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Author(s): Craig Charney

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Political Power & Social Class in the Neo-Colonial African State

Craig Charney

Using Poulantzas' mode of analysis Charney provides a framework for understanding and periodising the state, and the phenomenon of 'neo-colonialism' — often referred to, seldom defined. It shows that the neo-colonial state has a different basis for 'hegemony' — clientelism — than in the centre states, and that it is particularist not 'national'. It also explores the circumstances under which there could be a break up of the dominant class basis of and of factional popular support for the neo-colonial state.

It would be useful to reflect on the possible application of the concepts of Althusser and Poulantzas to the reality of neo-colonial states.

Jean Copans

Even experienced practitioners acknowledge that it will hardly do for a Marxist political analysis simply to ship Professor Poulantzas out to West Africa and set him promptly to work in the environment as best he may.

John Dunn

Neo-colonialism in Africa has been much discussed, but rarely defined and even less often theorised. When definitions of the phenomenon have been proposed, they have generally been descriptive rather than analytic. They refer to the absence of fundamental social change since the end of the colonial era without specifying the factors which account for the continuities, or those which distinguish neo-colonial societies from other types of capitalist social formations. Indeed, there has been surprisingly little progress since a resolution of the All-African People's Congress 25 years ago defined neo-colonialism as 'the survival of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries which become the victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military or technical means'. The latest major Marxist synthesis on African history in English simply calls neo-colonialism 'the continuation of practices of domination after independence by old colonial powers'. (Freund 1984: 235)

Despite the vague definitions offered, the notion of neo-colonialism clearly refers to something real. Contrary to the hopes of some and the fears of others, in Africa the position of the dominated classes, the power of foreign capital and the international division of labour have changed little since independence. The rarity of even partly successful attempts to overthrow class domination, change the relations of production or initiate processes of accumulation is also evident. These continuities are all the more striking in view of the frequency of changes of government in many African countries, and given the social tensions and political struggles even in the states which have remained relatively stable. The issue raised by these phenomena is the nature, form and function of the neo-colonial African state.

The premise of this paper is that the neo-colonial state is a type of capitalist state associated with a particular stage of capitalist development in Africa, and produced by a given set of class struggles. It can be analysed in terms of the same criteria as other capitalist states, while taking into account the particular characteristics of African societies.

This analysis is based upon concepts drawn from the work of Gramsci, Althusser and Poulantzas. In their perspective, class domination is produced by a combination of force and hegemony. Force, by its nature, means acts of repression which inspire fear. Hegemony, in contrast, is politico-ideological leadership, which pervades the entire social formation (including the dominated classes). In developed capitalist societies, Poulantzas defines it as 'the specific characteristics of the dominant capitalist ideology by means of which one class or fraction succeeds in presenting itself as the incarnation of the general interest of the population, and in so doing conditioning a specific political acceptance of its domination on the part of the dominated classes'. (1968: 239) The ways hegemony is exercised in neo-colonial states differ somewhat from those in the developed capitalist countries, but the notion of hegemony remains both applicable and essential for their analysis. In my view, it represents the unifying concept permitting the comprehension of the functioning of African states, including many aspects considered paradoxical by political scientists or economists.

I propose to define the neo-colonial state as a formally independent state, in which transnational capital is the hegemonic class and the indigenous petty bourgeoisie the reigning class, whose economy remains extroverted and subordinated to the world market, and which diffuses commodity relations within precapitalist modes of production. My argument is that in the neo-colonial state, foreign capital retains its hegemony through a contradictory alliance with local dominant classes, a strategy rendered possible by the interpenetration of capitalist and domestic modes of production. The evolution of this articulation permits class hegemony and state legitimisation to be maintained via lineage-type discourses rationalising an increasingly capitalist reality. Clientelist networks justified through this discourse enable African dominant classes actually to lead the subordinate classes and to contain opposition to the ruling alliance. In these circumstances, merely spreading ideas of resistance is difficult, and acting upon them dangerous; the safest strategy open to the dominated classes is to play the game of their patrons. The first part of this paper presents the operation of this hegemonic strategy. The development of relations among the dominant classes is discussed in the second part. The final section considers the conditions in which the neo-colonial alignment might break down.

THE STRATEGY OF CLASS DOMINATION

The Different Basis for Hegemony in Peripheral States

'One of the major tasks of the authoritarian neo-colonial state, inseparable from the emergence of a dominant class, concerns the formation of a civil society which guarantees the functioning of the capitalist mode of production', writes J.-F. Bayart (1978: 26). This poses squarely the question of how the hegemony of the dominant classes is maintained in the neo-colonial state. In a sense, it is a restatement of the classic question of Pashukanis: 'Why does class domination not appear for what it is, that is, the subjection of one part of the population to another?' However, it cannot receive the same response that he and other Marxist theorists formulated for developed capitalist societies.

The hegemony enjoyed by capital in the centre presupposes the generalisation of commodity relations into production and reproduction, as well as exchange. Under these conditions, commodity fetishism (the notion that the wage received for labour represents an equal exchange between possessors of two types of commodities) hides the fact that the capital relation is a social relation of inequality and unequal exchange. Social inequality is justified on the grounds of competition among individuals who are theoretically equal. The separation of the worker from the means of production corresponds to the separation of the economic and the political spheres under capitalist conditions of production, where the capital-labour relation no longer involves personal dependence or political constraint. (Poulantzas terms the separation of the economic and the political under capitalism the 'isolation effect'.)

The capitalist state thus need not appear as a class state. It is legitimated rather as impersonal, neutral and above-the-fray. It treats each citizen as a subject, not an object, legally free, independent and equal. Just as citizens are equal before the law, they are equally free to sell their labour power, and have an equal right to vote for the government, which is presented as the incarnation of the national will. Class is formally absent from the institutions of the state; it is a 'national-popular' class state. Thanks to the isolation effect, political and economic struggles are perceived as separate, often in atomised or individualistic terms, rather than in class terms. This ideology is reinforced by the action of various ideological state (or class) apparatuses: schools, the mass media, etc.

