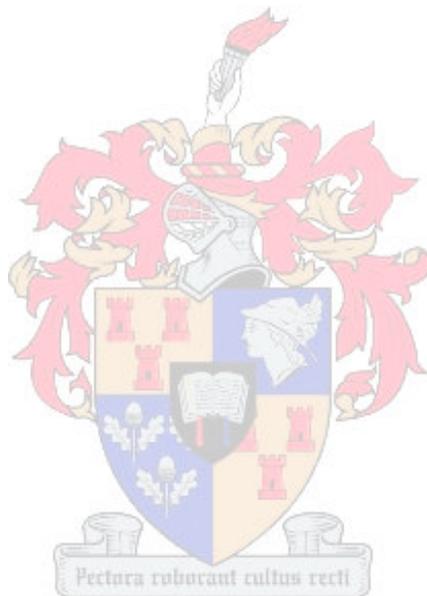


**Theorising African States:
The Case of Angola from a Critical Theory
Perspective**



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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract.

This thesis is a theoretical contribution to the debate about statehood in Sub-Saharan Africa. My primary aims have been to interrogate the use of the state concept on the continent, and to open up new theoretical avenues to analyse the state. My starting point has been that the state is a key to solving socio-economic challenges. Yet the social theory that purports to make sense of the state in Africa is poor. Mainstream scholars use prefixes such as ‘failed’, ‘weak’ and ‘quasi’ to make sense of existing African states. If they call for such labels, it is only because an unhelpful ideal type based on the ‘modern’ European state is postulated. Such scholarship is limited to theorising the distance between the ideal type and real states. This approach gives a functionalist account of the state’s relationship with society and economy, but fails to explain the state as a historical product and expression of the distribution of power between social groups. As an alternative way to theorise states, I propose a synthesis between Robert W. Cox and Mahmood Mamdani. Combining Mamdani’s and Cox’s theoretical frameworks avoids the problems that arise when Eurocentric International Relations (IR) theories are applied to an African context. The synthesis adds to both frameworks by addressing a shortcoming in Cox by paying more attention to power struggles in the periphery, and redresses the exclusive focus on Africa in Mamdani. Adding Cox to Mamdani contextualises Mamdani’s African state in space as well as time, whereas adding Mamdani to Cox shows how African states respond to outside pressures and in the process (re)constitute the world order by adding an inside-out pressure.

I use a single case study of the Angolan state to illustrate how a Coxian / Mamdanian synthesis contributes to the debate. This theoretical framework turns the attention to four aspects. First, there is a close historical link between the economic structure and the form of the state in the country, from the slave trade to today’s political economy of oil. Second, I look at the attempts of the Angolan state elite to legitimise its own power. I posit that in the context of social destitution and poverty, strategies to sustain consent based rule assumes particular importance. Third, the Angolan state is an expression of internal powers struggles between social groups in the country. The contemporary balance of power is volatile: recent economic growth has the potential of unsettling old power structures, as the relative balance of who has access to economic power changes. Lastly, the world order supports the current structure of power in Angola, largely thanks to the political economy of oil. Oil gives the Angolan regime ample economic resources, as well as crucial support from oil companies and

the states that import the oil. This foreign support underwrites the regime and constitutes an important element in its support base.

Opsomming.

Hierdie tesis is 'n teoretiese bydra tot die debat oor die stand van state in Sub-Sahara Afrika. Die primêre doel van die tesis is om die gebruik van die konsep "staat" ten opsigte van die kontinent te bevraagteken en 'n nuwe teoretiese denkrigting te open om die staat te analiseer. Die uitgangspunt is dat die staat deurslaggewend is in die oplossing van sosio-ekonomiese uitdagings. Die bestaande sosiale teorie wat poog om sin te maak uit die staat van Afrika is onvoldoende.

Hoofstroomse skoliere maak gebruik van terme soos 'gefaal', 'swak' en 'kwasi' om sin te maak uit die bestaande Afrika state. Die gebruik van sulke stempels is bloot omdat 'n onondersteunende idealtipe, gebaseer op die moderne Europese state, gepostuleer word. Hierdie denke is beperk in die sin dat dit slegs die afstand tussen die idealetipe en werklike state aanspreek. Hierdie benadering gee 'n funksionalistiese siening van die staat se verhouding met die samelewing en die ekonomie, maar misluk daarin om die staat te verduidelik as 'n historiese produk en 'n uitdrukking van die magsverdeling tussen sosiale groepe. As 'n alternatiewe manier om oor state te teoretiseer word 'n kombinasie van Robert W. Cox en Mahmood Mamdani voorgestel. Die kombinerende van Mamdani en Cox se teoretiese raamwerke omseil die probleem wat ontstaan wanneer Eurosentriese Internasionale Verhoudings toegepas word op 'n Afrika konteks. Die kombinasie dra by tot beide raamwerke deurdat dit tekortkominge in Cox aanspreek deur meer aandag te skenk aan die magstryde en dit herbesin ook die eksklusiewe fokus op Afrika in Mamdani se raamwerk. Deur Cox by Mamdani te voeg kontekstualiseer dit Mamdani se Afrika staat in ruimte asook in tyd, waar die toevoeging van Mamdani tot Cox illustreer hoe Afrika state reageer op eksterne druk en in die proses die wêreldorde herrangskik (hervorm) deur binne- na- buite druk toe te pas.

'n Angolese gevallestudie word gebruik om te illustreer hoe 'n Cox-Mamdani kombinasie bydra tot hierdie debat. Die teoretiese raamwerk vestig die aandag op vier aspekte. Eerstens, is daar 'n noue historiese verband tussen die ekonomiese strukture van die vorm (samestelling) van die staat in die land, vanaf die slawehandel tot vandag se politieke ekonomie van olie. Tweedens word daar gekyk na pogings van die Angolese staat elite om om sy eie magte legitiem te maak. Die argument word voorgestel dat in die konteks van sosio-ekonomiese agteruitgang, word strategieë om 'n konsensus gebaseerde regering te behou van kardinale belang. Derdens is die Angolese staat 'n uitdrukking van interne magstryde tussen sosiale groepe in die land. Laastens ondersteun die wêreldorde die huidige magstruktuur in Angola, grootliks te danke aan die politieke ekonomie van olie. Olie verleen aan die Angolese

regering voldoende ekonomiese hulpbronne, sowel as belangrike ondersteuning van maatskappye en die state wat olie invoer. Hierdie buitelandse steun bevorder die Angolese regering en vorm 'n belangrike komponent in sy ondersteuningsbasis.

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The usual caveats apply.

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List of Abbreviations.

CCT - Coxian Critical Theory.

FESA - *Fundação Eduardo dos Santos* (Eduardo dos Santos Foundation).

FNLA- *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (National Front for the Liberation of Angola).

HDI - Human Development Index.

IMF - The International Monetary Fund.

IR - International Relations.

MPLA - *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola).

OAU - Organisation of African Unity.

OPEC - Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

UN - United Nations.

UNITA - *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola).

UNPD - United Nations Development Program.

Chapter One. Motivation of the Study.

“The problem of the nature of the state created after independence is perhaps the secret of the failure of African independence.”

Amílcar Cabral (in Samatar & Samatar 1987, p.669)

Introduction.

In his 1963 classic *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon warned against the dangers facing the new independent African states. Instead of furthering development on the continent, he predicted that the leaders of the new states would continue the oppressive structures and economic exploitation of the colonial era:

“But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land, and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie.”

(Fanon 1963, p.166)

Fanon further warned that to sustain this parasitical relationship vis-à-vis their societies, the regimes would be able to rely on aid and loans from other countries. In other words, the external recognition of regimes as the states’ representative would form the very basis of the survival of these states. Almost half a century later, the verdict among a wide range of scholars writing on the role played by Sub-Saharan African¹ states resonates closely to Fanon’s early warnings. Although the explanations vary, there is substantial scholarly agreement that they have played a salient role in the underdevelopment of the continent (for useful summaries, see Hyden 1996; Samatar & Samatar 2002).

