

Alternatives in the Restructuring of State-Society Relations: Research Issues for Tropical Africa¹

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The existence on a world scale of an apparent trend towards more market-oriented approaches implying the withdrawal of the state from certain long-established areas of activity is hard to deny. To the extent that they are effective such processes of 'liberalisation', 'privatisation' or 'economic reform' may entail a shift in the relationship between the state and civil society,² with important implications for long-run political and social dynamics.³ However, the apparent parallelism between these processes currently under way in widely different parts of the globe may be deceptive — more the result of the undoubted ascendancy of free-market economic theories and political discourse in some of the central capitalist states than a faithful reflection of their objective sources and significance.

While obviously influenced by world-wide ideological trends as well as directly and indirectly by the policies of the central states, the 'retreat of the state' in Tropical Africa in the 1980s has its roots in quite specific features of the profound crisis which has developed in the region since the end of the last decade. The timing and intensity of this crisis owe much to international economic factors which have also been relevant elsewhere, but in its fundamental features, I would argue, the African crisis cannot be understood apart from the continent's own economic, political and social transformations over the last 25 years or more. The long-run political and social implications of the recovery measures now being adopted seem similarly *sui generis*.

To the extent that it does place a rearrangement of the

fundamentals of state-society relations squarely on the agenda of change, the current economic and social malaise in Tropical Africa is clearly of momentous significance for the development of the region. It deserves to be researched with adequate attention to detail and to the 'view from below'; and it also needs to be theorised about, calling for some initial sharpening of our conceptual vocabulary and analytical sensibilities. We need studies of the micro- and macro-politics of, for example, stabilisation programmes, new marketing arrangements and administrative reforms in individual countries, but we also need a better idea than we presently have of the terms in which to evaluate the data produced by such studies. To be worthwhile, work on particular topics of the above kind needs to be informed by a clear conception of the major structural issues upon which they bear.

The discussion in the literature to date has taken us some way towards such a clarification of issues. At least it allows us to dispose of a few red herrings, to establish some directions in which it would not be fruitful to proceed any further. It also suggests, mainly by implication, some alternative lines of enquiry which are potentially both theoretically interesting and of some considerable practical relevance. This paper identifies, not for the first time [Brett 1986; Sender and Smith 1984], one major pair of non-starters in the recent discussion about Africa, and begins to sketch, in what I hope is a suggestive form, some of the genuine research issues which underlie its unhelpful clichés. I am aware that the requirements of this critique and the generality of the subject make the whole discussion apallingly abstract, but the risk of losing contact entirely with the national and local realities with which the theoretical categories are ultimately concerned seems, in the context, to be a risk worth taking.

I. The State *versus* Civil Society? The Argument Outlined

The notion I wish to dispose of straightaway is that there is much mileage from a research point of view in focusing on the state-society balance as such. In other words, the hesitant steps currently being taken in Africa towards the replacement of state-led development models with more market-based arrangements are not suitably or interestingly analysed in terms of a

¹ This paper outlines some of the author's thoughts at the beginning of a major research project, not the results of completed work: I am very conscious that it contains many questions, often of an extremely general kind, and relatively few answers, especially in the form of detailed and well-founded illustrations from the experience of particular countries or regions. I am grateful to Teddy Brett, Jean-Marc Fontaine, Moises Ikonicoff, Jim Manor, Subrata Mitra, Mick Moore, Hugh Roberts, Paul Sutton and Gordon White for helpful comments on the first draft, which was presented to the IDS/EADI Workshop on 'The Developmental State in Retreat?', IDS, June 30-July 1, 1987.

² Here and in what follows I take the expression 'civil society' in the now conventional sense derived from Hegel as referring to the social space 'intermediate . . . between the close-knit, immediate dependency of the family bond, and the universal interest and perspective of the state', or more simply as 'socio-economic life as distinct from the state' [Mann 1983:45].