In Africa, however, bourgeois hegemony and state legitimacy cannot be founded exclusively on exchange relations, as commodity production is far from universal. A large proportion of reproduction takes place within domestic or lineage relations, rather than through commodity sales. Furthermore, much of production is organized around personal relations of direct dependence between peasant or worker and chief, merchant, marabout or bureaucrat, rather than through an impersonal market. In these circumstances, the isolation effect cannot operate, since from the viewpoint of the subaltern classes, the economic and political orders are one and the same.

Legal and political equality are likewise sharply circumscribed. Independent African states inherited bourgeois legal systems, but their writ does not run in many respects. 'Traditional' or religious authorities often have considerable power, while the law is simply ignored in a large part of the economy (the informal sector). As to formal democratic rights, in most African states these are limited or absent altogether. The role of the state in the reproduction of the labour force is also much more limited than in the developed countries; thus apparatuses such as the schools or the press have much less influence.

The Role of 'Lineage' Ideologies

In the neo-colonial state, the dominant classes maintain their hegemony and the capitalist state its legitimacy by reproducing relations of dependence organised on the basis of lineage-type discourse. The non-universality of commodity relations in these states stems from the interpenetration of capitalist and domestic modes of production. (Meillassoux 1975, Wolpe 1971.) This interpenetration, produced by capitalism's evolution in Africa, permits the dominant classes to profit from the ideologies of legitimation and state structures characteristic of the different modes of production in which they originated. As Poulantzas wrote:

Just as the structures of the state in a concrete formation present, under the domination of one type of state, structures which come from other types, these structures often participate, under the domination of one type of legitimation, in other types of legitimation; specifically, in previous dominant ideologies, corresponding to classes which are no longer the politically dominant classes . . . The gap between a type of state and the dominant legitimacy in a form — corresponding to different political forms — is particularly striking in the case of developing or decolonizing countries, in Africa for example, where the establishment of 'modern' states is constantly dominated by traditional ideologies. (1968: 242).

However, these ideologies are *not* mere illusions. They explain the codes of access to the means of production and reproduction in neo-colonial societies.

The domination of capitalism in Africa (and elsewhere) was originally imposed upon societies organised in lineage or kinship communities based upon domestic modes of production. The process began with the monetarisation of prestige goods and armaments, which set communities to procuring slaves and producing exportable products. From this time on, the heads of lineage communities were acting as agents for capital. Through the conquest of Africa, the colonial state expanded the *économie de traite* over the whole of the continent, extracting labour power on capital's behalf indirectly (taxes stimulating commodity production and proletarianisation) and directly (forced labour). This phase of initiation was almost everywhere finished by the 1940s, when capitalism could count on the enlarged reproduction of commodity relations through the operation of the market, thanks to the partial monetarisation of individual and social reproduction: food, clothing, tools, school fees, dowries, etc. Forced labour was abolished and taxes became less important, as 'free' labour at least partly separated from the means of production flowed towards the towns. Nevertheless, domestic modes of production and reproduction remained intact, even though capitalism was sucking more and more labour power out of them.

Despite great variety in levels of productive forces and details of social organisation, societies in which domestically-based modes of production* are prevalent share certain common features. Production, distribution of product and reproduction occur largely within the domestic household (extended or nuclear family). The economic and political instances are not separated; an individual's place in one determines his place in the other. Authority rests in the hands of chiefs (elder males); women and younger men (the 'social cadets') are powerless. Social organisation of units larger than one household is centered around lineage segments, with real or fictitious common ancestors (Meillassoux, Sahlins, Middleton).

The ideological instance is also closely linked to the economic and political spheres in lineage formations. At lower levels of productive forces, it is identical with them. The dominant class reinforces the power it enjoys via reproduction through a monopoly on sacred knowledge. This is manifest in the spiritual powers of elders, chiefs and kings, ancestor worship, etc. At higher levels (feudalism), ideology is a separate instance, operating as a hegemonic apparatus justifying exploitation (church or mosque). As P. Anderson put it, 'The super-structures of kinship, religion, laws or the state necessarily enter into the constitutive structure of the mode of production in precapitalist social formations'. (Anderson 1974: 403)

*Under the label 'domestically-based modes of production' I class together all the so-called Germanic, Slave, Asiatic, feudal and African modes.

There are two characteristic aspects of the ideologies of the dominant within domestically-based modes of production:

1) *Hierarchy*: relations of domination are ascribed to real or fictitious relations of blood or seniority; relations between different lineage communities to an order of precedence. Less developed forms base these ties on common ancestry; more highly articulate versions elaborate notions of social ranks, castes, or a 'great chain of being'.

2) *Reciprocity*: the submission of dominated groups and the offer of their labor power or surplus, in return for redistribution of other goods and protection on the part of the dominators. Thus youths and women must efface themselves before older men, serfs and vassals before their lords, talibes before marabouts.

In neo-colonial societies, the beneficiaries of systems of legitimation based upon domestic or lineage-type ideology are often different from those of pre-colonial times. The local dominant classes need not necessarily be descendants of the pre-colonial aristocracy, where one existed (though they often are). Other dominant classes or fractions may also control apparatuses of dependency based upon lineage units and discourse: bureaucrats, religious leaders, the petite bourgeoisie, landowners. (Copans 145)

Though the dominant groups may vary, however, on the bottom of the neo-colonial system are regularly found the exploited of both capitalist and domestic societies: peasants, workers, youths, women and disfavoured lineages. This is the product of the interpenetration of the two modes as capitalism develops. Younger sons, women and members of subordinate lineages tend to have the least access to land and other resources, and most often become workers. While the opportunities for social mobility open to individual members of the dominated groups vary, the general effect of political and economic organisation on the basis of lineage-type ideology is to keep them 'in their place'. (Bayart 1979: ch.7) Discussing the consequences of political machines organised on this basis, Powell notes that their function is 'to integrate actors high and low in the social hierarchy, thereby serving as a potential buffer to inter-class conflict.' (1970:416).