There is little gainsaying in pointing out that Africa faces grave developmental challenges. Neither is it controversial to suggest that the nature or forms of the continent’s states must take at least part of the responsibility, and that part of the solution is to be found doing something about state structures. As a consequence of the economic crisis facing Africa since roughly the 1970s, the revenue bases of states have diminished, which in turn has constrained

¹In the following, I will follow suit and write “Africa” in my discussion of Sub-Saharan Africa, as is commonplace in the literature. This typically excludes the special cases of South Africa and Botswana, that have higher level of economic development than the other countries. However, the alleged exceptionalism of South Africa has been questioned by Mamdani (1996) who maintains that this perspective only makes sense from a political economy approach that focuses exclusively on labour. Contra this perspective, Mamdani maintains that apartheid conceived as a *mode of rule* exemplifies the model used elsewhere in colonial Africa. I will return to Mamdani’s argument in detail in chapter three.

state leaders (Clapham 1996; Herbst 2000). Mamdani (1996) argues that while the postcolonial state by and large has managed to deracialise civil society, it has been less successful at democratising the state structure and, consequently, at furthering socio-economic development in a context of uneven international relations.

Rather than to merely dissect and describe the development of the processes described above, I posit that the pertinent question for social theory is to explain why these situations have come about and identify the potential for change. From the literature, I was struck by how many leading scholars complain that Africa has remained marginal to social theory and that one therefore can talk about a theoretical impasse regarding understanding state / society relationships in Africa (Clapham 1996; Herbst 2000; Mamdani 1996; Mbembe 2001; Rotberg 2004). The consequences of this theoretical poverty are dire, as it inhibits purposeful action to improve the situation and further human development on the continent.

Aim of thesis.

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the theoretical debate on state building and state disintegration in African countries. My main argument is that the combination of the theoretical frameworks offered by Cox (1981; 1983; 1987) and Mamdani (1996) offers a novel and illuminating perspective to analyse African states from. In order to make this argument, I posit that it makes sense to engage with the general debate on states in Africa as a vantage point. To present my argument in a specific context, I look at the case of Angola. The aim is to use a case study as a 'testing ground' for the explanatory power of the divergent theoretical approaches to African statehood. In particular, I am interested in the type of state that has evolved in Angola and how or if this relates to the country's main resource base by looking at the political economy of oil in the country. Simply stated, my main research question is 'what is the Angolan state a case of'? Stated differently, what form of state does Angola have? Interrogating this question is a way to place existing theories under scrutiny. Is the Angolan state representative of other African states, suggesting a broader family of 'African statehood' that share properties other than their geographical location? Of a state promoting economic growth but little human development? Of a state in a country struggling to overcome the legacy of a long civil war? Is it a 'failed state'? The answer to these questions is by no means a given. Crucially, the question itself frames the study and thus simultaneously limits and focuses the enquiry. I will look at the Angolan state from the vantage point of the political economy of oil, and thus I hope to bring in global and local, historical and contemporary elements into a study thus contextualised in space and time.

In order to do this in a purposeful manner that will shed light on the research questions, I hold that it is necessary to start with a general overview of African states and the social theory that purports to make sense of these states. This is not to say that statehood in Africa should be conceived of in the singular. As Bayart (1993) points out, treating Africa as a unit of analysis is in many ways an awkward choice since there is no African mode of production or African culture. Nevertheless, he maintains that “geographical proximity has nonetheless brought about a relative commonality of historical destiny” (Bayart 1993, p.32). This common destiny, apparent for instance in the negative trends in the continent’s human development figures, allows the observer to treat Africa as a scientific unit of inquiry. Mamdani (1996) further maintains that the European colonisers used the same model for ruling African countries, and that this model turned out to provide the basic framework of the independent postcolonial states. This justifies my bird’s-eye-view perspective and serves to contextualise the Angolan state in its continental neighbourhood.

For the purposes of this study, I also note that debates about what African states *are* in academic and policy circles also involve questions about what they are *supposed to be*. On the discursive level, it is fair to say that African states are pushed in one direction by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. By discursive, I here mean that the external actors (other states, global institutions) engaging with Africa assume or want African states to conform to a state ideal that may not reflect those states as experienced by those who live there. This mainstream approach involves a double manoeuvre: on the one hand, it posits a Weberian ideal type as the model for what African states should be. On the other hand, there is a strong push on African state leaders to conform to the norms of neo-liberal ideology, where the state has a minimal role in economic life. Rotberg (2004, p.39) exemplifies this neo-liberal attitude in the literature: “will the state continue to be interventionist, or to what extent will it stimulate and support market mechanisms?” These two ideals, the totalising impulse from the Weberian ideal type combined the minimalist, hands-off approach of the neo-liberal state – form the basis of what the mainstream approach wants the state to be in Africa.

Having established my main motivations and aims for this study, I will now continue by spelling out my reasons for why I have chosen the state as the unit of analysis. I will also briefly sketch my understanding of development, as this forms the backdrop of why I am interested in the state in the first place. In this section, I further consider and counter the charge of state-centrism which maintains that other venues than the state offer more

explanatory power to issues of development, power and domination in Africa. I then proceed by opening up the concept of the state itself by pointing to different ways it can be theorised. My preferred approach will be laid out in the section on research design and methodology, where I also motivate my choice of Angola as a case study. I then point to some of the weaknesses of and limits to my study. The chapter ends with a brief overview of the chapters to follow.

Why analyse States in Africa?

Given that the underlying concern that informs this study is the socio-economic development of the continent, it is by no means a given that the state is the (most) relevant unit of analysis. Why do I start my inquiry here? The conventional answer holds that the state is a natural starting point for analysis of political and social processes since practically all countries have a state² and it is the one social organisation that (supposedly) provides people with protection from violence. In short, the state is the “most authoritative and dominant institutional concentrations of power found within nations” (King & Kendall 2003, p.1). In the African context Clapham (1996) and Samatar and Samatar (2002) contend that the state remains the most salient actor in understanding the political economy of Sub-Saharan Africa. Clapham (1996, p.3) describes the typical African state as “poor, weak and subordinate.” However, this does not make it less important as a unit of analysis, since understanding how, why and for whom the state has failed and what consequences this has for the development of the continent contributes to understanding its political economy. This contention is in line with Samatar and Samatar’s approach. They argue that, roughly speaking, there are two responses to ‘failed’ states: one is to write them off as irrelevant actors and unit of analysis all together; another is to ask how they can be brought back in to play a positive role on the continent. Thus, the state’s importance is defined just as much by the roles it has *not* played, such as provision of general welfare and accountability towards its population. Herbst (2000) motivates his study on states and power in Africa in a similar way as I do by contending that understanding the history of state power is central to solving the challenges facing the continent. Likewise, Mbembe (2001, p.2) attributes the reason for the “extreme material scarcity, uncertainty and inertia” facing Africans to the fact that control over the state apparatus has remained in the hands of a tiny elite. An analysis of Africa’s postcolonial trajectory, I argue, must interrogate the role played by the continent’s states.

² In the African context, Somalia since 1991 stands out as the important exception. Samatar and Samatar (2002) describe it as ‘cadaverous.’

The Role of the State in Development.

These insights from scholars writing from widely different theoretical angles have inspired the overarching concern that motivates this study, viz. development. However, the accent of my thesis is not on development as such, nor do I aim to write specifically about how African states can further socioeconomic development in their respective countries. However, I need to sketch out my understanding of the term development and provide some pointers as to why the state plays an important role in creating or impeding it.