³ Hugh Roberts and Gordon White, invitation to the Workshop.

simple conceptual polarity of the 'regulation versus free enterprise', 'plan versus market' or 'state versus civil society' type. At a preliminary level of documentation and analysis we obviously do need to know to what degree these balances have been altered by the changes set in motion. However, unless the results of a changeover to 'market solutions' are held to be entirely predictable and positive, or unless one accepts a wholly zero-sum view of the relation between private enterprise and the developmental role of state in the African context, the really interesting questions are those which arise next. It is important not to allow these to be closed off by the poverty of our conceptual resources.

Intellectual influences which have just this effect are unfortunately not lacking, and not restricted to a single point on the ideological spectrum. On the one hand, free-market liberals are inclined to see the removal of price controls, the stimulation of the private economy and the restriction of the state to a narrow range of 'proper' concerns, as a wholly reliable means of dealing with the market distortion and inefficiencies which lie at the back of the economic deterioration in Africa. In this perspective — admittedly a minority view, probably even in such institutions as the World Bank — there are major obstacles on the path to a satisfactory outcome, but no real false turnings or dead-ends. This vision obviously takes strength from the continuing fashionableness of the economic liberalism of the past century, with its emphasis on rugged individualism and its view of the state as a parasitic excrescence on the market. But while there is of course much in the African situation to confirm neo-liberal prejudices about the state, there is not enough to support such unrestricted optimism about the private-enterprise alternative.

Radical critics of the trend of policy in Africa unfortunately tend simply to invert the terms of the liberal view. Evidence of the unreliability of private-sector models and of the complicity of the World Bank and other Western aid donors in Africa's development disasters is used to pour cold water on the whole idea of rethinking the role of the state in development. The adoption of reform programmes to revive agriculture and stimulate exports is viewed — despite much evidence to the contrary — as an externally-imposed and retrograde trend, with roots in the world political balance, but without genuine relevance to the actual problems of raising the capacity of African economies for sustained and equitable growth. While acknowledging for form's sake that much needs to be done to improve the quality of planning and the efficiency of parastatal enterprises, radical critics often seem to cling to a Fabian-type vision of the post-colonial African state as an all-seeing promoter of long-run comparative advantage besieged by local — and especially international — supporters of free-market capitalism personified by the IMF and the Bank. In

practice, while they are prepared to discuss reform, they are very short on proposals in this area, and are often particularly weak on the possible politics of a non-market attack on the anti-developmental roles of African states.

The debate between the liberals and the radicals (in the specific sense just defined) has so dominated the scene since the publication of the Berg Report [World Bank 1981] that it has sometimes seemed that the only real issue to which research might be addressed is which 'side' is likely to come out on top in any particular case. Fortunately or otherwise, the real issues are more complicated, both from a practical point of view and conceptually. In the African context, the 'retreat of the state', if such it is, is neither a panacea nor an irrelevance, and what a sustained economic liberalisation might mean for the relationship between state and civil society is a complex issue calling for both empirical research and greater clarity about the central concepts. The remainder of this article elaborates this contention with reference to recent literature, arguing in particular two things.

First, there is certainly a case for thinking that the emergence and the political entrenchment of new private-sector groups may be the best or only way of sustaining a more balanced and equitable pattern of development in Tropical Africa (particularly, a pattern less hostile to the raising of agricultural marketing and productivity). However, it cannot be said that *any* kind of private-sector development and any ensuing flowering of civil society whatsoever would be progressive from this point of view. Several different possibilities need to be distinguished. As well as drawing on my own limited knowledge of comparative class formation and politics in African societies, this part of the argument draws strongly on the 'urban bias' debate, particularly on the work on Africa undertaken by the political scientist Robert Bates [1981].