Clientelism

Lineage-type discourse enables the capitalist-dominated power bloc and neo-colonial state to achieve legitimation through the clientelist practice of power. Clientelism is a personalised relationship between two individuals or groups belonging to different classes or class fractions, based upon reciprocal exchange of goods and services. These relations entail the extraction of labour power, surplus and political loyalty, in return for economic, political, military and religious services. When classes form and exploitation appears in social formations, domestic or lineage relations become clientelist relations. Clientelist strategies mask exploitative exchange behind lineage-type discourse stressing hierarchy and reciprocity. Clientelist relations are rationalised in terms of kinship or pseudo-kinship ties, mutual obligation, redistribution and solidarity.

The fluid and ever-changing structure of group relations within African states is the product of clientelist relations, which have permitted the subordination of domestic units in various kinds of collectivities. As Lemarchand has noted, clients may take on their patron's tribal identity, broaden the focus of their own identity or become one of many lineage-defined groups in a wider political system, depending upon the

scope and discourse of the relationships. The phenomenon can be viewed as the 'pyramiding of patron-client ties', as surplus and services are exchanged at a variety of levels (Foltz, 1962). Domestic units could thus be hooked into clan or, where they existed, pre-colonial states, by appropriate pseudo-lineage ideologies (such as the invention of mythical common ancestors). The establishment of the colonial state enabled state legitimation and primitive accumulation to take advantage of lineage ideology as well, a function that continued even as capitalism transformed the bases of production and reproduction. Domestic units were hooked into the state and capitalist production via clientelist structures of indirect rule (chiefdoms, tribes, factions, etc.), irrespective of whether the metropole's policy for the petite bourgeoisie was 'assimilation' or 'separate development'.

This clientelist practice has been carried over and extended within the neo-colonial state. Continued adherence to lineage-type strategies fulfills political and ideological functions for the dominant classes, not merely the economic function (reproduction of the labour force) highlighted by economic anthropology. They offer a way to legitimate state and class power even in societies penetrated by capitalism to the point where the reproductive function of the lineage mode has declined drastically. They also remain important in maintaining the ideological conditions for the subjection of the dominated classes even where the ideological instance has been partially separated from the political-economic by the organisation of churches or mosques. (Often in fact lineage-type religious practices exist side-by-side with Christian or Muslim practice reflecting the continuing ideological efficacy of the dominant elements within lineage groupings.) Thus, Coulon has shown that Senegalese peasants obey the state not as subjects, but as the *talibes* of their *marabouts*. This type of discourse has a popular resonance in part because it draws upon shared symbols and history, but particularly because the dominant class patrons 'deliver the goods' through clientelist mechanisms. The lineage-type discourse shows how conformity must be expressed in order to obtain satisfaction, while clientelist practices make the independent organisation of the dominated classes very difficult. 'But this argument can be taken much further', notes Flynn, 'if one emphasises their deliberate organisation and maintenance from above for political purposes.'

Changing Forms of the State

While the discourse and shell of lineage formations have been kept, their interpenetration with capitalism and the development of the state have transformed the material bases of clientelism which existed in pre-colonial Africa. The productive and reproductive vitality of domestic organisations has been steadily eroded by capitalism. In consequence, clientelist ties increasingly regulate access to capitalist means of production and reproduction, often via the state, according to lineage-type ideologies. The very process through which state and capital undermined the economic foundations of pre-capitalist structures created the new resources and lines of authority channeled through them. In the simple domestic mode of production, the bases of power lay in the processes of reproduction: control of surplus and women. Colonial capitalism intensified the contradictions within it, often to the breaking point, while establishing new means of domination. In turn, the domestic modes gave rise to individual and collective strategies of lineage-based access to resources within the capitalist sphere.

To understand the development of class dominance on the basis of clientelist strategies, one must consider them in relation to the evolution of productive and

reproductive relations, and the form of state or place of the state within them. In Poulantzas' terms, the state form changes with phases of the capitalist mode of production (initiation and enlarged reproduction), capital seeking different types of state intervention in the economy in each. Following Marx, he says the absolutist state corresponded to the 'initiation' phase in Europe, and the liberal state to that of enlarged reproduction. While African states can be periodised on the same basis, the characteristics and peripheral position of African societies produced rather different state forms. The initiation phase involved a 'peripheral absolutist' state: an authoritarian, foreign-controlled administration which forcibly extracted labour power and extended commodity relations on the basis of pre-existing forms of production. After World War II, the phase of enlarged reproduction permitted the establishment of a 'developmentalist' state form, symbolised by the Colonial Development and Welfare Act and the *Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social*. This state intervened actively to intensify agricultural production needed by the metropole and to promote limited industrial development, on the basis of 'free' labour and a more liberal political order. It remains in existence today, despite changes of regime at or since independence.

During the initial phase, state coercion tightened the grip of pre-colonial forms of exploitation while slotting new resources into them. Forced labour and taxation intensified demands for labour time and encouraged dependence on marketed food and tools by the dominated classes. In addition, the monetarisation of dowries and other goods opened possibilities of accumulation (particularly of wives), leading elders to increase labour demands and reduce redistribution. Producers unable to meet taxes and ever-rising expenditure needs fell into debt and deeper dependence on patron creditors. Some migrated to become clients elsewhere in the countryside; others went with groups seeking work in the towns. Both trends broadened the scope of lineage clientelist ties. Thus, within the early colonial order, local dominant classes acquired a variety of powerful new means of patronage: money, access to land, jobs, and means of production, the delegated power of the colonial state to arbitrarily tax or punish.