My understanding of development is taken from United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (1997) and Sen (1999). UNDP stresses that it is important to use the prefix ‘human’ when talking about development, because it is how people are affected that in the final analysis defines development. The UN agency defines human development as “a process of enlarging the choices for all people in society” (UNDP 1997, p.4). This way to conceptualise development serves as a reminder that there is no automatic link between economic growth and human development. Nobel Prize economist Sen’s (1999) seminal work *Development as Freedom* also provides a theoretical background to this approach. The book can be read as a critique of mainstream neo-liberal economics that fails to pay attention to how developments in economic activity affect the lives of peoples. Sen argues that expansion of freedom is both the principal means and ends of development, and defines development as “the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency” (Sen 1999, p.20).

The role of the state in creating both economic growth and development is fiercely contested. For the purposes of this study, this is a point of pivotal importance. As pointed out above, the way one conceptualises the state and understands its relationship to other social factors has a significant bearing on what type of policy prescriptions would be given to improve state society relationships. The debate about African states takes place in an intellectual context that ultimately is concerned with what they are supposed to be and what they should do in an ideal world. The two contemporary models for poor countries appear to be the neo-liberal state and the developmental state, where the main difference is the extent of the state’s role in the economy. The neo-liberal perspective holds that markets are freed rather than created and agitates for a minimal role of the state. This approach resonates well with arguments that identify African states as part of the problem rather than the solution. If the state historically has produced underdevelopment, one logical solution is to downsize it to conform to the neoliberal standard.

Against this, Castells (2000a) identifies the developmental state as, so far, the only successful model for poor countries that want to develop under the conditions of contemporary capitalism. He notes that the empirical record on the conditions for development and economic growth is short and sparse, but argues that the surge of Japan and the four Asian Tigers offers a model that paradoxically is state-driven in an age where the state is losing power. In Castells' analysis, the key to a successful developmental state is the manner in which it spends its available resources. The Tigers invested money in infrastructure, education, and the development of technocratic state bureaucracies. This contributed to a strong, national base that was able to adapt to and exploit the features of what Castells understands as the defining traits of contemporary capitalism: networking, flexibility, and informational technologies (Castells 2000a; 2000b). The state then intervenes in the economy, and by means of protectionism, export-driven industries, state run firms and export zones, secures an economic growth that benefits the country.

My agenda here is not to argue that African states should necessarily pursue the same route. Castells points out that a number of contextual prerequisites made this development possible, notably the geopolitical context provided by the Cold War where the Asian Tigers were given policy space to act contra free market ideology in return for support against communism. I do, however, maintain that if the empirical record of the most successful developing countries since World War II is anything to go by, there is at least a *prima facie* case for contending that the state has an important role to play in furthering development. Commenting on the importance of trade liberalisation for development purposes, Rodrik (2001) argues that the answer to that question depends on how recent economic history is read. He contends that since all countries find themselves in a unique context and require different solutions to their development challenges, the state will necessarily have different roles to play. For some, state-led measures such as import subsidies and protection of infant industries will offer the right answer, for others the country's economy has reached the maturity needed to open up the economy and compete on a global market.

Important for Whom? A note on State Centrism.

Hyden (1996) provides a useful history of how states have been theorised in postcolonial Africa. Social theory on the whole paid due attention to the state in the immediate aftermath of the colonial period, spearheaded by modernisation theorists and development economists. However, roughly around 1980 a paradigm shift took place. Samatar and Samatar (2002, p.4) point out that the 1981 publication of the so-called Berg report from the World Bank

redefined the parameters of the state debate, and largely explained underdevelopment in Africa by the “self-inscribed inability of the African state” and thus found it logical to conclude that it had to be trimmed down accordingly. If the state were part of the problem, the argument goes, then it cannot be a part of the solution. These parameters turned out to place the state on the margins of social theory about and on Africa, according to Hyden’s review article. Studies of African politics had to use other theoretical lenses than the state to make sense of social issues. What explains this paradigm shift? Hyden points to the overly ambitious project of detecting universal ‘laws’ pertaining to the development of political institutions and economic development that sought to explain the state independent of its historical and geographical context. Another reason stems from the conviction that “socioeconomics and political issues are better understood through other lenses than those provided by theories of the state” (Hyden 1996, p.30). From this perspective, there is a short way to the charge of state centrism. This approach maintains that if the aim is to understand the sources of actual authority that hold their sway over ordinary people, there are more salient and interesting places to look to than the state. Moreover, it holds that since it can be shown empirically that other (informal) structures and social organisations have more influence on the actual lives of people than the state, this is where the analysis should be concentrated.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to delve into the truly huge literature representing this perspective, I will provide the example of the ‘New Regionalism’ approach proposed by Bøås et al (2003; 2005) and Hettne and Söderbaum (2000). The starting point for ‘New Regionalism’ is that the end of the bipolar Cold War world order created new social realities that necessitated new theoretical approaches. In particular, regions have become the most salient players in the current world order (Bøås et al 2005a; 2005b; 2003; Hettne & Söderbaum 2000). The central contention of these approaches, in the words of Hettne and Söderbaum (2000, p.457) is that “the ‘new regionalism’ is a truly world-wide phenomenon that is taking place in more areas of the world than ever before.” The importance of the traditional nation-state is decreasing, in particular in the developing world where several states are best described as ‘failing’. An understanding of this requires an analysis of the interaction between local and global forces. Hettne and Söderbaum (2000, p.459) further maintain that their theory “abandons state-centrism in an ontologically fundamental sense” and that “social processes must be analysed delinked from national space.” Instead of conceiving of regions simply as a collection of states, they contend that regional borders may

cut through state borders: parts of coastal China partake in East Asian regionalisation process whereas parts of mainland China do not. Nonetheless, they are criticised by Bøås et al (2003) for not remaining true to this stated commitment against state-centrism by privileging the formal regional institutions in their empirical analysis. This is apparent in their identification of the EU as the most sophisticated regional project, and the EU integration model is taken as a blue-print for other regional projects. Bøås et al's theory displays a deeper theoretical revolt against state-centric analysis by maintaining that it is both Euro-centric and empirically wrong when applied to regions outside Europe. They state that their "research strategy is to move further above, below and beyond the state than [Hettne and Söderbaum are] willing to go" because "there is so much more to current regionalisation processes than whatever can be captured by a focus on states and formal regional organization. In many parts of the world, what feeds people, organizes them and constructs their worldview is not the state and its formal representations [...] but the informal sector and its multitude of networks, civil societies and associations" (Bøås et al 2003, p.204).

With regard to many African countries, it is correct to point out as does the 'New Regionalism' approach that many states have limited reach outside their capitals³ and that non-state actors necessarily play a more important role in peoples' lives than states do. Two things are important to note in this context. First, while this is correct on an empirical level, it does not necessarily follow that, on a theoretical level, the state is irrelevant as a unit of analysis. This depends on what questions are asked and what the analysis seeks to explain and understand. 'New Regionalism' is rich on description but falls short on offering explanation to some of the key issues addressed in this study. Second, there is a certain West African bias to Bøås et al's argument, which is where their empirical examples come from. Applied to for instance Southern Africa with a stronger merit list for state capacity their analysis may not hold up to empirical scrutiny, and the state may prove a necessary part of an analysis of "what feeds people, organizes them and constructs their worldviews" as Bøås et al formulated it.

Commenting on the role of the state in globalisation theory, Gamble and Payne (1996, p.250) make a comment that I concur with: "the strategic calculation of states is only one level of analysis for understanding the global political economy but it is a necessary one. If it is made the only level of analysis then it becomes narrow and one-sided; but equally one-sided is an analysis which conceives of globalisation as though it were a process occurring outside the

³ For a classic statement, see Herbst (2000).

system of states.” Phillips (2005) argues in a similar vein that both state-denialists and state-centrists impoverish social theory. While it can be justified not to include the state, one runs the danger of overlooking the instances in which states do matter.

Theorising States.

