

Domestic and international factors and/or actors have undermined the sovereignty of African states. By domestic factors, it does not mean by law or constitution, as Young suggests, because the problem in Africa has never been the limitation of the power of the state by law. There has never been an effective constitution, with a few exceptions for a short time during the first years of independence. Domestically, the sovereignty of African states has been weakened (challenged) by the anti-government forces (political groups which have been fighting either for a separate state and/or wider autonomy) which have mainly been mobilized as a response to the policies made and measures taken by the state or the absence of appropriate policies and measures. Internationally, the state in Africa lost its sovereignty to donor countries and international financial institutions (IFIs). Especially since structural adjustment programmes have been imposed in Africa, it is the IFIs not the African state which have been deciding what is good and bad for Africa.

States should have a stable community, indivisibility and oneness of memberships as citizens and its crucial empirical component, a permanent population. If we take 'a stable community' to signify an integrated political community resting on a common culture, we must conclude that few contemporary African states can be said to possess this attribute or can qualify as stable community.

The state, as Young suggests, must be a legal system. Its commands should be codified into uniform, predictable and impersonal rules. This is the element that almost all African states lack. The type of state in many parts of Africa has been, as Callaghan (1988: 80) calls it, a patrimonial administrative state. The nature of this form of state has mainly been authoritarian, arbitrary, highly personalistic, inefficient, and corrupt. In such types of state uniformity and predictability are out of the question. Instead we find unpredictability and inconsistency on the part of the central government, the court and local officials (Ibid.: 87-88).

The state, as Young points out, is an idea, deeply implanted in the minds of its citizens and officials. The post-colonial state in Africa, as the name indicates, has been created by colonialism and inherited by the post-colonial nationalist leaders. The creation and the nature of the state
have made it difficult for the citizens to accept as their own state. As Ayoade (Ayoade, 1988: 15) argues:

The state apparatus in Africa has suffered a gradual and sustained diminution of authority. In the immediate post-colonial period this was attributable to the successful defamation of the state by the leaders of the independence movements. The ideology of independence weakened the state system because of the faults the state qua state were confused with those of colonialism. The state was convicted as an alien apparatus for the oppression of the people. Consequently, the people dissociated themselves from the state, which they have continued to perceive as an adversary.

Paradoxically, the state has also been seen as the prime distributor of benefits, and thus people have been mobilized, to an extent, by an emphasis on the benefits to be derived from the state, without regard for the cost. The inability of the state to match this requirement has created a credibility gap, which has necessitated the delinking of the people from the state.

As a result, the post-colonial state as an idea has been questioned. Especially the emergence of ethnic, religious and regional groups which reject the state as it exists today is becoming a serious problem in Africa. To say the least, the acceptance of the post-colonial state as an ideal state has been eroded.

The state should have an 'effective government' and a 'compulsory jurisdiction' which are redefined by Jackson and Rosberg (1986a: 264) as a centralized government with the capacity to exercise control over state territory and the people in it. By 'exercise control' they mean, the ability to pronounce, implement, and enforce commands, laws, policies, and regulations, which many African states terribly lack. The capacity to exercise control raises the means that should be considered in terms of the domestic authority or the right to govern (legitimacy) on the one hand, and the power or ability to govern on the other. African states have been deficient on both counts.

It is important to make clear that the assumption behind the search for the elements of the Western state within the African state is that the European model of the state can be copied everywhere in the world. In other words, there is the assumption that there is nothing wrong with the European model and the attempt to transplant it in Africa, but what is wrong is not to copy it correctly. However, what should be assumed is that it is basically wrong to try to copy the political structure which was developed in Europe, which has a fundamentally different historical experience from that of Africa. Basically, it is a wrong start. It is the effect of this wrong start that should be explained in analyzing the failure of the state in many all parts of Africa.

Another approach, which has been used in studying the failure of the state in Africa and the developing countries in general, is to differentiate weak states from the strong ones, in which African states have been typified as weak. According to Migdal (1988: 4), weak states are at the low end of a spectrum of the capabilities to penetrate society, regulate social relations, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways. He further stresses that the emergence of a strong state can occur only with a tremendous concentration of social control. The problem for many Third World countries is the existence of fragmented social control. Holsti (1996: 82-83) has also pointed out that state strength is not measured in military terms. Rather, it is measured in the capacity of the state to command loyalty - the right to rule - to extract the necessary resources, to maintain that essential element of sovereignty, a monopoly over the legitimate use of force within defined territorial limits, and to operate within the context of a consensus-based political community. He then argues that all states do not similarly share these essen-
tial characteristics of statehood (Ibid.). In addition, Holst i identifies the characteristics of states that give strength or weakness.7

As a result of what happened and is happening in Africa during the last three or more decades and the change of perspective (as indicated in the discussion above) with which scholars have been trying to explain it, another important perspective, what Hyden calls 'the failure of state theory', has been dominant in the literature on the African development in the past decade or so. The basic assumption in this approach is, as indicated above, that the state in Africa had failed (and collapsed in extreme cases) to live up to the expectation people had in the first two decades of independence about what the removal of colonialism would mean (Hyden, 1996: 29). This entails, among other things, that the rational assumptions that underlie the modern states have not been sustained in Africa in the past three decades. It also means that the real existing African state virtually collapsed both as an instrument of development and as a tool for solving problems.

It seems, according to the proponents of the failure of the state perspective that there is a consensus that Africa is in a deep political, economic and social crises, with which many of us agree. The question, however, is how can we explain it better and develop a better alternative. It is true that the various explanations given by the failure of the state perspective, as briefly discussed above, have a number of important points. Among others, the assumption that the African state, far from being a mechanism for problem-solving and coordination, has been rather the major source of the various problems of the continent, is crucial. However, it also has basic weaknesses. The fundamental weakness is its basic assumption that the Western type of state is the ultimate standard with which the African state, for that matter all non-European states, must be measured. This is mainly the result of the domination of the modernization discourse in which the Western state is taken to be the result of human modernization and by which the traditional state has to be replaced. In other words, the Western state is not taken as one among the many possibilities that human society could be organized. The other weakness emanates from the political discourses which dominated our imaginations, notably the discourse on state sovereignty, state territoriality, homogeneity of society, centralized government, government control, etc. One can easily recognize the domination of these discourses in the arguments of Weber, Jackson and Rosberg, Azarya, Young, Migdal and Holsti. Still another problem with the failure of the state perspective is that of taking the state for granted as it is completed once and for all. Rather than taking the state as it has always been, socially (re)constituted and never completed, this perspective attempts to explain how the state as a finished product failed/collapsed. In other words, as can be seen in the brief discussion above, the different scholars more or less explained the nature and weaknesses (failure) of the real existing post-colonial states. However, some fundamental questions remained unanswered: How did these states come into being, as they are, in the first place? How did all these problems (weaknesses) come about? How can we better understand these weaknesses? As part of the process of the construction of the Western styled state in Africa or simply as the failure of the state, as the state being a finished product or given? It is, therefore, important to answer these questions in order to be able to provide a better explanation as to what

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7 Holst i (1996: 82-83) asserts that the state contains three interlinked components, (1) the idea of the state, which represents history, tradition, culture, nationality, and ideology. (2) Physical basis of the state - defined territory, population, resources, and wealth. (3) State institutions -comprises the machinery of government and the regime, meaning laws, norms, and incumbents of official office. All three elements of the state are interconnected and are necessary, if not always sufficient, for a state to cohere and sustain its basic functions. In other words, those states where all three components are well articulated, interconnected in such a manner as to sustain and support each other, will be stronger than states with opposite characteristics (Ibid.: 84).
has been and still is going on in African politics. This is possible with the help of critical and postmodern theories.