In the phase of enlarged reproduction, expanded state intervention afforded larger quantities and additional kinds of patronage resources. State aid provided farm implements, infrastructure and credit to rural patrons and a fortunate few among their clients. Paradoxically, however, indebtedness grew: those unable to accede to crop-boosting new technology were bound ever tighter to their patrons by the loans they needed to survive. For those who joined the exodus to the towns, a search for new patrons lay ahead. The total amount of labour power for sale was determined by the push-pull of rural impoverishment and urban development, but individual access to jobs was regulated less by the 'free' market than upon the basis of lineage-type relations. The gradual expansion of franchise rights and of the local dominant classes' role in the administration permitted the crystallisation of a party system corresponding to the clientelist politico-economic order. Participation in the factional political struggles of patrons represented for members of subaltern classes a form of struggle for essential reproductive or productive goods (which explains the intensity and violence of electoral struggles despite the absence of challenges to the fundamentals of the system).

Though independence did not change the form of the state, it brought deepened class dependence. Peasants rely ever more on rural notables for land, seeds, cattle and tools, as well as credit until harvest, commercialisation and access to state

services. The myriad of 'agricultural development' and foreign 'aid' programmes only increased the resources at the disposal of dominant class patrons and the reliance of the dominated classes upon the market. The accelerating collapse of rural subsistence systems unleashed an unprecedented wave of migration towards African (and overseas) cities.

In the towns, similar relations of dependence exist on fairly similar bases, African cities recalling what Gramsci (1971:91) labelled 'medieval-type cities'. In the informal sector of the economy, where half or more of the workforce is employed, commodity production is based upon domestic rather than exchange relations. Regulation takes place through lineage or pseudo-lineage ties which ignore the capitalist legal order — and are usually ignored by it. Workers tend to share family, tribal or caste links to the proprietor. They often go unpaid or receive only pocket money, and enjoy no protection under contracts, labour laws or state insurance schemes. (Salama and Mathias, 1984: 61-79; Hugon, 1984). In the formal sector, where employee and employer no longer share domestic ties, clientelist networks have nonetheless been reproduced on the basis of access to jobs and state power. Present local dominant classes either grew up within the bureaucracies, or took them over. In any case, they need to control urban workers and maintain good relations with the dominant rural classes. This has produced the tribalisation of access to posts and subsidies, where pseudo-lineage ideology ties the urban petty bourgeoisie to sectors of the workforce and its rural peers. To some extent exchange relations also permit the 'isolation effect' to play a legitimating role: even when workers have achieved class unity at the economic level through trade unions, their political consciousness remains tribal. As far as reproduction is concerned, town dwellers are far less self sufficient than rural residents. In many cities, workers in both the formal and informal sector for housing, beholden to 'chiefs' or landlords who can allocate plots. In other cases, state services for reproduction are particularly important: public housing, site and service schemes, school and health facilities, road and sanitation services and pensions. These resources constitute the substance of the patronage dispensed by the dominant classes through tribal political machines, the typical form of clientelism in African cities.

Thus, the ever-deepening penetration of capitalist relations and state structures in African social formations has created networks of control with a hold on members of dominated classes in town and country alike. The benefits for capitalism from such lineage-type clientelism were succinctly stated by Lemarchand (1972:148): 'Traditional clientelism regulates political mobilisation along traditional patron-client lines and maintains a measure of cohesion among ethnic segments, meanwhile permitting the accumulation of political and economic capital at the centre.'

The Working of Clientelism in the Neo-Colonial State

The lineage or pseudo-lineage clientele networks owe their efficacy as hegemonic organisations to their capacity to mystify class conflicts and channel them so that they reinforce rather than challenge the status quo. They determine the strategic options open to members of the dominated classes. Because the patron-client tie is personal, individual members of the dominated classes must confront dominant class patrons alone. Organisation is vertical: those at the base have no possibility of communication or solidarity with other members of their class. Conformity is but

logical, since a challenge to the patron can cost dear — loss of access to vital means of production and reproduction — and individual action is almost surely futile. Moreover, the pervasiveness of lineage-type ideologies and clientelist relations helps ensure that members of the dominated classes will rarely be exposed to other ideas, or come to accept them through a consciousness-raising process of independent political participation. If a client does protest or voice a demand, he must express it in the terms and forms which the dominant classes expect — as a loyal tribal subordinate, caste brother, *talibe*, etc., beseeching his better. If his request is granted, the likely result is merely to reinforce his sense of belonging to the clientelist group, provoking feelings of gratitude and reciprocity. Not for nothing did Pitt-Rivers call the clientelist bond a 'lopsided friendship': inequality and ideology are both present (quoted in Powell, 1970).

The same processes — mystification and channeling — occur in relations between patrons and groups of clients in the subaltern classes. Clientelist blocs exist to compete for productive and reproductive resources; the underdevelopment of African societies intensifies the struggles. This competition is described in terms of lineage-type discourse: 'I am a Baoule, a Zulu, a partisan of M'Backe,' and so on. Clients from the subordinate classes accept the leadership of 'their' dominant-class patron, as designated by the dominant ideology, and the obligations of reciprocity which follow. Unlike the state in developed capitalist countries, which presents itself as 'national' and 'popular', the neo-colonial state is 'popular' but particularist (tribal or sub-national).

The neo-colonial state is stronger than the colonial state, because the patrons at every level are themselves Africans. Clients in the dominated classes can identify with them as part of a racial or lineage-type community, and they respond as such. They have no interest in racially discriminatory legislation or limitations upon the professional advancement or accumulation of fellow Africans; contrary to what was the case under colonial regimes, their appropriations of land do not take the form of compact, racially-reserved zones, highly visible and resented. Most important, vastly more patronage is available to them with the enormous expansion of state activity and receipts, both in local exactions and foreign aid, which has occurred since their accession to political power. All these factors render them capable of exercising a form of popular leadership quite impossible under the colonial state. These factors of course help explain why anti-colonial revolution took place essentially in white-ruled colonies.