A key aim of this study is to contribute to the literature that theorises African states. My study thus fall under the rubric of what Mahoney (2004) calls ‘concept analysis.’ He complains that too little attention is paid to concept building, given its importance as one of the most basic tools in the social sciences. As I will argue in the research design section, a case study uses finely grained evidence to interrogate what the case is a case of in order to revisit the conceptual unit of analysis. In as much as various theoretical perspectives approach and explain African states differently, I find it helpful to put the methodological question in the front seat before analysing a specific state. My approach opens up a Pandora’s box of questions that in one way or the other will need to be addressed: the concept of the state itself and how it applies to an African context; of what is by some referred to as ‘state strength’ or capacity to do what a state is supposed to do; on the role of the state in creating human development; and how states are produced and reproduced. Two points of departure inform the direction of and motivates my study. First, African states have played a central role in what has become of the continent. This is not to say that the state is the only or even most important variable, as it always has been subject to influences from social forces working on different scales, ranging from the local to the global. Understanding how these different scales interact is necessary to understand the ‘agency’ or policy space of the state or what Braudel calls ‘the limits of the possible’ for state action. In order to untangle exactly what role the state has played historically and can play in the future, it is necessary to describe the theoretical lenses with which I look at the state. A substantial part of this inquiry is therefore devoted to theory building.

This basic yet fundamental point about theory will be rehearsed in the chapters that follow. Although there is a general consensus in the literature about the negative role played by the state in what has become of Africa’s development, there are substantial differences when it comes to explaining why this is so. These differences, I argue, boil down to opposing conceptualisations of the state – that is, different set of lenses used to make sense of African states. This in turn relates to opposing understandings of what power is and how it works. My second point of departure is therefore informed by Mamdani’s (1996, p.3) complaint that

scholarship on Africa faces a “paralysis of perspective,” which is echoed by Mbembe’s (2001) wish to rehabilitate and rescue social theory on Africa. Mamdani and Mbembe complain that African politics are understood primarily for what it is not, and how it differs from the Western experience. Social theory’s mission is to identify the steps necessary for African institutions to imitate Western ones. I have discerned two main approaches that theorise the state in Africa which I have labelled neo-Weberian and historicist. The gist of the neo-Weberian argument is that contemporary states are best understood when compared to an ideal type, which typically leads to claims that African states are failed, soft, or weak. The historicists on the other hand maintain that this approach has little explanatory power as it posits the state as a static and given variable around which other historical processes unfold. This perspective holds that it is more helpful to conceptualise the state as part and parcel of society, and as such is an institution that also is subject to historical change. The main difference between these two approaches is methodological and can be reduced to different conceptualisations about what the state really is. Chapter two and three are devoted to a literature review of the two approaches referred to above. For now, I aim to show that their disagreement in the final analysis boils down to questions over the appropriate epistemology (how to study, i.e. the methods of acquiring knowledge) and ontology (what to study, i.e. what variables are relevant or necessary to explain social change) for state studies in Africa (and by extension elsewhere?). I want to stress that my project is not primarily to compare and contrast the neo-Weberian and historicist approaches and then to choose one. Inspired by Mamdani (1996), I hold that this would hardly be a contribution to explanation and theory, as both traditions offer valuable insights. Comparing the two perspectives with the aim of negating one of them would be unfair: their respective proponents ask different questions and thus, logically, arrive at different conclusions. Inspired by Mamdani’s critique of what he labels the modernist and communitarian approaches, I aim to problematise the various claims about African states by historicising and contextualising them. This, I hope, will enable me to draw on insights from both.

Coxian Critical Theory (CCT): a Solution?

In order to bring together the insights from the two schools, I turn to the critical theory of Cox. I argue that when the questions considered above are looked at through the theoretical lenses provided by Cox (1983; 1981; 1987; 2002) the seemingly fundamental difference between the two approaches can be bridged in a way that manages to use insights from both. Samatar and Samatar (2002) use a similar approach: while they rely on Weber’s ideal type to

conceptualise the state as such, they emphasise that the state is a historical phenomenon. Though they do not refer to Cox, I am reminded of his remark that the disagreement between Weberians and Marxists boils down to the difference between synchronic (dealing with space) and diachronic (dealing with time) modes of understanding (Cox, 2002). The latter approach lends itself to a historical approach where the question ‘how did this order come about?’ comes naturally. The former is in contrast Weber’s domain and aims to grasp the complexity of the social in forms of ideal types. This difference forms a crucial element of Cox’s (1981) own distinction between critical theory and problem solving theory. In response to his critics that this distinction is too rigid, Cox (2002, p.28) argues that “ultimately, time and space are not separate and opposed categories; they are aspects of the same thing and both techniques of analysis are necessary for understanding social life.” This means that both problem solving and critical theory are valid approaches, while it has to be kept in mind that they seek to account for different things. Cox further labels his own method eclectic and maintains that the ultimate test for a good theory is not whether it successfully follows a certain methodology but rather if it has explanatory power and is able to guide action. The best way to attain this is to integrate, as far as possible, a variety of different approaches and sources. Cox’s (1987) critical theory focuses on change and has a historicist emphasis. However, he maintains that ideal types are useful as they ‘conceptually arrest’ aspects of social reality, and as such are important tools to use in understanding the complexity of change (Cox 1987, p.4). The aim is to represent historical structures. An ideal type for Cox is not a methodological straightjacket, as he stresses that a good concept is both general and context-specific. That is, a Coxian ideal type has a ‘loose’ structure that gains specificity only when applied to specific historical and geographic circumstances. Instead of analysing ‘the’ state as such, Cox discusses what he calls different forms of states that correspond to different state / society complexes. In short, these terms refer to the relationship and interaction between the state as the most powerful institution of rule in a country and the social forces that work on, for or against the state.

Cox’s theoretical framework is, however, not without shortcomings, and I will argue that it cannot be applied uncritically to an African context. Cox’s own empirical analysis focuses on the Western world, and I criticise him for conceiving of the ‘third world’ in the singular. This constitutes a major shortcoming and neglects the importance of power struggles within peripheral countries. However, as a theory and methodological approach, CCT offers a promising approach to investigating African state / society complexes as well as the continent’s role in the world order. To address its shortcomings, I seek to wed the insights

from CCT with Mamdani's (1996) theoretical framework. Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject* offers a fresh theoretical perspective on state – society relationships in Africa. In arguing for a specifically African form of state, based on the legacy of colonial indirect rule, Mamdani establishes Africa as a unit of analysis and proposes a theory of the state based on what it actually does as opposed to what it is supposed to do according to an ideal type. His methodology of historicising the state recognises African agency within historical structures. This approach resonates closely with CCT. I will argue that combining Mamdani's and Cox's theoretical frameworks avoids the problems that arise when Eurocentric International Relations (IR) theories are applied to an African context. The combination adds to both frameworks by addressing a shortcoming in Cox: it pays more attention to power struggles in the periphery, and redresses the exclusive focus on Africa in Mamdani. This contributes to bringing Mamdani's theory into IR and making Cox more relevant to Africa. Adding Cox to Mamdani contextualises Mamdani's African state in space as well as time, whereas adding Mamdani to Cox shows how African states respond to outside pressures and in the process (re)constitute the world order by adding an inside-out pressure.

Research Design and Methodology.

So far, I have attempted to establish that the question of how to conceptualise the state is a natural entry point into a discussion of state / society relationships on the state's importance in furthering human development. This, I think, is one of the most pertinent questions facing students of Africa today. A theoretical discussion is, however, of little interest if not connected to empirical evidence. If it is true that your theoretical inclinations structure how you view social reality, it is no less true that theory must be informed by real world evidence Chapter five is therefore devoted to an analysis of the state in Angola. I want to use Angola as a case study and 'testing ground' for the neo-Weberian and historicist approaches. Again, I emphasise that my research question is not about which theory is 'best.' Rather, I aim to integrate both synchronic and diachronic elements into my analysis by looking at the case through the conceptual lens of a synthesis of Cox's and Mamdani's theoretical frameworks.

A Case of What? Case Studies and Theory Development.