2.2 Critical Reconsideration of the Failure of the State Perspective

It will be possible, as it is indicated above, to use the insights of critical and postmodern theories to develop the failure of the state perspective into a plausible explanation of the state and its crisis in Africa. The most important and relevant insights of critical and postmodern theories can be summarized as follows. First, the state constituted as a territorially sovereign entity based on the discourses and practices of inclusion/exclusion, inside/outside, self/other, etc., has not been an instrument of coordination and problem-solving. Rather, it has been a social constraint for the emancipation and freedom of the society. It is also important to emphasize the role of exemplary model in the (re)construction of the state, especially in colonial and post colonial Africa. Such understanding will help us to understand clearly that, for instance, ‘quasi-states’ or ‘failed states’ represent empirical cases of state which deviate from the model by failing to display the recognizable signs of sovereign statehood. In understanding the crisis in Africa it is also important to take into account the fact that complex practices and representations: violence, (re)construction of boundaries and identities are crucial in the (re)constitution of the sovereign territorial state.

Second, institutions and social and power relations should not be taken for granted. Rather one should be concerned about their origin and how and whether they might be in the process of changing. This does not mean to ignore the existing order. On the contrary what it means is that in order to understand the prevailing order, it is important to understand the origin and development of the social and political configuration that have culminated in the present. This will be helpful in understanding the change and continuity in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa.

Third, the focus of the analysis on the political crisis in Africa has to be on the social totality. This entails a methodology that comprises a moment of abstraction, where a specific structure or object is studied in isolation, and a moment of reconstruction, where that which is abstracted is re-inserted into the whole. It is only when the whole has been understood that the analysis is complete. Moreover, due attention should be given to both historical and structural examination of power relations which frame the prevailing world order. One of the major tasks in this respect is to provide a critical historical explanation of global stratification and inequality.

Though these insights are necessary in order to develop the failure of the state perspective into a sound theoretical endeavour in analyzing the state and its crisis in Africa, one other question should be raised: Is it sufficient to focus only on the state per se to understand what is happening in African politics or should one critically examine other related concepts and issues? The state does not exist in a vacuum, because the success or failure of the state depends on a number of factors and processes, it is more productive to take into account those different factors and processes. Among other things, one has to critically examine the construction of viable political community (Chabal, 1992); the development of deeply rooted national identity (Smith, 1991 and Bloom, 1991); the institutionalization of political accountability (Chabal, 1992); the failure or success of state-making (state-building) and the related security-insecurity problematic (Ayoob, 1995); and the crisis of the exemplary model of the European styled (the real existing post-colonial) state (Badie and Birnbaum, 1983 and Badie, 2000). It is important to note from the outset that these factors and processes are highly interrelated. They seem to be both a cause and an effect at the same time. In the remaining part of this chapter I will attempt to critically reconsider
the failure of the state perspective with the aim of developing it into a more relevant theoretical approach for analysing the state and its crisis in Africa. To do so I will try to bring together the various concepts and issues with the help of the insights of critical and postmodern theories.

2.2.1 Political Community

Politics begins when people start organizing themselves for common purposes, and organization requires the formation of a community. The notion of community is, therefore, the most primary of all political concepts (Chabal, 1992: 38). It is thus crucial to start with the way in which political communities were constructed in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa. In pre-colonial Africa political communities had been created and recreated as a result of both internal and external developments. Internally, the struggle for power, territory and long-distance trade, among others, contributed to the creation of political communities. In this process, ethnic/tribal (though this was not rigid as we know it today), religious, regional and economic factors all played a significant role in which each individual perceived the community and was integrated within it. Externally, human movement (there were also internal human movements), invasion and conquest, the strengthening and weakening of long-distance trade routes and the creation of other trade routes played an important role in the creation and recreation of various political communities. In this process numerous political communities were created, others destroyed and many others were also recreated. Many small communities created bigger ones and many bigger communities also disintegrated into various smaller political communities. In a number of cases the centres of those political communities were shifting and changing, as they had been in Ethiopia. In other cases there were no strong political and/or economic centres.

It is important to note here that pre-colonial political communities were not constituted along purely ethnic/tribal and religious lines. Those communities were multiethnic and multi-religious with fluid boundaries (this will be dealt with in detail in chapters Seven and Nine).

Though the impact of European powers in the creation and recreation of political communities in Africa pre-dates colonialism, it was the establishment of formal colonial rule that drastically changed the type of political communities that existed in the continent. As Chabal (1992: 41) points out: 'The colonial revolution, for it was nothing less, introduced a new notion of political community which was superimposed over existing ones. It established rigid territorial and regional boundaries which cut across existing political, economic, social, ethnic and religious borders and it set up an administration to manage these new colonial communities'. Moreover, colonial rule dictated the categories by means of which individuals and communities were to be defined.

It is worthwhile noting that the colonial mind was shaped by the then political discourses and practices I which it was believed that the African political communities were traditional, backward and irrational, and therefore they had to be replaced by the modern, civilized and rational type (i.e., European styled) of political community. It was also shaped by the colonial discourse of relations between the European rulers and the African subjects. Later on, the same modernization discourses and practices have also shaped the African anti-colonial nationalists. The nationalist discourse was modernizing. It was believed that independence would give body to the modern African community. Thus, traditions of African politics were re-examined in the search for a key to an understanding of the vagaries of modern politics. The notion of the African community was yet again reinterpreted.

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8 The discussion below is mainly adopted from Chabal, 1992.
The political process whereby men and women (or rather those who rule on their behalf) imaginatively construct a political community is as old as the history of mankind. What was peculiar to post-colonial Africa was not that the 'national state' was imagined by nationalist. African states are far from being nation-state the term 'national state' (defined as relatively centralized, differentiated, and autonomous organizations successfully claiming priority in the use of force with large, contiguous, and clearly bounded communities) seems more meaningful than the 'nation-state' (defined as that whose people share a strong linguistic, religious, and symbolic identity). All nation-states have been constructed through imaginative labour. What marked out Africa (and many of the world's colonies) as different from most European states is that the state preceded the nation. This has profound consequences for the genesis as well as for the identity of the new political community (Chabal, 1992: 47).

In post-colonial Africa, whatever the pattern of decolonization, the process by which the nationalists attempted to create a viable political community has been similar. This process involved at least three steps: the creation of national vision; the nationalist myth; the setting up of a national organization, the nationalist party, the aggregation of local support for the national project, that is, the invention of unity (Ibid.). The extent to which the nationalists have been able to go through these steps successfully depended on many factors and it must be analysed case by case (This will be discussed in the coming chapters for the countries in the Horn of Africa). However, it is important to note that the invention of unity was the necessary final step in the gestation of the national state. Once the national myths and the national party had been created, unity (of community and purpose) had to be demonstrated. Because colonies were entirely artificial edifices, such unity could be no other than the product of imaginative labour.

Moreover, whatever the myths and the organization(s), the degree to which unity was achieved was in no small part determined by the nature of the colonial territories which had been marked out by Europeans. Unity of political community was not equally plausible in all colonial territories. In colonies in which there was a dominant (ethnic, religious, or regional) groups (e.g., Senegal, Kenya, Burundi, Sudan) or the legacy of a dominant hierarchy (e.g., Uganda, Rwanda, Mauritania), the rest of the community had little chance of escaping a form of unity which favoured the dominant. In colonies where there were several such dominant groups (e.g., Nigeria, Congo, and Angola), unity was not likely to be sought at the expense of submission to a rival. The national state was likely to be perceived as a competitive political arena rather than an overarching political community (Ibid.).