The mass organisations of African neo-colonial regimes (ruling parties, youth and women's movements, trade unions, etc.) serve to channel demands from subordinate groups and classes within the clientelist system. They replicate and encapsulate the contradictions between dominant and dominated in the society as a whole. While they may afford terrains of struggle to members of the subaltern classes, the practice of the patron classes generally ensures that such struggles are waged in terms of the system's own lineage-type ideology. One-party states and unitary mass organisations represent efforts to preclude the development of alternative foci of organisation and communication to the official system. Put more crudely, they permit the banning of organised opposition without sacrificing the forms of democratic representation. However, multi-party states function in much the same manner as one-party states with regard to the dispensing of patronage. Usually, a single party is dominant, at least regionally, and feels its clientelist organisation strong enough to face down a legal opposition. The dominant classes

also practice patronage politics in no-party states, but directly via the state rather than mediated by political party organisation.

When insubordination does present itself, clientelism also helps the dominant classes to neutralise it. At the individual level, discontented members of the subaltern classes may respond in a variety of ways: refuse to plant export crops, join the exodus to the towns, change job or region, use alcohol or drugs, engage in crime or practice sorcery. The common element in all these responses is that they change the position of the individual without changing the system of dependency itself. Indeed, after practicing many of them, the individual needs a new patron. Even collective resistance to the system often takes place on its own terms. As Rey (1973:162) noted, 'the workers of the dominated modes of production, constrained to go sell their labour power, as well as those menaced by this eventuality, see in the dominant classes of these modes of production the principal guilty parties.' They tend to struggle to replace chiefs or patrons, rather than attacking the institutions of class society themselves. The ideological effects of lineage-type discourse may also help shape the form of messianic cults, where magical beliefs mix with political ideology, potentially co-optable in lineage clientelist terms. Likewise, they may also help limit revolt to a single clan, community, tribe or region — as in Kenya.

These final observations are perhaps the ultimate proof of the effectiveness of the dominant classes' hegemonic strategies within the neo-colonial state. They fit well with an observation of Poulantzas:

We know that the dominance of (hegemonic) ideology manifests itself by the fact that the dominated classes live their conditions of political existence in the forms of the dominant political discourse. This means that they often live even their revolt against the system of domination in the frame of reference of the dominant legitimisation system. (1968:241)

RELATIONS AMONG DOMINANT CLASSES

Changing Forms of Regime

According to Leys, shortly before Kenya's independence, the former President of the Employers Federation there wrote, 'We are faced with the problem not of governing from power but of governing by example, influence, and persuasion . . .' Sir Philip Rogers' remark neatly frames the question of the relationship of the dominant classes in the neo-colonial state and the hegemonic position of foreign capital. Colin Leys pointed out that a central factor in neo-colonialism is 'the formation of classes or strata within a colony which are closely allied to and dependent upon foreign capital.' To analyse the position of these classes within the state, we will again apply the criteria suggested by Poulantzas. As in the case of the preceding discussion, however, we cannot simply copy his arguments concerning class relations in the developed capitalist countries.

In neo-colonial states, the organisation of hegemony within the power bloc differs from that in the metropolises, due to their location on the periphery and to their internal class composition. In these countries there is no national bourgeoisie; the transnational bourgeoisie is the dominant force in the economy. There are entrepreneurs, but no local class with an economic base and ideological project aiming to do what national bourgeoisies elsewhere have done: organise a national-popular bloc and develop auto-centred accumulation and industrialisation. Rather, the local dominant classes are divided into many different fractions. Thus, there exist oppositions between fractions of the petty bourgeoisie involved in the administration and in the private sector, those in commerce and in manufacturing,

the intelligentsia, and the dominant rural classes. These classes may themselves be divided by ideology — tribalism, regionalism, aspirant bourgeois, compradores, socialists, etc. The concrete configuration varies markedly from one country to another as a function of the evolution of class struggles and the ways in which the modes of production present are articulated. Finally, neo-colonial African states differ from those of the centre in the larger proportion of investment, employment and consumption controlled by the state. Nevertheless, like other capitalist states, the neo-colonial state is the element which favours the organisation of the dominant classes.

Poulantzas distinguished between the 'hegemonic class' — 'the one which, in the final analysis, holds political power' — and the 'reigning class' — which holds the state apparatus, providing high political, military and administrative personnel. Together these classes constitute the 'power bloc', a contradictory unity of politically dominant classes and fractions who accommodate each other politically, economically and ideologically. Poulantzas also distinguished between 'allied classes' and 'supporting classes'. The former are linked at one specific level to the power bloc (political, economic or ideological), while opposing it at others. The latter back its dominance not because of concessions, but from a belief in the state's neutrality and fear that one controlled by the subordinate classes would be worse for them.

The alliances of dominant classes are related to changes in the form of state and of regime. The form of state corresponds to the basic configuration of the power bloc of a given state, e.g. the hegemonic class and the range of kinds of alliances it is capable of establishing with other dominant classes. In contrast, forms of regime reflect different types of representation of social classes within political institutions, parties and ideologies. These are *not* reducible to economic phases; they are determined by political class struggles. The form of regime corresponds to the specific configuration of the power bloc and allied classes which exists in a given social formation. The entry of an allied class into the power bloc may change the form of regime without changing the form of state. These concepts offer a way to analyse continuity and change in political regimes and state forms in neo-colonial societies, and to understand the role of the local dominant classes as intermediaries between foreign capital and the subaltern classes.

With the establishment of the 'peripheral absolutist' state, old allies became opponents and vice versa. Capital dropped the indigenous trading petty bourgeoisie, a crucial ally in the phase of penetration, in favour of white men from the metropole, forcing local traders to become feeble dependents or liberal professionals. The enemies in the wars of conquest, the rural dominant classes, became supporting cogs in the administrative machinery. The initial phases of capitalism created not just means to extract labour power, but also a new African petty bourgeoisie. Relatively few in number, the members of this supporting class depended upon the colonial state and capital for their training and positions: clerks, teachers, catechists, professionals, artisans, etc. These groups struggled against the white colonial petty bourgeoisie, who constituted an allied class, e.g. the local agents of capital and the occupants of lower state positions. The *évolués* sought only the right to serve as the intermediaries of capital and the metropole, but their advances were quite limited, owing to their relative weakness as a class, and to the necessity of highly repressive state apparatuses for the forcible extraction of labour power. The hegemonic fraction in this phase was competitive merchant capital,

subject however to steady concentration over the course of the period, due to competitive struggles, crises and cartelisation.