The *problématique* informing this thesis is the theoretical impasse between the neo-Weberian and historicist conceptualisations of African statehood. As indicated, I seek to juxtapose and create a common ground between them rather than choose one over the other by means of synthesising CCT's and Mamdani's approaches to the state. The following pages will lay out why I chose a single case study as the preferred strategy of creating such common ground. As

is evident from the above and the organisation of the thesis itself, I approach my case with theoretically grounded questions and propositions. Thus I can use the case as a testing ground for the two approaches. This establishes a link between my study of Angola with previous scholarship; a strategy proposed by Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) in their *Capitalist Development & Democracy*. Rueschemeyer (2003, p.317) expands on this and argues that “such [theoretical] reflection not only shapes the questions and the premises of the case analysis, it also links them to earlier scholarship and thus to analytic work on other instances of the issues under investigation.” To ground one’s approach theoretically does not entail the application of a readymade empirical framework to a specific context. Instead, it “consist[s] of problem formulations, conceptualisations, and reasons given for these” (Rueschemeyer 2003, p.317). That is, the initial theoretical overview (chapter two through four) prepares the ground for the empirical analysis of Angola.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a single case study to contribute to theory building on African states? Crucially, the question as stated assumes the Angolan state is ‘a case of’ an African state and my analysis thus has a wider applicability beyond the specific context of the Angolan state. As Ragin and Becker (1992) note, the definition and usage of the term ‘case’ has important implications for the nature and the implied relevance of the research. Cases are frequently employed in research, but few interrogate their meaning and boundaries. Answering the question ‘what is a case’ is necessary to specify the aim of the research, and necessarily relates to other fundamental methodological issues. In particular, this relates to the generalisability of the propositions made about the case. Following Walton (1992) and in the spirit of Thompson’s (1978) historical logic, I will therefore problematise what the Angolan state is ‘a case of.’ In recognition that there are several possible answers, I am aware that conducting empirical analysis with strong preconceived notions of what the case represents frames the analysis and limits the types of questions I approach my subject with.

Theory development is the comparative advantage of a single case study research design. The underlying logic motivating many case studies is identified by Skocpol (2003) as a frustration with the inadequacy of established theory, leading to an in-depth exploration of a new case and a subsequent revision of the theory. The ability of case studies to create theory is indicated by the fact that some of the most influential texts in social science are case studies, such as Weber’s *The Protestant Work Ethic* or Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class*. Such studies have, if not created consensus, stirred up important debates,

proposed new hypotheses and explanatory models, and spawned an array of new research. So runs a commonly heard defence of the single case study method (Flyvbjerg 2004; Rueschemeyer 2003; Walton 1992). In the words of Walton: “in fact, as we begin to reflect on the state of general knowledge in social science, it is clear that much of what we know derives from classic case studies” (1992, p.125). Why is this so? An obvious answer is that a case allows the researcher to delve deeper into the material which enables a more nuanced, complex and above all contextualised study (Mitchell 1983; Skocpol 2003; Yin 1994; Rueschemeyer 2003; Flyvbjerg 2004). This in turn allows revisiting of existing theories viewed from the perspective of new evidence; a process that can result in theory development. A single case thus fits the overall purpose of my thesis.

Flyvbjerg contrasts the case study with the ‘trait analysis’ inherent in large-N studies, which allows the research to analyse only certain aspects of a complex reality. Conversely, a case study eases the dialogue between evidence and theory in that the theoretical propositions are more likely to be corrected by the subjects “talking back” to the researcher (Flyvbjerg 2004, p.236). According to Ragin (in Flyvbjerg 2004, p.236) “this feature explains why small-N qualitative research is most often at the forefront of theoretical development.” Rueschemeyer (2003) presents a strong defence of small-N studies in his article “can one or a few cases yield theoretical gains?” He notes that the conventional criticism against ‘small-N’ studies question their generalisability and thus wider relevance beyond the specific case studies. This line of criticism considers small-N studies to be capable of creating new hypotheses that could be applied to new cases, but their usefulness and theoretical relevance do not go beyond hypotheses creation. Rueschemeyer argues against this that single case studies can also be used to test the usefulness and applicability of theories. A single or few cases allow for greater complexity in their enquiries, and above facilitate the contextualisation of the object studied. The inherent problematic assumptions of large-N studies are thus avoided, for instance by being able to pay more attention to conceptual equivalence. This resonates with the historicist critique of the neo-Weberian school identified above. For example, Herbst’s (2000) study is a case in point where a problematic assumption is made regarding the a-historical nature of African states.

Theory development in case studies thus takes place by bringing concepts and propositions in close contact with a specific context. It follows then that a study of the Angolan state can probe the usefulness of the common argument that ‘the’ African state is ‘failed.’ Does this analysis contribute to the general debate about Africa states? The question touches one of the

controversies in the literature about case studies: can general theories be constructed from a case study? Stated differently, does the usefulness of a case study hinge on its generalisability? One school of thought argues that since all cases are unique any attempt to generalise implies a loss of nuance in the analysis. Flyvbjerg (2004) represents this perspective. He argues that case studies are valuable precisely because they produce context-dependent knowledge, and contends that social science has failed to develop general theories understood as propositions that hold true regardless of time and space. For this reason, case study researchers are wary to offer summaries of their studies, since they do not want to delink their explanations from the situation they are anchored in. Flyvbjerg finds *some* support in Lincoln and Guba's ([1979] 2000) article "the only generalization is: there is no generalization." They agree that context-independent propositions rely on epistemologically questionable assumptions of determinism, reductionism, and an inductive 'one to all' logic. However, they are quick to note that between the wide range of general and specific knowledge lies the broad category of the related. Case studies can create 'the working hypothesis:' does what holds true in context A travel to context B? Lincoln and Guba maintain that this question is relevant because characteristics of the individual part are indicative of the whole.

What is the Angolan state a case of? An analysis of the Angolan state can create working hypotheses for the system of states on the African continent. Other African states belong to the same wider context as Angola, albeit in different ways: Mozambique with its similar history of civil war and Portuguese colonialism, Nigeria with its oil fuelled economy and resource rich state. All participate and strive to thrive in a competitive global economy. I initially motivated this study by noting the importance of the state in creating human development. It would however be faulty logic to argue from this historical record that there is a historical law dictating that the state must play a specific role. This conception of history follows Thompson: "history is not rule governed, and it knows no sufficient causes" (1978, p.241). That is, historians study "*how* things turned out ... not why they *had* to turn out that way" (1978, p.241). Historical analysis of one context thus creates 'expectations' with which to approach other cases. The question is transferability of experience. Conversely, an analysis of the Angolan state creates new working hypotheses or expectations for other African states. An empirical analysis of the Angolan case cannot travel directly to other contexts as this would rely on a statistical inference. As proposed by Mitchell: "instead, the inferential process turns exclusively on the theoretically necessary linkages among the features in the

case study. The validity of the extrapolation depends not on the typicality or representativeness of the case but upon the cogency of the theoretical reasoning” ([1983] 2000, p.183).

For Walton (1992), extrapolation is inherent in any case study. Indeed, the very word ‘case’ presumes the subject is something more than a mere instance: “a case implies a family; it alleges that the particular is a case of something else. Implicit in the idea of the case is a claim” (Walton 1992, p.121). Identifying the family of the case in turn constitutes the theoretical value and contribution of a study. It is precisely by pursuing the question “a case of what” that the researcher contributes to a more general theory (1992, p.135).

The Case of Angola.