It is also important to note that the weaker the foundations of the national unity, the more open the challenge, the less legitimate it was, the more the state would have to resort to coercion. Moreover, the viability of the national state determined how deeply rooted the political community was. Viewed from this angel, it seems clear that the nationalist project to construct a viable political community, based on the unity of community and purpose, has not been successful.

In short, the process by which the pre-colonial and colonial communities were transformed into the political communities embodied in the independent states that have prevailed since independence was infinitely more complex than most political analysis of contemporary Africa suggests. The construction of the post-colonial political communities derived from processes, which were specific to each colony. Thus, one needs a precise historical account of what took place in

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*The distinction between nation-state and national state is based on Charles Tilly's definition (see Ayoob, 1995: 24).*
order to plausibly analyse the post-colonial politics of each successor country. In this respect, the continuities and ruptures between pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial communities provide the material from which it is possible to understand the contemporary national-states. As Chabal (Ibid.: 53) points out, ‘without an understanding of the meaning of political community there can be no political analysis’.

2.2.2. Political Identity

The other important concept in analysing the state in Africa and its crisis is the construction of political identity, which is closely related to the construction of political community. For it is assumed here that it has been the absence of deeply rooted national identity (or identity crisis) where ethnic/tribal, religious and/or regional identities compete with the national identity, which is one of the factors behind the political crisis in the continent.

Nationalism, Smith (1991: viii) argues, provides perhaps the most compelling identity myth in the modern world, but it comes in various forms. Myths of national identity typically refer to territory and/or ancestry as the basis of political community, and these differences furnish important sources of instability and conflict in many parts of the world. The fundamental features of national identity, according to Smith (Ibid.: 14), are: a historic territory, or homeland; common myths and historic memories; a common, mass public culture; common legal rights and duties for all members, and a common economy with territorial mobility for members. In the construction of the national and other identities lies the promise of the nationalist salvation drama. But this power is often immeasurably increased by the living presence of tradition embodying memories, symbols, myths and values from much earlier epochs in the life of the population, community or area. In other words, in the construction of identities historical memories, symbols, myths, values and historical territories or homelands are reinvented and/or sometimes newly invented. The main purpose of (re)inventing these attributes is the creation of self/other, similarity/difference, and inside/outside. This implies that political identities do not exist prior to the differentiation of self and other, or we and them. The main issue is how something which is different becomes conceptualized as a threat to be contained, disciplined, negated or excluded. It is in this process that the different identities have been created. This has been a never ending process dictated by the prevailing discourses and practices. It is because of this process that there have been different identities in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa. Even within post-colonial Africa the emphasis on national, sub-national, religious, regional, etc. identities shift from time to time, and from country to country. Furthermore, people have multiple identities, though the emphasis may vary from the one to the other. For instance, where the creation of a strong, unified and viable political community is successful citizens give emphasis to their national political identity. On the contrary, where the creation of a national political community failed or weakened, the people emphasize their ethnic/tribal, religious, or regional identities. However, this can change at any time.

Because ethnicity became an important issue in African politics and is closely related to the creation of both national and sub-national identities, it is necessary to point out the various perceptions of ethnicity. For some ethnicity has a primordial quality. It exists in nature, outside time. It is the ‘given’ of human existence. For others ethnicity is situational. Belonging to an ethnic group is a matter of attitude, perception and sentiment that are necessarily fleeting and mutable, varying with the particular situation of the subject. As the individual’s situation changes, so will the group identification; or at least, the many identities and discourses to which the individual adheres will vary in importance for that individual in successive periods and different situations.
This makes it possible for ethnicity to be used ‘instrumentally’ to further individual or collective interests, particularly of competing elites who need to mobilize large groups of followers to support their goals in the struggle for power. Still others stress the historical and symbolic-cultural attributes of ethnic identity. An ethnic group is a type of cultural collectivity, one that emphasizes the role of myth of descent and historical memories, and that it is recognized by one or more cultural differences like religion, customs, language or institutions. Such collectivities are doubly historical in the sense that not only are historical memories essential to their continuance but each such ethnic group is the product of specific forces and is therefore subject to historical change and dissolution (Smith, 1991: 20).

The perspective adopted in this research is that ethnicity is not given-for-granted or primordial. Ethnicity is a human creation based, on the one hand, on invention and reinvention of myth of descent and territorial homeland, historical memories and (re)invention of mass public culture. On the other hand, it is also the result of the political discourses and practices of self/other, inclusion/exclusion and difference interpreted as danger. Furthermore, it is a community imagined by political leaders and elites for mobilizing followers in the struggle for political power and scarce resources.10

The point that needs to be clear is that identity, in which politicized ethnicity has been playing an important role, should be considered in understanding contemporary politics in Africa. The assumption here is that the failure to (re)construct a strong national identity will fragment the society and leave a wider room for the development of competing identities. The more the national political identity is weakened and the more the competing sub-national identities are strengthened, the more likely that the state will fail or collapse as the result of an identity crisis. Such developments have been partially responsible for the crisis in Sudan (the Southern Sudan crisis) and that of Ethiopia (the question of Eritrea and Ogaden), in which the national identity is strongly challenged by the (re)creation of regional/ethnic identities.

2.2.3 Political Accountability

Wherever there are political communities and where people identify themselves with these political communities, there are political (mainly power) relations. What determines the nature of such relations is political accountability (Chabal, 1992: 54). At the core of political accountability is the notion of political obligation. Thus, in understanding the crisis in Africa it is essential to consider the principles of political obligation between the governors and the governed, for it is those principles and the manner in which they are put into practice which define political accountability in a particular community.

The basic assumption here is, ‘absolute power, the total absence of accountability, cannot last; it is inherently self-destructive. Absolute equality cannot be productive even if it may have endured in small-scale communities of hunter-gatherers’ (Ibid.: 55-56). Accordingly, the crisis in Africa and the resulting collapse of the state is partly the result of the absence of accountability. Thus, the question that should be raised and analysed is, how did political accountability, political legitimacy and representation change from pre- to post-colonial period? As Chabal (Ibid.: 58) correctly notes, ‘there

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10 There is also another perspective with regard to the construction of national identities, what Bloom calls ‘identification theory’. According to identification theory, the solidarity or the glue of any social system is to some degree based in the fact that individuals internalized their society’s values, norms and accepted patterns of behaviour. Furthermore, through a shared identification, individuals are linked within the same psychological syndrome and will act together to preserve, defend and enhance their common identity. Thus, a people who share a common national identity will, with a certain configuration of circumstances, tend to act as one unit and mobilize as a coherent mass movement (Bloom, 1990: 26).
have been two ruptures in political accountability, two political revolutions, during this period: the establishment of the colonial order and independence. To understand these two ruptures in the political order of Africa is to understand, simultaneously, the nature of the political continuities and discontinuities between the old and the new. In the light of this argument, nationalist mission, independence was not only to be a simple transfer of power but also the creation of new political accountability and decolonization to be genuine independence, a new principle of political accountability has to be created. During the struggle for independence, the nationalists were accountable to the people insofar as the people supported their struggle for independence. And the people supported the nationalists only insofar as they appeared to be the best placed to achieve independence from the colonial masters. In many cases the nationalists established new principles of accountability in order to inspire and consolidate the legitimacy of nationalism. In other words, they operated according to a principle of political accountability, representation and legitimacy which helped them to carry the historic task of ending colonial rule. However, the forms of political accountability created during the nationalist campaign and the period of formal decolonization have not been transformed into a general principles of political accountability for the independent states (Ibid.: 65).