The emergence of a new form of state after World War II corresponded to important changes in class alliances. As we have noted, the commencement phase of capitalist development was finished almost everywhere in Africa. The system had become capable of reproducing itself, rendering directly coercive forms of labour control obsolete. At the same time, the hegemony acquired by metropolitan monopoly commercial and financial capital, against the backdrop of Europe's economic straits, provided means and motivation for developing export production in the colonies. Prior development, accelerated during wartime, had already created the growing numbers and power of the African petty bourgeoisie and working class, which enabled them to struggle vigorously against the existing repressive state structures. If the transition to monopoly hegemony made a new strategy of domination based on a new state form appear desirable to capital, the intensification of class struggle in the context of the postwar African politico-economic crisis (strikes, disorders, etc.) made it imperative.

As the 'developmentalist' state based upon free labour was established, the white settlers were more or less rapidly ousted from the alliance of dominant classes, the indigenous petty bourgeoisie taking their place, often in alliance with the dominant rural class. The latter now enjoyed the status of allied classes, privileged contacts of state and capital, with growing quantities of school places, posts and funds within the grasp of their patronage networks. Their struggle now became one for a place in the power bloc alongside foreign capital. Capital itself had less need for direct representation within the state, now that loyal indigenous intermediaries were available. With mass mobilisations to varying degrees occurring in many territories, and anti-colonial peasant wars in Vietnam, Kenya, Cameroun and Algeria casting long shadows, direct colonial rule began to appear more of a liability than an asset. Moreover, since investment in public works exceeded immediate returns, influential voices began to suggest putting the equipment of the colonies at the disposal of transnational capital, which were clamouring for access, rather than metropolitan governments. A prominent member of the French colonial establishment, A. Blanchet, summed up the case for change in the debates just prior to the end of French colonialism thus: 'How can it be doubted that Africans of French culture, of French sentiments, placed in a French economic system, would hesitate for a moment to choose France if one left them free to associate themselves?'

Independence in Africa thus represented no change in the form of state, but merely a change in the form of regime and the composition of the power bloc. The establishment of formally sovereign regimes in the hands of local dominant classes marked their arrival as reigning classes. Henceforth, the initiatives of foreign capital and governments had to pass through them, considerably increasing their possibilities for influence and enrichment. Yet despite greater means and new masters, the type and objective of state intervention in the economy remained the same: the enlarged reproduction of commodity production and exchange.

With the growing internationalisation of capital, the hegemonic fraction in independent Africa became multinational capital, more weakly tied to individual countries in the centre, more strongly interested in exploiting all those on the periphery within a hierarchical world economy. Due to this approach, African

countries remain extraverted, producing raw materials for the world market, with few 'backward linkages' or intersectoral connections. The majority of productive investment, particularly in mining or manufacturing, is still externally financed. International capital has withdrawn from retailing and direct commodity purchases in many cases, offering lucrative opportunities for African middlemen, but it has continued to cream off profits upstream in wholesaling, commercialisation, processing, shipping and services. At the level of the international economy, the World Bank and other 'aid' agencies act as 'collective capitalists'. They divide up the costs of the establishment of infrastructure for the production and transport of export commodities. They also share out the costs of carrying the weakest, least profitable states to permit continued exploitation in others. The International Monetary Fund, clubs of private finance capital, and now the World Bank have increasingly used the renegotiation of African debts to negate their economic sovereignty, dictating economic policies and investment orientations.

The hold of foreign capital is reinforced by the ideologies of 'development' and 'modernisation'. It is no accident that these notions appeared in the 1950s, when the enlarged reproduction of capitalism in the interests of transnational capital had come onto the agenda in the colonies and ex-colonies. Foreign investment was portrayed as the path to the development of a dualistic economy, permitting the 'modern' sector to triumph and eliminate the 'traditional' sector. The old slogan, 'What's good for General Motors is good for America,' was now writ larger: 'What's good for General Motors (and other multinational capital) is good for the Third World.' At the same time, through Western education and close collaboration in planning, Africans in state bodies and private firms worked closely with expatriates and international capital. They established a common frame of reference and culture, an indication of the hegemonic nature of their ideology.

In the relation between foreign and local dominant classes, the neo-colonial state offers a form of political representation to the indigenous petty bourgeoisie. This is a typical use of capitalist state apparatuses, according to Poulantzas, and the reasons he adduces apply with particular force in Africa. The state is the principal source of employment for the African petty bourgeoisie, which cannot find enough work in commerce, small-scale production or local industry. Its absorption into the state machinery helps to ensure its loyalty to the state. Moreover, its lack of independent class organisation makes it a useful servant for the economically dominant class.

However, the place of the petty bourgeoisie in the state apparatus gives it a certain relative autonomy with respect to foreign capital. This autonomy is that of the capitalist state itself, a formally autonomous instance within the capitalist mode of production. While it does not permit the local dominant classes to break the yoke of foreign capital, this autonomy can enable them to set limits to its power or bargain with it. While subject to the international division of labour they can also struggle to change the distribution of the gains or raise their country's place within it somewhat. This marks, in fact, one of the most important differences between colonial and neo-colonial states: conflict is endemic between local dominant classes and foreign capital over the distribution of surplus and possibilities of accumulation.

The contradictions between the role of the bureaucracy as servant of foreign capital and its relative autonomy are aggravated in Africa by the interpenetration of

capitalist and pre-capitalist social organisation. As Poulantzas wrote, 'the impact of bureaucratism is all the more important, the chances of the bureaucracy to make itself into a social force all the greater, the less the dominance of the capitalist mode of production in a social formation is clear and neat.' The fact that the petty bourgeoisie must help to organise the domination of the subordinate classes via lineage-type clientelist networks creates inevitable tension with the role it is expected to fulfil as the intermediary of capital. This conflict is frequently labelled 'inefficiency' or 'dysfunction'; and is really the direct consequence of the contradictions in the position of the local dominant classes.