Angola stands out as an interesting case for a number of reasons. From the point of view of the neo-Weberian tradition, it displays many of the features of a prototype ‘failed state’ (Bauer & Taylor 2005). With respect to Herbst’s (2000) yard stick for measuring state strength, the postcolonial Angolan state has faced severe problems of radiating effective control beyond the capital. The most visible example of this is the protracted long civil war between rebel group *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA, National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) and the regime *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA, Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) that started in the immediate aftermath of independence in 1975, after the Portuguese exit. Peace has reigned only since 2002, when UNITA demobilised and the government declared that the peace agreement’s requirements had been met. Moreover, the state’s relationships vis-à-vis its society can be described as parasitical. Bauer and Taylor (2005, p.152, referring to le Billion 2001) report that due to the widespread fraudulent appropriation of the country’s oil wealth by government officials a popular Angolan slogan had it that “MPLA steals, UNITA kills.” Angola’s vast oil reserves offer an interesting vantage point to analyse the state from. Oil accounts for 90% of exports and 80% of government revenue. This has led to income levels that means that Angola is about to become a middle income country (Bauer & Taylor, 2005). However, this growth has not led to the human development of the country. The oil connection will allow me to look at the interlinkage between global forces and the nature of the social support of the Angolan state.

The political economy of oil is of interest to both historicists and neo-Weberians. For the former group, it provides an entry point to look at the interlinkages between global and

domestic levels. Herb (2008) notes that the insistence that different geographical scales are interconnected and that the state cannot be viewed as an isolated container, unites the critical tradition in political geography. He finds support in Castells (2000a) who emphasises that Africa's predicament cannot be understood without reference to global economic history. Castells identifies a number of structural changes in the world economy starting with the development of new information technologies in the 1970s. Further, he argues that this development "coincided with the collapse of African economies, disintegration of many of its states, and breakdown of most of its societies" (Castells 2000a, p.82). The core of his argument is that this development is best understood from the interplay between global, regional and national forces that together have worked against the general development of the continent.

Neo-Weberians are prone to understand states with reference to their resource base. My initial approach to understanding state / society relationships was inspired by Clapham's (1996) reminder that states need resources to reproduce themselves. I was further motivated by Moore (1998), who makes a strong distinction between earned and unearned income, and argues that they are indicative of state strength. He defines earned income as those state revenues that originate from the citizens and that the state therefore has had to make an effort vis-à-vis its society to obtain, whereas unearned income such as foreign aid comes from sources outside the state. The logic behind this reasoning is that states that rely on unearned income do not need to develop a harmonious relationship towards their societies, whereas states that rely on earned income depend on their societies for survival and therefore are more likely to move towards a developmental or integral state. In other words, what Moore essentially proposes is a theory of state strength based on the concepts of earned and unearned income that accounts for the relationship between state and society.

I do not find this approach however satisfactory, as it leaves a number of questions unanswered. The assumptions made in the theory itself seem to beg the question and suggest the conclusions. It strikes me that the majority of African states must by necessity rely on unearned income, since their domestic resource base is so poor to begin with. Noting the correlation between 'weak' states and an aspect of their resources base offers few clues as to why and how this situation arose. In other words, to use the language of Cox (2002), while the synchronic element may be described and dissected – which can be valuable – the diachronic element that would explain why, is lacking.

Limits of the Study.

To what extent will I be able to answer my research questions? My theoretical scope and aim is relatively wide, as I aim to contribute to the theory on the state concept applied to an African setting. I try to engage with a broad selection of the general literature, and I hope to propose an alternative theoretical framework of my own. The evidence I present that seeks to illustrate the usefulness of this framework is limited to a single chapter. In this chapter, I attempt to focus squarely on the Angolan state; what social forces it is made up of and what strategies it employs to reproduce its power. I do not attempt to account for ‘everything’ the Angolan state does and is, so to speak, and in the process I risk to neglect socially important areas where the state has an important stake. To exemplify, I do not concentrate on the protracted civil war, although it is clear that a historical analysis of the activities of the postcolonial Angolan state could usefully use the war as a vantage point.

Time constraints and financial constraints implied that there remains much uncovered theoretical and empirical terrain. I was unable to go to Angola to conduct my own field work, and only later realised how important it could have been to go to the country myself. I look at the state’s strategies to reproduce its own power, but I am unable to assess the success or failure of these strategies from the point of view of ordinary Angolans. This constitutes a major limit to my study. My reliance on secondary literature is another important limit of my study. I make a theoretical claim about how to theorise the state in chapter four, but the actual evidence I present in chapter five is insufficient to ‘prove’ or sufficiently illustrate its usefulness. In accordance with this framework, one of my primary aims was to analyse the Angolan state from the vantage point of the social groups that it includes and excludes. In some ways, this proved difficult as little empirical fieldwork inside Angola has been conducted by others. Understandably perhaps, the bulk of the literature focuses on the nature of the civil war. When the Angolan state is in question, the state concept as such is not explained. I thus had to read between the lines so to speak to tease out what assumptions the scholars made about what the Angolan state is.

The remainder of the thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter two and three will go into further detail on the neo-Weberian and historicist approaches. Chapter four turns to Angola, and looks at how the two schools approach the Angolan state and the country’s political economy of oil. The concluding chapter will discuss the findings in chapter four and conclude what lessons can be drawn for social theory.

Chapter Two. Failing States in a Failed Continent: the neo-Weberian Approach.

Introduction.

The neo-Weberian ideal typical approach informs the mainstream *methodological* school of thinking about African statehood in scholarly and policy circles. Although the school is defined by its usage of a slightly modified Weberian ideal type of the state, the methodology lends itself, by force of logical reasoning, to a number of concrete claims about what African states are. The adherents to the neo-Weberian school tend to border on, or display Afro-pessimistic attitudes, despite common caveats to the contrary. Indeed, the very choice of an ideal typical approach based on European states necessarily leads to claims that African states are weak, failed or soft. The main research question of the school is how to account for this weakness and what its societal impacts are. As Clapham (1997) and Taylor and Williams (2004) note much recent Africanist scholarship revolves around the search for the cause of what has gone ‘wrong’ on the continent. The literature surveyed in this chapter agrees that the fate of African states is a crucial factor in the creation of a ‘crisis.’

What are the main claims of the school? In short, it maintains that African states are “organizationally impaired” “ramshackle states” that are “far from complete.” The incompleteness signifies that they have some way to go before they mature into the strong, empirical statehood enjoyed in the West. They do not stand up by themselves, and are creations of the international state system and international law. There is no social contract between the state and the citizenry that ensures social cohesion. They are typically desperately poor, and rely on the artificial life lines provided by foreign aid to survive. Indeed, it is misleading to call them real states, hence common prefixes such as ‘quasi’ ‘failed’ or ‘weak’.

The condescending language in the above paragraph is perhaps extreme, but it epitomises the general attitude among neo-Weberians. The labels and quotes are taken from Jackson (1990, p.169; 23; 21) and are meant to apply not only to African states but to all non-Western states in general. Building on an earlier article with Rosberg (1982), Jackson’s notions of quasi-states and judicial statehood proved extremely influential. The notions capture the facts that, compared to a Weberian ideal, African states fall short and therefore have to rely on the benefits of sovereignty, such as diplomatic recognition and foreign aid, granted to them by international law to survive.

This chapter provides a literature review of the neo-Weberian school, ranging from Jackson (1990) to Clapham (1996; 2000; 2001; 2004), Reno (1998; 2000a; 2000b; 2005), Herbst (2000), Harbeson and Rothchild (2000), Rotberg (2004), and Bates (2008). All of these scholars incidentally teach at prominent US universities, save Clapham who teaches at Cambridge in the United Kingdom. I structure the chapter as follows. First, I will present the ideal typical methodology of the school. Second, I will elaborate on the school's main thesis as identified briefly above. I will then turn my attention to the two main concepts the scholars offer to explain African politics. Here, I open up the concept of the state itself. As states are hardly conceivable without power, I will interrogate how the school conceptualises it.

The Ideal Typical Method.