The failure to transform the system of political accountability which was created during the anti-colonial struggle or to create new forms of accountability had important consequences for the post-colonial political legitimacy and representation. The legitimacy of the new states could not only be derived from their nationalist credentials, and their representativeness either from pre-colonial elections or from their victories in the nationalist struggle. More importantly, the legitimacy of the national-state they created depended, among other things, on the viability and effectiveness of the post-colonial governments. The states should be accountable to the new political communities-in-the-making. And because the new political communities, the national-states, were yet to be fully established, they did not possess principles of political accountability to which the new masters, bureaucrats and politicians, and the military alike, could readily be made to subscribe (Ibid.: 67). Therefore, the principles of political accountability of the newly created African national-states should have been invented in the practice of post-colonial politics. In this process of invention the success or failure of creating new principles of political accountability is to be determined by the nature of the political relations between the state and civil society. It is, thus, crucial to analyse the nature and role of the civil society within the national political scene. It is also important to examine the attitude of the state, especially the ruling elite, towards the civil society.

2.2.4 State-Making and Security/Insecurity Problematic

The complex process of state-making and the related security/insecurity problematic are the other issues which should be considered in understanding the political crisis in Africa in general and the failure/collapse of the state in particular. This is particularly important in refugee studies since refugees are clear signs and evidences of the security/insecurity problematic of the state and the society. These are strongly related to the (re)construction of political community, the creation of strong national identity and political accountability. One thing should also be clear from the outset is that despite the rhetoric of many African (for that matter many Third World) leaders, the sense of insecurity from which these states suffer emanates largely from within their boundaries rather than from outside. In other words, security/insecurity of the society and the state is an integral part of the (re)construction of the state. As Holsti (1998: 114) points out, violence which is the major source of insecurity in many Third World countries has been the result

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11 This part of the discussion is mainly adopted from Ayoob, 1995 and 1996.
of the manner in which governments deal with their population. And in many cases, it is the state - or regime acting in the name of the state and its 'nation-building' project that launches the internal war. Ayoob (1996: 37) has also strongly argued:

Two significant realities of current the international scene form the backdrop to any discussion of failure and disintegration of the state and the problem of international order and governance in the last decade of the twentieth century. The first is the incontrovertible fact that the overwhelming majority of conflicts since the end of World War II have been located in the Third World. The second is the equally unassailable fact that most conflicts in the Third World either have been primarily intrastate in character or have possessed a substantial intrastate dimension, even if they appear to the outside observer to be interstate conflicts.

Although this does not mean that external threats do not exist, it does imply that such threats often attain prominence largely because of the conflicts that abound within the countries. However, it can be argued that these internal conflicts are frequently transformed into interstate conflicts because of their spillover effect into neighbouring often similarly domestically insecure states.

Security is defined as the security of the state - in terms of its territories and its institutions - and the security of those who profess to represent the state territorially and institutionally. In other words, security-insecurity is defined in relation to vulnerabilities - both internal and external - that threaten or have the potential to bring down or weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional, and governing regimes' (Ibid.: 8-9). Though Ayoob's definition is important, it left out one fundamental aspect of security/insecurity problematic in many parts of Africa. This definition to be more useful in understanding the political crisis and refugee migration in Africa it should include the security threats of the society posed both by the state and other organized groups and vice versa. It is common knowledge that the state is seen as a serious threat by the society, and the state elite fears the society more than the outside forces. In order, therefore, to comprehend the complexities of the security/insecurity predicament of the African states and their societies it is important to understand the process of state-making underway in these countries and the security problem it generates. In other words, the internal dimension of security is inextricably intertwined with the process of state making.

In establishing the relation between the process of state-building and the security problem facing African countries, the roots of insecurity within these states need to be scrutinized. These roots include the lack of legitimacy for state boundaries, state institutions, and regimes; inadequate societal cohesion; and the absence of societal consensus on fundamental issues of social, economic and political organization. In other words, the roots are inevitably related to the construction of political community, political accountability and identities. These problems arise

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12 For instance, when we look at the types of wars since 1945, which have been the sources of insecurity for many states and their societies, they have been within and about the state. Almost 77 percent of the 164 wars were internal, where armed combat was not against another state but against the authorities within the state or between armed communities (Holsti, 1996: 21).

13 Ayoob (1995: 21-22) formulates a composite definition of state-building taking into account the activities essential to this process. (1) The expansion and consolidation of territorial and demographic domain under a political authority, including the imposition of order on contested territorial and demographic space (war). (2) The maintenance of order in the territory where, and over the population on whom, such order has already been imposed (policing). (3) The extraction of resources from the territory and the population under the control of the state essentially to support not only the war making and policing activities undertaken by the state but also the maintenance of the apparatuses of the state necessary to carry on routine administration, deepen the state's penetration of society, and serve symbolic purpose (taxation). All these broad categories of activities depend on the state's success in monopolizing and concentrating the means of coercion in its own hands in the territory and among the population it controls (Ayoob, 1996: 38).
throughout the process of state-building, whenever state makers attempt to impose order, monopolize instruments of violence, and demand the exclusive loyalties of their population. Moreover, the process of state-building is painfully slow and extraordinarily violent. Thus to pass through this process and create a national state, African state makers need two things above all. They need a great deal of imagination (vision), time and a relatively free hand to persuade and coerce the population under their nominal rule to accept the legitimacy of state boundaries and institutions, to accept the rights of the state to extract resources from them, and to let the state regulate important aspects of their lives. Unfortunately, the imagination of the African state elites has been shaped by the dominant discourses of territorial sovereign state and neither of the other two commodities are available in adequate measure (Ayoob, 1995: 28-29).

The demands of competition with established modern states and the demonstrated effectiveness of relatively socially cohesive and administratively effective states in the industrialized world make it almost obligatory for African states not only to copy what was available but also to do it within the shortest time possible or risk international ridicule and permanent marginalization within the system of states. The existence of a mode to emulate, and the pressures generated by international and domestic elite’s demands that post-colonial states translate their juridical statehood into effective empirical statehood within the shortest possible time, make the task of state-makers in Africa so difficult.

It is important to note here that the attempts at rapid state-making have been made immeasurably more difficult, and the security predicament of post-colonial states have been made more acute, by the distortions introduced by colonialism into the process of state formation. Among other things, new ethnic solidarity was formed during colonial rule largely as a result of the introduction of new definitions of communal identities. This situation has been particularly true in the case of Africa. As Jeffrey Herbst (Quoted in Ayoob: 1995: 36) has rightly observed, ‘... in many cases, what are today viewed as long-standing tribal differences only became apparent just before and after an independent African nation was created, at which time it suddenly became necessary for groups to organize on a broader basis in order to gain enough of a political presence to pressure for resources being allocated in the newly created capital city’.

The problem of state-making and of state and regime security in Africa have been further complicated by two other factors now at work in these countries that were either absent or very weak during the analogous stage of state-making in Western Europe. These factors are the demand for political participation by an increasing number of politically mobilized people and the demands for a more equal distribution of the economic cake by substantial segments of the general public. These claims complicated the tasks of state makers by tremendously increasing the demands upon them and upon the states they are trying to build (Ibid.: 39). It is crucial here to note that satisfying popular demands can frequently run counter to the imperative of conventional state-making. This is because state-making is a rather unsavoury task and often involves levels of coercion that are bound to be unacceptable to a population that has been influenced by the notion of human rights, political participation and social justice.