Thus, there is a striking difference between the ideology of 'modernisation' (stressing the growth of a rational, efficient bureaucracy in the Weberian sense) and the particularistic lineage-type ideologies which pervade a bureaucracy heavily engaged in the manipulation of clientelist structures. In the African context, the 'neutral state' does not mean an objective, impersonal state; it means tribal balance in patronage. The need to keep the petty bourgeoisie within the dominant alliance and to 'deliver the goods' to clients in the subordinate classes also provoke the hypertrophy of the public sector so evident in African states. The excessive consumption, low rates of investment and economic 'irationality' which mark African bureaucracies must be viewed in the light of this political logic.

Conflicts within the Power Bloc

Among the dominant classes, the neo-colonial state reinforces foreign capital's hegemonic position by conditioning the strategy of indigenous dominant classes and helping to defeat challenges to the system itself. As far as individual members of the local dominant classes are concerned, many sincerely accept one or another of the hegemonic ideologies (tribalism or another lineage-type ideology, and 'modernisation' or exchange relations). Even if they do not, before the clientelistic leviathan of the neo-colonial state, individuals who wish to advance, and sometimes to survive, will mouth the slogans of the regime.

The means of struggle available to groups within the dominant classes and fractions, clientelist factions, are the bases on which class power itself is organised. They serve as both a source of control and a frame of reference for these classes. The dominant patrons cannot dismantle their own power bases, and could hardly be expected to do so. Rather, they organise their conflicts in clientelist patterns which implicitly recognise the 'rules of the game'. As Rey put it in his analysis of tribalism and the state in the Congo:

Hostility at the base in no way precludes an understanding at the summit between the political representatives of these ethnic groups. In fact, one finds the same configuration as in the case of the simple lineage system, but on a larger scale, the ethnic group replacing the lineage or group of lineages. (1971:456)

The fabric of interconnections among dominant classes due to the overlapping modes of production, along with their perception of shared interests, encourage them to limit their divisions to the distribution of the spoils, without permitting the nature of the system to come into question. Thus Bayart writes of Cameroun:

(T)he antagonism between the older and the modern segments of the elite was in fact less profound than it is usually claimed to be. Certainly, discords have been numerous and often intensely felt, particularly in rural areas. But the play of matrimonial alliances, kinship relations, a certain commonality of interests and the concern to promote the position of the collectivity had created and maintained links between the older and modern dominant groups of each ethnic group, and indeed between those of different ethnic groups. (1979:34-35)

This often remains true even for members of an aspirant bourgeoisie, who retain individual alliances with members of the dominant rural class of their tribe or lineage-type group. Like the 19th-century Latin American oligarchies, the rural dominant classes have no particular interest in capitalist industrialisation, which would replace cheap imports with dear protected goods and drain the rural labour force. Likewise, the dependence of a local bourgeoisie on the rural alliance makes it difficult for it to challenge the axis of foreign capital and rural dominant class.

These strategies are visibly at work in constitutional political struggles within African states. The survival of their political regimes depends upon their ability to reconcile the diverse fractions of the dominant classes into a coherent power bloc based upon relatively stable class alliances. Elections and parliamentary representation offer a way to permit dominant fractions to work out new hegemonic alliances. Leys described how elections both express and limit clientelist conflicts.

(The Kenyan elections) were fought almost wholly on the basis of clan and in the towns tribal support. The electorate merely "circulated the elite" — about 60% of sitting MPs were replaced — in the hope of finding individuals who would be more energetic in finding jobs and services for them. The Kikuyu ministers and their main allies were all returned. In other words, it was an election which reinforced tribal forms of consciousness, and which disturbed nothing and changed nothing. (1973:238)

Similar factional struggles take place within ruling parties or state bureaucracies in non-electoral regimes, without the utilisation of the ballot box as a measure of political influence.

The character of the neo-colonial state also helps turn aside direct challenges to the dominant classes. Individuals or groups who menace the system can be brought into the dominant alliance via patronage. Gramsci termed the process 'transformism': 'the gradual but continuous absorption, achieved by methods which vary in their effectiveness, of the active elements produced by allied groups and even of those which came from antagonistic groups and seemed irreconcilably hostile.' The phenomenon has a long history in Africa, particularly due to the ways in which cleavages in class struggles are moulded by the interpenetration of the capitalist and domestic modes. The tensions produced by the development of capitalism have been expressed in lineage ideology terms in conflicts between young and old. The 'young' are the exploited or poorly-integrated of the two modes of production: social cadets in the countryside, workers new to town, recent graduates, and people of peripheral regions. The 'old' can be considered the 'social elders': leaders of lineage communities in the countryside or cities, and groups of long-term residents of urban centres, all connected into the circuits of political and economic power. But the 'young' leaders of one era become the 'elders' of the next, both through aging, and consequent status rises, and through their integration into the clientelist networks: in short, transformism.

In the event of a crisis which menaces the very survival of the hegemonic system, the various dominant factions can normally be counted upon to rally round, despite their disagreements on other matters. Their collective interest in the maintenance of the system of domination and exploitation overrides their parochial differences. For example, Coulon says in Senegal:

The politico-administrative bourgeoisie and the *marabouts* have in common the fact that they are at the summit of the social pyramid and that this position is due in large part to the hegemony that they exercise upon the peasantry. Both draw a very real profit from the

economic activity of the rural masses and have an interest that the peasantry remains in a state of dependence. (1981:225)

Thus, he shows, the *marabouts* closed ranks behind the faction closest to foreign capital in the Senghor-Dia showdown of 1962. Likewise, he indicates how all sections of the dominant classes came together in 1968 to oppose the workers' general strike.