The convention of comparing existing states to an ideal type is an often unstated postulate in the neo-Weberian literature. What are ideal types and how are they used? For Weber (1949, p.42), an ideal type is a "logical construct" used as a "means of correct casual imputation." There are variations of ideal types, but the one employed by the neo-Weberian school is a list of what a state would be according to a "rationally 'correct' 'utopia'" (Weber 1949, p.42). The purpose is thus not to create a definition of what states have in common but to create a methodological tool to better understand existing ones. Weber emphasised that while many ideal types correspond to the observer's own ethical standards, the ideal type

"has only one function in an empirical investigation. Its function is the comparison with empirical reality in order to establish its divergences or similarities, to describe them with the *most unambiguously intelligible concepts*, and to understand and explain them causally" (1949, p.43, emphasis in original)

The idea underlying the use of ideal types is thus that the divergence between reality and the ideal type aids understanding of reality. Weber provides the example of two commanders on a battle field. In an ideal or utopian world, they would each have full knowledge of the fighting resources and strategies of the opponent. On the basis of this knowledge, they would then make perfectly rational calculations on the best way to defeat the other. Weber argues that this constructed situation provides a useful means to understanding the consequences of the facts that neither commander possess such knowledge or are capable of flawless rational conduct.

Applied to the state, Weber (1947) proposed an ideal type meant as an a-historical and context independent definition. This aids comparative analysis in that the observer's understanding of 'the state' does not change from society to society. Emphasising that he is interested in the state as it has developed in modern times, Weber defined it as a compulsory political association that can be called a state to the extent to which it manages to defend a claim to

“the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order” (Weber 1947, p.154, emphasis in the original). The modern state in particular is characterised by an apparatus of administrative and legal order. The nature of this order changes with legislation, and is staffed by people that are also regulated by a legislative framework. The law of the state concerns all activities within the defined territory of the state; Weber hence underscores that the unchallenged monopoly of legitimate coercion defines the state no less than does the legislative apparatus and the bureaucratic structure that it entails.

Main Argument.

The neo-Weberians use this ideal typical method in their concrete analysis of African states. What empirical claims do they make? I have divided their main arguments in two. From the postulated starting point that Africa faces a ‘crisis’, the scholars go about accounting for states’ role in producing it.

Describing the Crisis.

As sketched out above, the main thesis of the school is that African states owe their creation and continued existence to international law that recognises their sovereignty. Jackson (1990, p.5) argues that decolonisation created a “new sovereignty regime” that changed the way states have been created historically. The new independent states possess what he calls “negative sovereignty” and are more juridical entities than real states (Jackson 1990, p.1). The borders from the colonial period were kept intact and the new states promised to respect each others’ territorial integrity. This principle was stated unequivocally in the 1963 founding charter Organisation of African Unity (OAU). ‘Negative sovereignty’ ensures the state’s continued existence for purposes of international law, no matter the conditions on the ground. As has been the case in Somalia since 1991, the institutions of the state may have been torn apart by civil war, but the state continues to be recognised as such by the international and African state system. Herbst proposes that this constitutes “an African model” of statehood – “where states are born easily but do not die” (2000, p.272).

The neo-Weberian school thus easily labels African states as ‘weak’ or ‘failed’. Clapham (2000) complains that the category of the failed state is unsatisfactory in that it describes what it is not rather than what it is. The label furthermore contains a normative assumption that the global order ought to consist of states, according to Clapham. Yet his own category of the African ‘monopoly state’ (Clapham 1996) does not differ significantly in terms of factual description from Rotberg’s (2004) definition of weak and failed states. The point is that

compared to the Weberian ideal or to what Jackson calls ‘positive sovereignty’; African states are by definition understood as a deviant of some sort. This does not mean that they are all the same. As Clapham (1996), Reno (1998), and Kasfir (2004) point out, the ideal typical approach lends itself to classifying states on a continuum, placing fictional, quasi, judicial, or failed states towards one end, and strong states on the other. The gist of the approach is that a state is assumed to be stronger the closer it conforms to the ideal type. Figure 1 below provides an overview of the various labels given. The figure aims to illustrate how the different descriptions given to African states overlap with each other.

Figure 1. A Typology of the African State.

+ Max Strategy		Min Strategy -		
Empirical Statehood Strong States Nation-States		Juridical Statehood Quasi- / Weak- / Monopoly- States Territorial-States		
Integral Provider of public goods, High degree of legitimacy.	Developmental Drives economic development, often at cost of democracy.	Prebendal Protects interests of regime and its clients, focuses on regime survival. Dependent on external recognition and aid, despotic at home.	Predatory Parasitical and exploitative, no pretence of legitimacy.	Cadaverous / Failed Institutions and regime are gone, no public authority.
	? ← Botswana South Africa	Nigeria → Ghana Zimbabwe → Angola (Malaquias 2007)	← Ethiopia Sudan → Majority of African States (Castells 2000a)	Somalia

Figure 1, adapted and expanded from Samatar and Samatar (2002) Labels taken from Clapham (1996), Herbst (2000), Castells (2000a), Malaquias (2007) and Harbeson and Rothchild (2000).

Quasi-states regimes have problematic relationships with their societies. To varying degrees they ensure their own survival by preying on their peoples, and consequently offer little protection from violence. Herbst (2000) argues that African politics thus turns the realist picture of international relations inside out: while the international order is secure, the domestic order is anarchic and unstable. Harbeson and Rothchild (2000) argue the post Cold War era has exposed the frailty inherent in the African state system. Whereas African leaders before could rely on external sponsoring from a Cold War patron, they are now left to fend for themselves. Recent and dramatic examples of states in deep disarray might foreshadow a

Hobbesian state where the pervasive self-interest of leaders forecloses the possibility to secure political order. While this description is largely pessimistic, they conclude it is too early to doom the African state system: “in sum, *flux* may or may not ultimately prove to be a synonym for *decay*” (2000, p.6, emphasis in original).

Clapham’s preferred label is the ‘monopoly state.’ The monopoly state is ‘the’ African state, as it were, since there is “no doubt about its virtual universality” (1996, p.56). Much like Fanon’s quote that introduces chapter one, Clapham describes a process where originally popular independence movements lost support relatively fast. The postcolonial regimes clung to power by imposing control from above rather than relying on the consent from their peoples. Monopoly states display high reliance on personal leaderships, and the governments are difficult to remove by constitutional means. *Coups d’état* resulting from a weakening patronage base of the sitting government have been a common experience. The clientelist culture among the elites and their associates implies that they are bound together by economic and not moral ties. Reno (1998; 2005; 2000a) presents a gloomy picture of the evolution of the monopoly state in the post Cold War era that adds rich empirical data and a compelling argument to support Harbeson and Rothchild. In four case studies of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Zaire / Democratic Republic of Congo, he presents a picture of states that borders the “opposite of the Weberian ideal” (1998, p.5). Desperate to earn the necessary resources to survive, politics in these countries have become criminalised and militarised. What matters for the rulers is income, and Reno argues that consequentially “control over commerce rather than territory has become the key demarcator of political power” (1998, p.71).

Explaining the Crisis.

While the neo-Weberians agree broadly on the descriptive labels for African states, they provide conflicting explanatory narratives. The main dividing line concerns the relative weight assigned to the international versus the domestic level. None of the scholars surveyed focus exclusively on the global level, and are thus in agreement that whatever external structural constraints, African leaders can still exercise some level of agency. However, the dispute reveals a disagreement on who are the most relevant actors and important agents in shaping African politics.

The key protagonists for the domestic explanation are state leaders. They may face external and internal pressures, but what becomes of the state is in the last analysis dependent on the

choices they take and policies they enact. Hence, the main research question of this perspective is: given a number of historical predicaments such as poverty, the colonial legacy and borders, a sparsely populated and harsh land, what actions have African state leaders taken to ensure their own survival (see Jackson 1990; Herbst 2000; Rotberg 2004; Bates 2008)?

Herbst argues repeatedly against the literature that blames globalisation, pressure from global markets, and the IMF for Africa's predicament, and states that "this conventional wisdom is incorrect" (Herbst 2000, p.26). Herbst evidently understands globalisation as de-territorialisation and a deepening incorporation into the world economy, and finds the opposite to be the case for Africa. Rotberg (2004) echoes this focus on domestic factors, and highlights the agency of African leaders to drive their states to failure. He maintains that state failure is not accidental but by and large the product of greed and misguided human actions. State leaders destroy their countries to enrich themselves. Post-civil war Angola provides an example, and so does Zimbabwe: "President Robert Gabriel Mugabe *personally* led Zimbabwe from strength to the precipice of failure, his high-handed and seriously corrupt rule have bled the resources of the state into his own pockets" (Rotberg 2004, p.26, my emphasis).