In addition to these domestic factors, the working of the international system, especially the policies adopted by the superpowers during the cold war era have also complicated the process of state-making in the Third World. By exporting superpower rivalry into the Third World in the form of proxy wars and by transferring weapons to governments and insurgents in fragile polities and in volatile regional environment, the cold war era greatly accentuated the insecurity and
instabilities in the Third World. Moreover, Ayooob (1996: 42-44) points out, certain international norms such as: the inalienability of juridical sovereignty or statehood once conferred by international law and symbolized by membership of the United Nations and the issue of human rights, with primary emphasis on civil and political rights have affected the security of Third World countries.\(^\text{14}\)

The political and economic overload that comes about from the combination of all or many of the factors indicated above, notably the lack of adequate time required for state-making; the highly destructive colonial inheritance; the accentuation of ethnic fissures; the demand for political participation, economic redistribution, and social justice at different stages in the state-making process, lie at the root of the high degree of insecurity and fragility witnessed in most African states. This is perhaps the very reason that the security apparatuses of these countries continue to consume a substantial proportion of their scarce resources. Moreover, not only does security absorb a considerable share of resources, but national security concerns have also influenced the scope, timing, and trajectory of economic development. Furthermore, domestic political and security concerns frequently determine resource allocation, even those earmarked for economic development. Such resources are often apportioned either as rewards to loyal groups or as pacifiers to disgruntled groups (Ayoob, 1995: 192).

The problem of insecurity resulting from the failure of constructing political community, political accountability, national identity and state-making has been clearly manifested through the state's attempts to impose its version of political order, often by force, and through the equally frequent violent resistance by substantial segments of Africa's population. The final result has been, as has been witnessed in Liberia, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Ethiopia and many others, the failure of the state.

2.2.5 The Crisis of the Real Existing Post-Colonial State

The crisis of the post-colonial state proper (or the real existing state) must be examined when analyzing politics in Africa. It is important to look into the crisis of the postcolonial state proper from two different angels. Firstly, it should be seen from the point of view of the failure of the imported European political ideas, notably the European styled state as an ideal state, to be fruitfully transplanted into Africa and solve the problems the society encountered. Secondly, it should also be seen as the crisis of the existing state institutions.

2.2.5.1 The European Styled State as an Exemplary Model and Its Practical Problems

It is important to remember the role of the exemplary model, as it negates alternative conceptions or devalues them as underdeveloped, inadequate or incomplete, in the process of statecraft, from the discussion in the previous chapters. To fulfil its function the exemplary model must be (or pretend to be) replicable, and it must be seen as a universally effective model, which can be instituted at any site. The pressures applied in societies to conform to this model are complex

\(^{14}\) According to Ayoob (1996: 42-44), 'the international norm upholding human rights runs directly counter to the norm which prescribes the inalienability of juridical statehood for Third World states. ...the simultaneous and contradictory operation of the two norms contributes to the creation and augmentation of internal discontent within Third World states. It does so, on the one hand, forcing all the diverse and dissatisfied elements within Third World state to remain within their postcolonial boundaries and, on the other, encouraging these very elements to make political, administrative, and economic demands on the states that these state cannot respond to. The states cannot respond either because they lack the capacities to do so or because doing so could seriously jeopardize their territorial integrity).
and various: internal and external, direct or indirect. It is also important to point out here that the exemplary model achieves its dominance through power and imposition.

Taking into account the fact that the emergence of the modern state has been a specific resolution of a specific crisis is also crucial. It is a resolution to a crisis that is in each case particularly characteristic of the development of a particular society and not a mere working out of the political aspect of a universal process of social 'maturation' (Badie and Birnbaum, 1983: 50). In this respect, it was the political crisis of the feudal system that shaped the state as a specific form of political centralization. The state, therefore, is primarily the post-feudal version of the process of centralization of political structures (Ibid.: 82-83).

How can we, then, account for the failure of societies in the Third World to create European styled viable states? The crises experienced by political systems in Africa, Asia and Latin America have mainly to do with the unwise attempt to graft a formula for political rationalization derived from Western experience onto radically different cultural traditions. State-building in these societies has been burdened by the weight of traditional relations of dependence and by the myth of the universal effect, which dominates the international order, as well as the so-called 'demonstration effect', which leads less developed societies to follow recipes that seem to have worked elsewhere in trying to solve their own problems. The intensity of communication structures that raise the level of aspiration has also been contributing to the increasing feeling of deprivation among members of a society.

When Western political ideas are imported into countries with a culture and infrastructure different from those of the West, the result is generally the emergence of hybrid forms of government, which are often antipathetic to the character of the societies in which they develop and are able to endure only by resorting to violence or totalitarian rule. This has been the case in many Third World countries. The introduction of Western ideas of the state has been associated with circumstances that vary widely from one country to the next. Countries adjacent to Europe encountered Western political ideas in the context of a more general influence of European culture, encouraged in part by respect for European military and economic exploits. The most important influences were on the setting up of a particular bureaucracy divided into a number of ministries, introduction of institutions of a secular legal system, and the establishment of specialized technical schools and a military academy (Ibid.: 97-98). This was partly the case in Ethiopia, even though it is not adjacent to Europe. In contrast to this pattern of Western influence was the role of Western political ideas in countries colonized by the nations of Europe. In these countries the introduction of Western 'political technology' was not only more sudden and systematic but also less far-reaching in its effects. The experience with colonial administration did undoubtedly pave the way for the European style of state-building after independence. However, the bureaucracies set up by the colonial powers were designed mainly for the purpose of colonial rule and did not permit the development of centralized political systems capable of controlling highly segmented peripheries where traditional modes of government remained potent. Not only was the graft of Western structures onto native stock artificial, but even these peculiar hybrids were prevented from developing naturally because the colonial powers generally impeded progress in the division of labour within colonial societies, and thus prevented civil society from adjusting to its im-

15 As Badie and Birnbaum (1983: 97) point out, 'European culture and therefore the basic ideas behind the rise of the state are alien to the countries of the Third World. These countries must participate in an economic system that is largely beyond their control. Most of them have suffered military conquest and colonial rule. Hence state-building in these societies has largely been a matter of imitating models developed elsewhere, in industrial societies of either East or West, and artificially superimposed with or without local consent, on economic, social, and political structures shaped by other ways of thinking'.
ported political structures. The colonial powers were also at pains to limit the growth of native administrative and economic elites. 'The end result', as Badie and Birnbaum (Ibid.: 98) argue, was only to make the hybrid plants that did take root seem even more outlandish and unsuited to their surroundings. This has mainly been the case in almost all African societies which went through colonial rule.