Second, the matter of the state and its development needs to be distinguished analytically from the question of the state's relation to civil society. While it is trivially, even tautologically, true that any strengthening of civil society weakens the state (i.e. in its relations with civil society), the strength of the state in the sense of its capacity to realise given objectives is related in no obvious and univocal way to developments in civil society. The strengthening of state *capacity* is very much on the agenda in most countries of Tropical Africa in the 1980s. Moreover, it may be that the possible resurgence of private-sector activity is important not just because of its more or less direct contributions to economic revival, but also — and in the longer run, more importantly — as a stimulus to the development of state capacities. In even the best surveys of the African literature in this area [Crook 1986; Mars and White 1986; Ravenhill

1986b], I find insufficient sensitivity to this possible interdependence between processes of class formation and state development, even when the independent significance of the latter is acknowledged.

II. Two Paths of Civil Society Development for Tropical Africa

I do not want to say anything in this article which might be construed as reopening the important but long-running debate about the technical merits of alternative policy-reform packages for economic recovery in Africa [Allison and Green 1983, 1985; Lawrence 1986; Mellor *et al* 1987; Rose 1985]. The outstanding issues between those specialists who emphasise pricing issues, institutional problems and inter-sectoral resource allocation, and those on the other hand who insist on longer-run structural and technological constraints and the continuing need for planning, are not unimportant. But underlying the controversy there is a considerable measure of tacit agreement both about what has gone wrong in post-independence African states and about the immediate measures that need to be taken. There is wide agreement, notably, that in many countries the institutional and economic-policy regime has been hostile to either food production or agricultural exports or both — for reasons that have little to do with either equity or industrialisation, and that as a result African economies have done so poorly that the long-run constraints barely enter the picture.⁴ Although there is controversy about the likely efficacy of a recovery strategy that relies heavily or exclusively on getting the prices right, there are no widely canvassed proposals that do rely wholly on measures of this type, and none in which action on prices and exchange rates does not play a fairly substantial part.

While there is in this sense a fair amount of shared understanding about the economic and technical side of what needs to be done, there is almost no consensus, and very little direct discussion, about the sociology and politics of successful reform. Serious research is now needed not just on the politics of past economic failure, but on the types of political realignments and social changes that are occurring, and which may or may not provide a stable basis for the implementation of a well-designed reform package over the medium and longer terms. To begin with this means investigating in some detail the ways socio-economic differentiation, interest-articulation and policy 'implementation' are interacting in the context of reform in different countries.

Hypotheses which might guide work of this kind are not entirely lacking in the literature. Michael Lipton's pioneering attempt to bring together the economic

⁴ The essential facts are laid out in different but consistent ways by Fieldhouse [1986] and Sender and Smith [1986].

and social-structural aspects of 'urban bias' into a single synthesis is obviously relevant here [Lipton 1977, 1982, 1984]. So is Bates' analysis of the way African governments use agricultural policies to appease powerful constituencies and confer benefits on their supporters [Bates 1981; also Bates and Lofchie 1980; Bienen 1987; Commins *et al* 1986; Lofchie 1985]. On the whole I find the latter a more sensible starting point for a discussion like the present one, not only because it accommodates more fully the specificities of the African situation,⁵ but also on theoretical grounds. Although the argument has not yet been made in a fully convincing fashion, Lipton's treatment of the politics of 'urban bias' is in my view correctly accused of socio-economic reductionism. In other words, the interests which lie behind urban biased policies and institutions are taken too much as given by the structural locations of socio-economic groups, and not enough as having been defined or constructed in action, either, so to speak, within civil society or, more significantly, through the operations of a political system. The result is a rather unstable and self-contradictory estimation of the intractability of urban bias and the possible means of defeating it [cf. Corbridge 1982; Lipton 1984; Moore 1985].

Bates may perhaps be accused of the contrasting failing, of ultimately dodging the important socio-logical questions his work raises [Konings 1986:1-6], but his basic analysis is useful in providing a non-reductionist context into which it is possible to reintroduce the role of socio-economic differentiation and class formation in the shaping of development policies and institutions.⁶ One major question that arises from Bates' discussion is: what is the possible role of socio-economic differentiation, and in particular the emergence or re-emergence of rich peasant or elite farmer groups, in consolidating given changes in the framework of agricultural development? The central idea I want to propose in this section is that the Bates/Lipton framework suggests at least two quite contradictory answers to questions of this type.