Even when the failure of attempts at conciliation leads to a *coup d'état*, the neo-colonial state itself endures. The reigning faction changes, but there is no change in the form of state or the position of the foreign bourgeoisie. The world market and foreign firms remain the ultimate sovereigns and the state continues to diffuse commodity relations within its borders. The situation resembles a game of musical chairs.

Breakdown of the Hegemonic Alignment

Despite the existence of effective hegemonic strategies based upon strong class alliances, the neo-colonial state is neither invulnerable nor immortal. It corresponds to a stage in capitalist development. While this stage may be long — Latin American experience suggests that it can continue for a century or more — it does not last forever. Moreover, its passing will perhaps prove more rapid in Africa, due to the more rapid penetration of the continent by a more powerful capitalism. To move beyond neo-colonialism would require a situation in which a new form of state is created. This could be either because old forms of domination have broken down, or because certain dominant classes have lost interest in maintaining existing alliances. At least three such situations can be envisaged, though others may well exist.

The first possible condition for the loss of hegemony would be economic crisis, which would have implications for both the subordinate and dominant classes. A crisis of subsistence could undermine the obedience of the dominated classes. The maintenance of clientelist relations and of the persuasive capacity of lineage-type discourse becomes difficult when patrons have nothing left to offer, because their resources (funds, jobs, land, houses, etc.) are exhausted. Likewise, clientelist systems can break down from excessive exactions by the dominant classes. The threshold for resistance in these circumstances, Scott has suggested, is when the actual subsistence of peasants is endangered. Yet such a crisis seems likely to provoke generalised resistance only if it is of a degree which renders unavailing individualistic alternatives, such as flight to the towns. From the viewpoint of the dominant classes, a prolonged loss of import capacity due to economic crisis can reduce the interest in alliance with foreign capital. In such a case, rural dominant classes lose their primary rationale for opposing industrialisation — cheap goods. Rather, they may favour it to make up for lost imports. There are, however, two preconditions for such a development: enough import capacity to cover capital goods, and a relatively strong and coherent aspirant bourgeoisie.

A second possible condition for change is the gradual or sudden collapse of lineage-type relations of subordination. One potential cause is economic: rapid capitalist penetration of the countryside and the complete monetarisation of the reproduction of a large part of the labour force. This process would imply the socialisation of the reproduction of the labour force, since the domestic sector would be incapable of furnishing even part of its subsistence. Given the deepening of potential domestic markets that such trends would represent and the tendency

on the part of transnational capital to redeploy manufacturing activity towards the periphery, it cannot be ruled out that a pro-industrial alliance of foreign and domestic capital might emerge in a few advanced regional centres. There or elsewhere, the disappearance of true lineage production relations could also open the possibility of a challenge to clientelist structures from below, by weakening their ideological referents. The other potential source of defiance is political: Gramsci cites the case of military mobilisation and defeat. In such circumstances, the habit of subordination on the part of the subaltern classes is broken, the prestige of patrons diminished. In all these cases, the iron logic of individualism need no longer apply to relations between members of subordinate and patron classes. Transformations of the state could then occur either through controlled participation of the dominated classes within state apparatuses responsible to fractions of the dominant classes (populism), or when 'the great mass of peasant farmers bursts simultaneously into political life' in a revolutionary upsurge, in Gramsci's phrase. The consequences are far from predetermined, however: they depend on whether the dominated classes succeed in establishing an autonomous capacity to struggle for their liberation or remain pawns of parts of the dominant classes operating through new formulae of control.

A third factor in state transformation can be the development of a corps of organic intellectuals disenchanted with the status quo. In the conditions of peripheral social formations, the function of the intellectual takes on particular importance, as Gramsci underlined:

When the impetus of progress is not tightly linked to a vast local economic development which is artificially limited and repressed, but is instead the reflection of international developments which transmit their ideological currents to the periphery — currents of the more advanced countries — then the group which is the bearer of new ideas is not the economic group but the intellectual stratum.

In Africa, the capacity of the state apparatus to employ the petty bourgeoisie continues to shrink, with the growth of schooling and the deepening of economic crisis. Worsening graduate and school-leaver unemployment could erode the adherence of educated youth to the neo-colonial order. Likewise, social crisis and class struggle can change substantially the atmosphere in schools, universities and youth groups. At least some of these ideological state apparatuses may be put into reverse gear, and begin to reproduce intellectuals hostile to the system. These circumstances might permit the appearance of organisations interested in and capable of raising consciousness among the dominated and able to develop political practices of opposition to the neo-colonial state. It is worth noting here the role young intellectuals, civilian and military, have played as catalysts of revolution in Burkina Faso and Ghana. The rapidly growing young Islamic intelligentsia would also in certain cases constitute a potential challenge to the state, though whether as a partner in a national-bourgeois alliance or as a comprador-clientelist claimant appears unclear. In any event, the breakdown of discipline among the local dominant classes would have serious implications for the stability of the neo-colonial alignment.

While it is possible to analyse some of the conditions in which the neo-colonial state would be transcended, it is not possible to predict the results. The conditions described above could lead either to a consolidation of capitalism or to an advance towards socialism. The hegemony of the dominant classes in Africa depends both upon their apparatuses of control and the state of relations among those classes, as

well as upon the degree and quality of unity among the subordinate classes. At the decisive moment the outcome will turn not only upon the internal economic, political and military conjuncture.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the neo-colonial state was born in a specific situation, grows in particular ways and may disappear in certain circumstances. This essay attempts to suggest an appropriate mode of analysis, but does not claim to offer rigorous proof of this approach. More empirical work would be necessary to see whether this framework really permits the periodisation and analysis of particular African states. What is clear, however, as Copans has put it, is that:

If we need a theory of the neo-colonial social formation, of the role of the state apparatus and of the social fields of the class struggle (the nation, ethnic groups, village communities, cities, etc.), it is not by the idle curiosity of Western intellectuals. It is because we believe that this elaboration of theory, this work of diffusion of analytical information, make up part of the historical tasks of revolutionaries in the present world conjuncture. (1978:251)

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