Moreover, no matter how much local elites may have internalized Western political ideas, the truth is that the Western model has only been transplanted in an abstract and formal sense and has not really worked in Third World societies. It is a model that has been introduced artificially, sometimes by force, sometimes voluntarily when traditional forms of government have been rejected because of unfair accusation that they were responsible for economic and military failures. As a result, to this day the European styled state is no more than an imported artifact in Africa, a pale copy of utterly alien European social and political system, a foreign body that is not only inefficient and a burden on society but also a fomenter of violence (Ibid.: 98-99). Thus, it is wrong to think that the failure of Western political ideas in the Third World is due to economic backwardness and that further development would ensure their success. The real reason lies elsewhere. One very fundamental reason for the failure of the Western political ideas is that the increasing importance of the state in the Third World countries is based on two fundamental misconceptions, which the end of foreign domination has done nothing to eliminate. First, the social, economic and political problems faced by the Third World countries are utterly unlike the problems faced by Europeans when the state first emerged in Europe. Such different issues require different solutions. Second, as the product of a culture based largely on the principles of differentiation, the state has not been able to achieve a fully fledged institutional form in societies dominated by 'organic religions' such as Islam or Hinduism, or one can add Orthodox Christianity, which reject the idea of a temporal or secular domain distinct from the spiritual. What is true for religion also holds for the other component of culture. Hence, it seems clear that the state born in the Renaissance Europe and today presented as a model for a state everywhere is not suited to the kinds of cultures that have shaped most Third World societies (Ibid.). It is crucial, therefore, to understand the European styled state as a unique phenomenon, an innovation developed within a specific geographical and historical context, rather than wrongly viewing it as the inevitable product of political development. As Badie and Birnbaum (Ibid.: 135-136) rightly conclude:

The state was the political response that some European societies were forced to make to an increasing division of labor coupled with strong resistance to social change on the part of certain elements of feudal society; it was a way of reconciling the growth of political incapacity of the great lords with the fact that they still maintained substantial control over economic and social life.... As a response to a specific crisis affecting one part of Europe and as a product of specific culture, the state remedy is quite unlikely to prove satisfactory in Third World societies faced with other problems and moved by other visions of the future.

Thus, it is important to understand that the current crisis in Africa has been partly the result of the failure of the European political ideas, notably the idea of the European styled state as a uni-

16 Europe had to deal with a crisis of feudalism involving the private ownership of land by feudal lords. Most Third World societies, particularly in Africa, are currently faced with quite different sorts of crisis, involving the persistence of tribal structures, the crucial importance of kinship, and the limited individualization of property rights in land. Whereas European societies had to find a way to integrate already existing economic elites, the developing countries today need to create a market economy, to say nothing of a full-blown industrial society, from the ground up. Finally, whereas Renaissance Europe had only to contend with a gradual increase in the demand of popular participation, an increase more or less kept in check by organized civil society, today's Third World societies have to face a much more dramatic rise in the desire for participation, which traditional allegiances by themselves can not hold back. (Badie and Birnbaum, 1983: 100-101).
versal model, to be practical in Africa and elsewhere. The unwise attempt to graft the European political formula has created more problems rather than solving those problems that African and Third World societies at large have encountered.

2.2.5.2 The Crisis of the Real Existing State Institutions

In the general post-colonial historical pattern of African political development 'state institutions have undergone a cycle of attempted consolidation, the entrenchment of hegemonic domination and, more recently, deterioration, if not disintegration' (Chazan, 1988c: 326). Since the beginning of the 1990s, however, the possibility of disintegration has also been more visible in a number of African countries than ever before. In the light of this reality one can identify a number of dimensions of this malaise, which have been behind the crisis of the post-colonial state institutions in Africa. The first and most apparent feature of the state structures has been their extensiveness. The public sector has grown consistently during the past three decades. The over-blouted administrative apparatus has been both costly and parasitic: it has avidly consumed scarce resources and proliferated unnecessarily (Ibid.: 326-327). The second related characteristics of the African state is the patrimonial quality of its institutions. Selective representation of social groups in ruling cliques remains a prominent feature of African states, even if the precise composition of the ruling coalition varies over time. Third, the elite character of the social make-up of state agencies comes together with a personal view of the public domain. In many instances the separation between the civil and the private realms is ill-defined. As a result, state institutions have frequently been diverted for personal gains and decision-making patterns have assumed an idiosyncratic quality. Fourth, the absence of regularized channels of communication with social groups has nurtured authoritarianism. The over concentration and monopolization of power at the core is the most prominent by-product of the statist propensities exhibited almost universally by the first generation of African leaders. Fifth, growing disillusionment with the performance of the state and cynicism in many countries about the ruling groups lead to apathy and detachment. Important segments of civil society derive their livelihood from the magendo world. Even within the public realm, it becomes more apparent that formulas of authoritarian incorporation, which attempt to bring civil society within a framework of 'conforming participation' are losing their credibility (Young, 1988: 26-27). Sixth, the propensity to over-consumption. In 1967 the average fraction of GDP consumed by the African state was 15%. In 1982 in many states the figure surpassed 30%, and in some it was substantially higher than this (Ibid.). Problems arise not only from the scale of state consumption, but also from its impact. If the state translates its consumption into welfare delivery and economic accumulation, there might be no special cause for concern. But there is enough evidence that this has not been the case in many African countries. An important component of state consumption has gone to military expansion and into theatrical self-display. Since the mid-1970s real military expenditures of Africa states as a whole have been increasing as a fraction of government expenditure faster than in any other group of countries, substantially exceeding economic growth rates. In addition, the parastatal sector in many countries expanded at a remarkable pace. But its quantitative increase was rarely matched by its qualitative performance. The last but the most important dimension of the crisis is the anemic rate of development, which is partly the result of state consumption. Africa is unable to point to any significant growth rate or satisfactory index of general well being (Ibid.). In general, as Chazan (1988c: 327) correctly puts it:

The combination of centralization, proliferation, personalization and social inequality has..., severely hampered the effectiveness of the state machinery in many parts of the continent.... Most significantly, central government organs have failed in many of their economic roles: they have not used their revenues judiciously, they have distorted distribution systems, they have regulated pro-
duction in ways that have reduced output, they have formulated policies with many urban, gender
and industrial biases, thereby further constraining economic prospects. ... Public structures emerge
... as simultaneously more repressive and more detached, more coercive and more aloof, more op-
pressive and more feeble, more intrusive and hardly more influential.... the power of the state in
many African countries is not unlimited; it is, however, unsupervised. Indeed, it may be that formal
institutions, ..., constitute points of control without adequate power. They may be omnipresent, but
they are hardly omnipotent. (Ibid.)

In this respect, the beginning of the 1990s, more than the proceeding decades, coincided with the
realization that the state, purportedly the key instrument for the promotion of general welfare,
was itself the most probable cause of the failure of many development efforts. As the economic
situation worsened, the capacity of the state further diminished.

Looked at from these different angles, African countries in general and the countries in the Horn
of African in particular, first, failed to (re)construct political communities based on the unity of
community and purpose. Rather they are fragmented into different sub-national communities.
Second, political leaders and elites have not been successful in creating new principles of politi-
cal accountability, which correspond to their newly independent countries. Third, post-colonial
nationalist leaders failed to create deeply rooted national identity over and above sub-national
identities. This is partially the result of the absence of strong socio-political and economic infra-
structure. Fourth, the process of European styled state-building failed as a universal idea, and the
institutions and structures of the existing post-colonial states collapsed. The combined result has
been the failure or collapse of the state. This will lead as to the discussion on the concept of state
failure/collapse.

2.3 The Conceptualization and, the Conditions for and Signs of
the Failure/Collapse of the State

What do we mean by the crisis (failure/collapse) of the real existing state? How should it be
(re)conceptualized? What are the conditions for and signs of the crisis (failure/collapse) of the
state? This section will single out the crisis (failure/collapse) of the real existing states, from the
discussion above, and attempt to answer these questions.

It is helpful to stress, from the outset, that state-building is a process, not an occurrence, it is a
process that can terminate at anytime, it is capable of reversing itself (Connor, 1994: 219). In
other words, we have to understand the state not as a given reality, but as work-in-progress, a
model of something at once to be built and to be treated for political reasons as already in exis-
tence (Ibid.: 223). Therefore, the conceptualization of the failure/collapse of the post-colonial
state in Africa should not be conceived as a crisis of the state as a finished and complete product.
Rather, it should be (re)conceptualized as it is a complex problem encountered in the ongoing
process of statecraft.