On the one hand it is a major theme in both Lipton and Bates that the better-off rural sectors are frequently beneficiaries of the policies which are responsible for depressing agriculture at large. Not only is biased resource allocation the result of interlocking public and private-sector activities (so that economic liberalisation *per se* cannot be expected to do away with the problem), but the richer peasantry are 'bought off' by selective subsidies and preferential

⁵ While suggestive in other ways, the attempts to theorise the sources of the present crisis in terms of concepts of neo-patrimonialism or 'personal rule' [Callaghy 1986a, 1986b; Medard 1982; Sandbrook 1985, 1986] seem insufficiently general in their application.

⁶ With Mick Moore [1986], I would reject the suggestion that finding Bates' political analysis useful logically entails either agreement with his somewhat oversimplified economic analysis, or acceptance of the wider claims of the rational choice school of political science to which he claims to belong.

access to inputs and credit. Privileged agricultural groups or regions also benefit from special projects and programmes which help to undermine the general conditions for agricultural growth. To the extent that these kinds of arrangements remain a part of the picture in these more austere times, we obviously cannot discount the possibility that policy shifts achieved or consolidated with the support of emergent elite-farmer groups will turn out to entail large regionally and socially concentrated concessions to rural interests funded more out of cuts in basic needs provision and other services benefiting the rural poor than out of a genuine reversal of urban/rural priorities. In this sense, some African countries may go overboard in the direction of 'capitalism' as the solution to their current difficulties, and end up creating no more than a new version of the same thing [cf. Brett 1986; Ravenhill 1986:28].

Although widespread, the incorporation of the potential leadership of the rural sector into an anti-rural coalition is not, however, an absolutely invariant pattern. In any given case where the rural elite has come to be 'bought off' in this particular way, the explanation tends to involve subtle political factors, often highly specific to the country in question. In different political contexts other patterns seem possible. Indeed, Bates [1981:119-28] and others [e.g. Barker 1984:24, citing Hart 1982] have concluded from comparative historical evidence that a key to the adoption and permanence of relatively unbiased policies towards agriculture has been the emergence and political entrenchment of a significant group of elite farmers from among the African peasantry. Crucially, under certain conditions the influence exercised by rich-farmer groups within post-colonial political systems has inhibited the use of output pricing and other policies to turn the internal terms of trade against agriculture. This suggests the possibility that in conditions of high bias such as continue to prevail throughout much of the region in the mid-1980s, the activation or reactivation of links between such groups and other forces within the national political arena may be important, and even perhaps a *sine qua non*, in securing a transition towards a policy regime more favourable to agriculture.

A flowering of civil society as a result of the economic strengthening of the private sector in the rural areas of Tropical Africa *may*, then, be the key to a more satisfactory and sustainable form of development. Albeit in the pursuit of their own particular interests, new pressure groups arising from liberalised economic sectors may contribute to the consolidation of economic-policy regimes which favour general interests both at the sectoral and at the societal level. In this case other things too may become possible (on which more later). But the 'turn towards capitalism' in rural areas of the continent may also turn out to be a

dead end, economically and politically, leading to nothing more than new pockets of politically-bestowed privilege and support for the *status quo*. Under which conditions each of these possibilities becomes the more likely would seem to be a research issue of the greatest importance.

III. Taking the State Seriously in the African Context

Among the numerous critics of Berg-inspired liberalisation packages for Africa there are many who are clear-sighted enough to recognise that while the inefficiency of African developmental states has been exaggerated in certain respects in the liberal case, there is a real need to increase the effectiveness of state institutions, especially in their relation to agriculture. In this context it is sometimes pointed out that African states are to a greater or lesser degree 'soft states'⁷ and more or less thoroughly penetrated, corruptly and otherwise, by particularistic social claims, suggesting that far from being overdeveloped and in need of curtailment, they need in crucial respects to be strengthened and given greater autonomy in relation to civil society. The point is an important one, but it suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity which results in a rather superficial appreciation of the possible long-run consequences of economic liberalisation.