To talk about the failure/collapse of the post-colonial state in Africa is to talk about the crisis of
the imposed political structure. It is to talk about the false start and its consequences. This im-
plies, among other things, that there has not been an effective state to begin with. What existed
was the attempt to create a Western type of state that later proved not to be workable in Africa.
This is not to categorically deny the existence of some sort of political organization (structure)
which was inherited from the colonial powers and continued without fundamental change after
the end of colonial rule. The point here is that it has not been possible to maintain even the pol-
itical structure that was created during colonialism and independence. Equally, this is not to
suggest that the post-colonial political structure should be maintained. On the contrary, it is to suggest that what existed did not work and should fundamentally be transformed if it is to solve the problems Africa encountered.

As it is important to consider the construction of political community, political identity and political structure in analysing the state in Africa, it is also useful to take into account these factors in (re)conceptualizing the crisis (failure/collapse) of the state. Thus, the failure of the state in Africa should be seen, first, as the failure in the reconstruction of a new political community, political identity and political structure. In this respect, Ottaway (1999a: 84) asserts, the priority task for newly independent African states was the creation of a common identity and the fostering of strong allegiance to the country among the disparate groups that made up the population. Citizens heterogeneous in culture, language, religion, social structure and political tradition were expected to acquire a new national identity overriding all the others. However, this hardly happened. The various ethnic/religious/regional groups within many African countries were kept together not because of the development of a new common identity and their voluntarily chosen allegiance to the newly emerging political community but by the force of authoritarian regimes. This clearly indicates that the African states failed to construct a new political community and strong political identity. The failure, in part, was because the states were weak and ineffective. They lacked the resources to foster universal, homogeneous education and a well-developed administrative system that made the state a real, but not an oppressive, presence. They also lacked the resources to promote rapid economic development, thus giving their citizens a vested interest in feeling part of the new country (Ibid.: 85-86).

The failure of the state in Africa should also be conceptualized as the failure in the reconstruction of the colonial state into an African postcolonial state. Colonial powers tried to reconstruct the pre-colonial African socio-political and economic systems in their image. They transplanted the European style territorial state into Africa. They introduced European political and economic institutions. After independence the new African political leaders happily inherited the colonial political structure. Rather than reconstituting the inherited colonial state by taking into account their historical heritage, culture, population diversity, etc. they tried to make the same system work. However, the political system that was constructed to serve the colonial powers failed to serve the African society. It was not meant to.

The failure of the state in Africa should also be seen as the collapse of the real existing state institutions. In this case, state collapse is a deeper phenomenon than mere rebellion, coup, or riot. It refers to a situation where the structure, authority (legitimate power), law and political order have fallen apart. On the other hand, it is not necessarily anarchy. Nor is it simply a by-product of the rise of ethnic nationalism. Rather, it is the collapse of the prevailing order that brings about the retreat to ethnic nationalism as a residual, viable identity (Zartman, 1995: 1). State collapse involves the breakdown not only of the government superstructure, but also that of the social infrastructure. State failure/collapse is also the rejection of the three components of the state: the idea of the state, the physical basis of the state and the institutions of the state, and the lack (or absence) of vertical and horizontal legitimacy within the state (Holsti, 1996: 82-84 and 92-97).

State collapse occurs, therefore, when structure, authority, legitimate power, law, political order fall apart (Lyons and Samatar, 1995: 1). It should be noted that this is not a short-term phenomenon but a cumulative and incremental process. Governments, argue Lyons and Samatar (1995: 1) lose their ability to exercise legitimate authority unevenly over territory. Certain regions de-
compose or fall away from central control, as happened to many African countries such as northern Somalia, northern Ethiopia and southern Sudan, while others remain within the government’s realm. A state may also collapse unevenly over time: government controls over a territory during day and other forces rule the night. For instance, as Kaplan (1994: 1) points out, the cities of West Africa at night are some of the unsafe places in the world. Streets are unlit; the police often lack gasoline for their vehicles; armed burglars, carjackers and smugglers proliferate. The government in Sierra Leone has no writ after dark…. This has been true in much of Africa.

State institutions may lose their authority in some areas while maintaining influence over others. Some states disintegrate as cohesive economic entities while maintaining their political unity. Thus, as a cumulative process, the syndrome of state collapse often begins when a regime loses its ability to satisfy various demand-bearing groups in society as resources dry up. Then dissatisfaction and opposition grow. The regime starts an increasing use of force to maintain order. Armed resistance from the opposition may follow. Such a development will finally lead to civil war. Sometimes the old government falls, and is replaced by a successor regime, as happened in 1974 in Ethiopia. In cases of complete collapse, however, the degeneration is too widespread, and society is not able to rebound into a coherent foundation for the state. As a result the state collapses, and political and economic space retract, the centre no longer has authority, and power withers away (Lyons and Samatar, 1995: 1-2).

It is because of the fact that, as Zartman (1995: 8) points out, ‘Collapse, …. is an extreme case of governance problems; or excessive burdens on governing capacity, a matter of degree but not a difference in nature from the difficulties of meeting demands and exercising authority’. the terms failure/collapse are used together in this research, to show that the difference is a matter of degree. In the case of state collapse it will be difficult to bring the pieces together under a common identity and work together. The components of society oppose the centre and fend for themselves on the local level. Different political groups - warlords, ethnic, religious and regional leaders - use regionalism, ethnicity, tribalism, etc. as a source of identity and control in the absence of anything else (Ibid.). Somalia is an excellent example.

It is crucial to point out that the state, the regime, the party (if any), and even individual personalities have been closely intertwined in the vast majority of African countries, and they are not easily disentangled (Villalon, 1998: 9). In other words, in much of Africa there has been a high degree of personalization of state and regime. Thus, attack on regimes and incumbent governments became de facto attack on the state itself. For instance, in Somalia, Liberia and Ethiopia the fall of the individual leader and the regime triggered the virtually simultaneous collapse of the state.

What are the conditions for and signs of the crisis (failure/collapse) of the state? One of the basic conditions for the failure/collapse of the real existing post-colonial states in Africa is, as indicated above, related to decolonization. Ali A. Mazrui has made an important contribution in this respect. He started with a fundamental question What is real decolonization? In other words, the question is as Mazrui (1995: 28) puts it: whether real decolonization is not the winning of formal independence, not the changing of the guard on independence day, the raising of new flags, or the singing of new national anthems, but the collapse of the colonial state itself, the cruel and bloody disintegration of colonial structures. Liberation and decolonization can no longer be equated’.

As Mazrui points out, African decolonization did not go beyond the changing of the guard on Independence Day, the raising of new flags, or the singing of new national anthems. The colo-
nial political and economic structure remained more or less intact. The centralized and authoritarian nature of the colonial state did not change. Rather it was consolidated. The ethnic hierarchy, which was created by colonialism, remained as it was or even worsened. This was one of the first conditions for and sign of the crisis of the state in Africa, for that matter, for many post-colonial societies.