As is now becoming fairly widely recognised [Evans *et al* 1985a; Hall 1986] Western — especially post-war Anglo-American — social science has been powerfully influenced by what have been called 'society-centred' as opposed to 'state-focussed' approaches to the analysis of historical change. In different ways, it is argued, both the pluralist and structural-functionalist tradition and Marxist and neo-Marxist theorising have been preoccupied with the influences upon politics and state action emanating from civil society (interest groups, classes) to the detriment of investigation of the specific structures of states, of the development of those structures and of their impact upon the evolution of economies and societies [Skocpol 1985]. In other terms, interest in modes of production and their transformation has not usually been accompanied by a parallel interest in modes of political domination and their dynamics [Mouzelis 1986]. As a result of these influences, questions about the variable aspects of state organisation — notably, the development of state autonomy and the capacities of states in different areas of activity — have only fairly recently come to be formulated as problems for historical and comparative research. I would argue that those engaged in the current controversies about Tropical Africa have something to learn from this 'neo-Weberian' point of view and the new avenues of

⁷ That is, where policies decided upon are often not enforced and where the authorities are systematically reluctant to place obligations on people [Myrdal 1968].

research that it suggests.

In the present context it implies a critique of two types of thinking in particular. One, obviously, is the reductionism of the Marxist tradition, in either its class-instrumentalist or functionalist variants, in which state autonomy is treated by conceptual fiat as a limited and largely invariant feature of all states within a mode of production. This closes off almost entirely comparative research into such questions as why some states do and other states do not develop a high degree of autonomy [Skocpol 1985], including any evaluation of the contribution to state development of different patterns of economic change and class formation. The problem extends of course to the whole relation of 'the political' to 'the economic'. As Mouzelis puts it, we need to 'try to deal with political phenomena in a way that does not build into their very definition (and therefore excludes from empirical investigation) the type of relationship they are supposed to have with the economy'. It seems possible to Mouzelis to avoid this reductionism 'without abandoning the "political economy" holistic approach, that is, without falling into the type of compartmentalisation of the political and economic spheres which is to be found in neo-classical economics and in non-Marxist political science' [1986:203-4].

Perhaps less obviously, this trend of thought also implies a break with what has been called a crudely Weberian imagery producing straightforwardly zero-sum propositions about state autonomy [Evans *et al* 1985b:353]. In this perspective, as described by Evans *et al*, 'the increased ability of a bureaucratic state to realise internally generated goals supposedly reduces the power of all societal groups "outside" the state; conversely, the existence of well-organised social groups with control over the disposition of politically relevant resources implies a less autonomous state'. A further assumption, shared by the vulgar Weberian perspective and some Marxist treatments (Poulantzas), is that state autonomy and state capacities for effective socio-economic interventions invariably go hand in hand. Contrary to all of these notions, the research assembled by Skocpol and her collaborators suggests a complex, dialectical relationship, both between state autonomy and the power of groups in civil society ('state autonomy and the power of social groups can increase or decrease together') and between state autonomy and state capacities (while in general one might assume these to vary together, sometimes they are in contradiction) [*ibid.*:353-5].

All this, I think, is highly suggestive of research themes for Tropical Africa during the next decade or so.⁸ With reference back to the observation with which I began this section, it is plainly time we stopped talking about

⁸ Although perhaps not quite the same thing, asking questions about state capacities would seem to be consistent with approaching states as organisations [Mars 1986].