The other condition is that every African government has too much or too little government. An excess of government becomes tyranny; too little government becomes anarchy; either may lead to the failure/collapse of the state (Ibid.). There are many instances where both too much and too little government led to state collapse. Somalia under Siyad Barre was the case in which tyranny ultimately led to the collapse of the state; anarchic conditions in Zaire (more recently the Democratic Republic of Congo) in 1960 nearly destroyed the post-colonial state (Ibid.). A similar argument can be made regarding Ethiopia both under Emperor Haile Selassie as an absolute monarch and under Mengistu as a military dictatorship and Sudan repeatedly under military dictatorship and civilian centralized governments. In this respect, it is imperative to point out that on the one hand, military rule almost always leads to too much government. On the other hand, civilian rule, as in Nigeria and Sudan, with politicians squabbling among themselves and sometimes plundering the nation's resources, has sometimes meant too little government. Another dilemma of too much government versus too little hinges on the party system. On the one hand, one-party states tend toward too much government, on the other hand, multiparty systems in Africa have often degenerated into ethnic or sectarian rivalries resulting in too little control (Ibid.).

In addition to the party system, the state may succeed or fail in relation to wider societal configurations. Within the wider societal configuration of Africa ethnicity continues to be a major factor in the success or failure of the state. Here, too, Africa presents contradictions. A state may collapse either because of too many ethnic groups or, paradoxically, because it has too few (Ibid.: 30). The failure of the state in Uganda in previous decades was due partly to the very ethnic richness of the society, to the striking diversity of Bantu, Nilotic, Sudanic, and other groups, each of which is itself internally diverse. Uganda's political system was not able to sustain the immense pressures of competing ethno-cultural claims. Ethiopia under Emperor Hail Mariam, who came to power in 1977, also drifted toward state failure partly because the system was unable to accommodate the country's rich cultural and ethnic diversity. Mengistu's tyranny did not foster free negotiations, or compromise, or coalition building among ethnic groups (Ibid.). The current situation in which ethnicity is politicized and ethnic federation is the official government policy seems a dangerous experiment that may again lead to the collapse of the state in Ethiopia.

How can a state fail or collapse because it has too few ethnic groups? Two things should be considered here: Plural Society (e.g. Somalia) and Dual Society (Burundi, Rwanda, and Sudan). Somalis are a people divided by the same culture. Its cultural homogeneity notwithstanding, Somalia is also a plural society. The single culture of the Somali people is misleading because Somalia's pluralism is at the level of sub-ethnicity. Its culture legitimizes the system of clans that is one of the central causes of discord. And it legitimizes interclan feuds and the macho response to interclan stalemates. These interclan rivalries would decline if the Somalis themselves had to compete with other ethnic groups within a plural society, if, for example, the Amhara and the Tigre were members of Somalia's society. Siyad Barre, who played one clan against another, exploited Somalia's disguised pluralism. Siyad Barre's tyranny, which lasted from 1969 into the 1990's, turned out to be the road to destruction of the Somali state (Ibid.).
In contrast to the threats to the state presented by the plural society are the threats presented by the dual society. In this respect, Mazrui (Ibid.) argues: 'the plural society endangers the state by having more sociological diversity than the political process can accommodate. The dual society endangers the state by having less sociological diversity than is necessary for the politics of compromise'. In countries in which the fundamental divide within a country is between two groups or two geographic areas, such as Rwanda, Burundi and Sudan, the state's vulnerability differs from that plural societies (Ibid.: 31). Especially, as Mazrui (Ibid.) further points out:

The most risky situations with respect to dual societies are not those involving a convergence of ethnic duality and regional (territorial) duality, as in Cyprus or Czechoslovakia. ... The most risky form of duality is that of pure ethnic differentiation without territorial differentiation, because there is no prospect of even a Cyprus-type stalemate, in which the conflicting ethnic groups can live separate but peaceful lives. Nor is there the prospect of creating separate countries, as with Czechoslovakia's 'gracious parting of the ways.' Rather, the two groups are so intermingled in neighborhoods, at times so intermarried, that a soured ethnic relationship is an explosive relationship - a prescription for hate at close quarters.

The other basic condition that may lead to the collapse of the state is, as Ng'ethe (1995: 254-255) put it, whether or not the state has the ability to overcome the crises related to the successful state formation. Some of these crises are: the crises of identity, through which the people learn to identify themselves as citizens of the national-state rather than members of a particular ethnic subgroup; the crises of legitimacy or the development of the sense; on the part of the governed, that the government in power has the legitimate right to rule; the crisis of penetration or the development of the state's capacity to enforce all decisions within its territorial jurisdiction; the crises of participation, or the provision of means and opportunities for the citizens to influence state decisions; and the crises of distribution, or the evaluation of the will and the means to solve at least the most glaring aspects of social, political, and especially, economic inequality. As Ng'ethe (1995: 256) also argues, the ability of the state to overcome the crises indicated above is conceptually linked to leadership and governance; i.e., the manner in which power is shared and exercised. The more personalized the control over power, the more the public is denied the rights to participate in decision-making, the more political power is used for personal enrichment, the higher is the possibility for the state to collapse.

These and other related conditions may give us hints. However, before we can decide whether or not a particular post-colonial state is dying we need to understand what constitutes state failure, as opposed to less catastrophic political collapse. Mazrui (1995: 31) has identified six basic functions that can be used to assess whether a state has failed or not:

Sovereign control over territory; sovereign supervision (though not necessarily ownership) of the nation's resources; effective and rational revenue extraction from people, goods, and services; the capacity to build and maintain an adequate national infrastructure (roads, postal services, telephone systems, railways, and the like); the capacity to render such basic services as sanitation, education, housing, and health care; and the capacity for governance and the maintenance of law and order.

In this regard, as Mazrui (Ibid.: 28-29) observes, the governments of Angola, Sudan and Ethiopia, for example, have lost sovereign control over a large proportion of their country; very few countries have effective control over their country's resources; the tax systems are in shambles in one African country after another; and the states lag behind in providing essential services and infrastructures. But it is the sixth stage in state failure - a crisis in governance, sometimes leading to the collapse of law and order - that is often catastrophic (Ibid.). Zartman (1995: 9-10) also
identified five ultimate signposts for state collapse: (1) power devolves to the periphery when (because) the centre fights within itself. (2) Power withers at the centre by default because the central government loses its power base. It no longer pays attention to the needs of its social bases and they withdraw their support. The centre instead relies on its innermost trusted circles: this may be ethnic or regional groups, or a factional group such as an army officers' clique. (3) Government malfunctions by avoiding necessary but difficult choices. (4) Incumbents practise only defensive politics, fending off challenges and reducing threats. (5) Probably the ultimate danger sign is when the centre loses control over its own state agents, who begin to operate on their own account. Officials exact payments for their own pockets, law and order is consistently violated the agent of law and order, the police and the army units become gangs and brigands. When we look at the state in Africa, with these conditions and signposts for the failure/collapse of the state in mind, it seems clear that many states have already collapsed while many more are on the verge of collapse. The three Horn of African countries are good examples.

To sum up, in order to fruitfully understand the contemporary politics in Africa (or politics in contemporary Africa) and the prevailing crisis it would not be enough to focus only on the state per se. The post-colonial state is the result of complex factors and process, both pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, notably the process of the construction of political community, political accountability, national and sub-national identities, state-making and the resulting insecurity, and the complex and never ending process of statecraft. It is, therefore, be important to take all these factors and processes into account in analyzing the situation in the continent. Furthermore, it is also crucial to consider the impact of the dominant political discourses and practices which have been shaping the overall political development. It is only then that it would be possible to analyze the failure/collapse of the state (or the crisis of the state in general) in Africa in general and the Horn of Africa in particular.

As has been clear from the beginning, the failure of the state, the refugee crisis and their relationships are the focus of the research. In this chapter I have tried to lay the theoretical foundation on how to critically analyse the failure of the state. The next chapter will focus on the critical conceptualization of the idea of a ‘refugee’.