the 'strength' of states as if this had a single and straightforward meaning, and about the strength or weakness of civil society as if developments in civil society had an obvious and univocal impact upon the evolution of the state. We also need to consider more carefully the distinction between 'civil society' and plain 'society' and its implications for analyses of state development.⁹ It seems perfectly consistent to say, for example, that while by general assent civil societies in most countries of Tropical Africa are very poorly developed (whence the old theme of the 'overdeveloped state'), it is also the case that states have, comparatively speaking, very little autonomy; they are in Myrdal's sense soft, and more generally uninsulated from the particularistic loyalties and 'role diffuseness' which prevail in African societies, perhaps precisely to the extent that they have not developed as *civil* societies.¹⁰ The most likely route towards increasing the state's autonomy with respect to pressures of these kinds — which seems in this case a precondition for raising its effectiveness as an agent of development — is not completely clear. However a number of hypotheses suggest themselves.

We cannot exclude in principle the possibility that African states will prove capable of self-reform. It is, after all, by no means the case that there are no historical examples of successful developmental states emerging out of processes of state development in which the role of civil society was scant. Outside Africa, the most unambiguously successful developmental states from the Meiji Restoration onwards seem to have emerged out of 'revolutions from above' in which non-state groups played an almost entirely passive role [Ruggie 1983; Trimberger 1978; White and Wade 1985]. On the other hand, one looks in vain in recent African experience for signs that within the military or civilian bureaucracies of the continent there are the seeds of a comparable transformation. Admittedly such things are by their nature hard to detect in advance, but the East Asian cases themselves indicate that there is a certain threshold of state-bureaucratic autonomy which has to be reached before an effective revolution from above becomes a possibility, and it is at least doubtful whether this threshold has been crossed anywhere in Tropical Africa.

⁹ I owe this important further clarification and the points which follow from it to Hugh Roberts.

¹⁰ The distinction here is between the sphere of voluntary association and market-oriented behaviour regulated by law — 'where individuals pursue their own self-interest within universally recognized bounds' [Mann 1983:45] — and that of the family and its extensions. However, in the African context, where the ramifications of kinship and ethnicity are so widespread, it is probably not sensible to maintain such a sharp distinction. Bayart, who defines civil society as 'society in its relations with the state . . . in so far as it is in confrontation with the state' [1986:111], develops a conception of civil society in Africa in which the elements of particularism appear extremely strong.

This being the case, a very different avenue seems worth exploring. For a long time some students of the African scene interested in such matters as bureaucratic corruption have seemed to suggest that it is not inappropriate to put the African situation against the background of the long struggle against corrupt practices in British history between the 17th and 19th centuries [Wraith and Simpkins 1963]. The implication appears to be that the development in civil society of groups — thrusting self-made entrepreneurs, new-style professional associations — which are capable of imposing new standards of public morality on politicians and bureaucrats may be the best or only route to higher levels of state development in Africa as in some otherwise very different industrialising societies.

This type of idea has been developed in one form¹¹ in Goran Hyden's *No Shortcuts to Progress* [1983] which argues that despite a superficial structural resemblance with its colonial predecessor, the post-colonial African state is 'a state with no structural roots in society'. It is like 'a balloon suspended in mid-air', and thus prone to be punctured by excessive demands as the 'economy of affection' (i.e. the sphere of anti-bureaucratic, particularistic loyalties) swamps the public realm, rendering it unable to function without an indiscriminate and wasteful use of resources. According to Hyden, the only long-term solution to this state of affairs lies in the adoption of market-oriented economic policies which permit the growth of new social forces that will battle against the pressures of 'clan' politics. 'The essence of these new policies must be to strengthen the market, and through such measures, the development of a core of people ready to defend the market at any cost and to withstand the pressures of the economy of affection and its ensuing clan politics. These people will constitute the core of a local capitalist class . . .' [Hyden 1983:19, 52-3].

It must be said that a part of Hyden's case for capitalism in Africa rests upon ideas about the intrinsic limitations of peasant production and the virtues of large-scale enterprise which, although now more nuanced or perhaps contradictory, than in his earlier book on Tanzania [1980], remain highly questionable [cf. Kasfir 1986]. Nevertheless, the thesis that the state needs to become more effectively bureaucratized (in the Weber sense) and that this will happen, for social and political rather than economic reasons, only as society becomes more capitalist, is interesting.¹² Again, recalling our earlier discussion of the prospects of sustaining a new economic policy regime, it is by no means certain that in practice new

¹¹ An alternative formulation would be that it is important to measure processes of change in Africa against the yardstick of a rigorous, if seemingly ethnocentric, conception of civil society [cf. fn. 10] because the development of a 'true' civil society is a crucial precondition for the achievement of higher levels of state autonomy and capacity — for example, because of the way it helps to strengthen the distinction between the public and private domains.

'bourgeois' groups would be as implacably opposed to the politics of special favours for ethnicity and region and the corresponding forms of state as Hyden hopes.¹³ Much, presumably, would depend on the precise terms on which the new forms of enterprise were put in place. At the very least, though, Hyden's vision is a hypothesis to which researchers will need to give attention in exploring and assessing the more permanent, long-term effects of economic liberalisation.

My purpose, once again, is not to legislate about these issues but to give an indication of just how much there is going to be to find out about the pattern of change in post-crisis African societies. As I have argued in this section, the newer forms of civil-society development throughout the region are becoming vital subjects of research not just for their own sake or in terms of their implications for economic recovery in the short or medium term, but also, and perhaps above all, with a view to their eventual consequences for the development of politics and the state. In the spirit of Bayart's [1986] review of the prospects for democracy, there is a sense in which those interested in the future of the state in Africa should begin by studying civil society.

IV. A Concluding Note on Elitism and Participation

In the interests of simplicity and brevity, this article has concentrated on the major reasons for not viewing the current trend in Africa in terms of a simple polarity of state versus civil society. This has meant dwelling on certain extreme alternative possibilities outlined in very stark as well as abstract terms. Since the resulting scenarios may seem unduly limiting and depressing, I should like before concluding to register two points about one aspect of the matter — the strong emphasis given to the roles of emergent elite or dominant-class groups to the apparent exclusion of the development of new and effective forms of democratic mass participation in the politics of development.

First, I would say that this initial stab at the problem does not at all exclude the possibility that reforms in the institutional framework for local political representation will enhance peasant political influence

¹² As applies more generally to the substance of this section, it is a question of recovering some of the essential insights of modernisation theory, themselves mostly taken from the classics of European social theory, without reinventing the evolutionism and ethnocentrism with which that tradition has tended to be associated. Hyden, like Bill Warren, goes out of his way to identify with the most strongly evolutionist tradition within Marxism, but it does not follow that the connection is inevitable.

¹³ As Ravenhill points out, moreover, to advocate capitalism as a solution to Africa's political problems 'is merely to move the argument one step backwards to the question of how political coalitions can be constructed that will favour giving a greater role to markets' [1986b:27].

in some places to the point where the more oppressive aspects of the state-led model of agricultural development can be replaced by a pattern based on more decentralised but non-market types of organisation [Barker 1985; Brett 1986; Mackintosh 1985]. I note only that the literature is fairly uniformly discouraging about effective peasant political organisation, whereas the role and position of elite farmer groups seems to have been critical almost everywhere. Second, more encouragingly, all such developments have to be viewed in a dynamic political context; they are not once-and-for-all changes which are likely to remain frozen in permanence. In particular, economic changes and institutional rearrangements which permit the expression of elite farmer views in favour of particular rural interests and limited improvements in the functioning of state institutions, may in time generate irresistible pressures towards the broadening of such participation. This at least seems to be one of the lessons of the Indian experience [Blair 1985]. I think it is at least worth considering that socially limited but strongly institutionalised arrangements for 'self-help' and local political representation such as have existed for example in Kenya may prove as productive of wide participation in the long run as the theoretically more inclusive arrangements which exist elsewhere — for example, Tanzania [Holmquist 1984; Kleemeier 1986; Leonard 1984]. In all events, these are important further issues to which research needs to be addressed.

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