This extensive focus on the agency of individual leaders is, of course, controversial. Herbst takes issue with assigning the primary explanatory variable to state leaders. They remain the protagonists, but Herbst notes that they are heavily constrained actors and views politics as "the result of human agency interacting with powerful geographic and historic forces" (2000, p.29). This applies to politics universally, but in the African context the continent's sometimes unforgiving political geography brings about particular constraints. Herbst presents a picture of what Bassin calls 'politics from nature' (Bassin 2003; see also criticism in Corbridge 2008). According to Herbst, "the fundamental problem facing state-builders in Africa – be they pre-colonial kings, colonial governors, or presidents in the independent era – has been to project authority over inhospitable territories that contain relatively low densities of people" (2000, p.11). The vastness of many African countries has meant an increased cost to exercise power for the state leaders. Given the lack of any security imperative from without, since the African state system guarantees the borders combined with a weak economic base, African leaders calculated that it was neither necessary nor beneficial to seriously attempt to place the hinterlands of their countries under the coercive apparatus of the state. What mattered from the leaders' point of view was control of the capital, since this ensures the benefits of judicial statehood.

Herbst underscores the importance of corruption, and claims that African leaders dip their hands so deep into state coffers that the state starts crumbling and with it future opportunities for rent-seeking. This is, however, presented as an effect rather than a cause. Although “geography is only a given” (2000, p.159) what Herbst calls the ‘national design’, meaning the size of the country and the location of the capital and other population centres relative to each other, primarily explains their fate. In large countries, it is costlier to broadcast power, and this acts as a constraint, more so than in smaller countries.

The unstated assumption that state leaders act as a *homo oeconomicus* that make rational cost-benefit calculations is a basic premise for Herbst’s work. This assumption is stated more clearly in Bates (2008, p.3), who uses game theory to account for why in “late-20th century Africa, things fell apart.” He detects a pattern of African civil wars from the 1970s to the early 1990s where the wars cease in a few countries but start in a larger number of countries. He explains this by providing the analogy of a fable. The reader is asked to picture a community with a specialist in violence (the state) and two groups of people. The setting is that the specialist can choose to either provide security and public goods or prey on the population. To account for this choice, Bates maintains that the specialist will act according to the economic incentives available. The weakening economic base in African countries since the 1970s thus represent a decline in the economic rewards available to the specialist in return for providing security and public goods. They are consequently more likely to shift to predatory behaviour.

The work of Clapham (1996; 2004) presents an in between case between the domestic and international explanation. His major work (1996) focuses on what African state leaders have done in order to survive and reproduce their own regimes. The international system has been extremely accommodating for the leaders of Africa’s monopoly states, providing both the assurance of judicial statehood and the necessary financial means to state survival. At the same time, Clapham underscores that poverty is one of the main obstacles facing African states and points to the exclusion of African economies from meaningful participation in the world economy as a major contributing factor. Clapham underscores that it is hard to discern between cause and effect: a weak state produces a poor economy, and a poor economy reinforces the weak state structure.

The nature of the economic base thus impacts the state structure, in Clapham’s analysis. African states must be paid for as must all other states, and this has to happen through engagement with the world economy. Declining state income has meant that the number one

foreign policy priority became a search for foreign economic support. The possibility of autonomous and independent African states free to develop their own economies was thus not an option. Most countries became dependent on exporting one or two primary commodities, which created 'rentier states' highly vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices. The importance of the type of commodity exported is highlighted in the special case of oil: no oil producing African country partook in the democratisation wave that swept the continent in the early 1990s. This indicates that a more stable resource base also makes regimes more secure. Clapham's later work takes the focus away from the actions and choices of individual leaders, and focuses on structural historical constraints. In a 2004 article entitled "the Global-Local Politics of State Decay", Clapham argues that "the state itself is the product of circumstance over which individuals have at best only limited control" (2004, p.92). Many African countries do not have a pre-colonial history of the state and hence lack a political culture conducive to state building. Somalia is a case in point. Conversely, those countries with a pre-colonial experience of organising and centralising political power that resembles the modern state are more conducive to the idea of the state. Rwanda provides a good example. Clapham notes that both its genocide and post genocide developments can be explained with reference to a shared strong culture and history of centralised power.

The impetus of focusing on weak states' sources of income and how this affects state structures was taken up by Reno (1998; 2000b). More so than Clapham, he presents a multi-scalar analysis that attempts to incorporate both inside and outside pressures on the state. The focus of Reno's work is the global pressures exerted upon African states in the post-Cold War period, and the ways in which the world order accommodates African state structures and regimes. He premises his analysis upon the new situation presented to African leaders in the early 1990s, with a drying up of Cold War patronage and the subsequent increased influence of the World Bank and the IMF and the conditionalities associated with their structural adjustment programs (SAP). These programs focused on enhancing a market economy free from state intervention already in the 1980s together with standards for 'good governance' that left no room for neo-patrimonial practices. Reno emphasises that African leaders could choose to reject, accept or adapt to the SAPs, and argues that leaders accepted the programs to receive financial support while doing what they could not to implement the policies. Apparently successfully so; Bates (2008) reports that the World Bank's own evaluation of the programs was largely negative and impacted the Bank's self-confidence.

Reno (1998) asks what implications the new post-Cold War realities had on African politics. He surveys Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zaire / the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria and found that “less government has contributed not to better government but rather to warlord politics” (1998, p.1). He claims that the most enthusiastic reformers were leaders of very weak regimes, who sought to downsize government in order to decrease the size of expensive patrimonial networks. Reno further argues that in the context of collapsed state institutions, rulers and foreign non-state commercial actors have formed alliances to control important resources and markets. Compared to the Cold War’s public support from strong states, weak states’ relationships to the outside world have become privatised. Relying on the same rational choice logic as Herbst and Bates above, Reno proposes that “thus, a turn away from conventional state structures, or warlordism, is a rational response to globalisation in weak states” (1998, p.28). The pressing question facing leaders in weak regimes is how to manage internal security threats from competing and often armed elites. Their “rational adaptation” of a new “calculus of opportunity” (Reno 1998, p.39) implies that “it is better to tacitly support foreigners (if not one’s fellow citizens) who will resolve crises of weak-state instability quietly, cheaply, effectively, and at their own risk. Even better is a plan in which the weak state that receives the ‘aid’ pays for itself by mortgaging resources to foreign firm partners” (1998, p.70). The result is that private foreign mercenary companies protect the states’ economic interests.

Conceptual Tools.

The neo-Weberian African State.

Having laid out the neo-Weberian ideal typical method and the main argument of the school, I now turn to the conceptual tools used to make sense of African states. How helpful is a ‘utopian’ ideal typical definition of the state for entities of political authority that fulfil only a few of Weber’s traits? The notions of taxonomical hierarchy and the so-called ‘min-max’ strategy offer a helpful gateway to answer this question. Mahoney (2004) refers to Satori’s notion of ‘taxonomical hierarchy’ which states that there is an inherent tension in a concept’s extension and its intention. That is, the more defining attributes a concept has, the fewer cases it can refer to. This holds true for the definition of democracy as well as statehood: the more traits required to qualify as a state, the fewer states in the world will qualify. To resolve this tension in their analysis of African states, the neo-Weberians employ what Mahoney calls the ‘min-max strategy’ that defines a concept both in terms of its minimal and ideal typical definition. As indicated in the figure above, a strong state is thus understood as one close to

the constructed ideal type. Conversely, failed states are defined in terms of what they are not – viz. as all that which the ideal type is not; but they are also anchored in the radical category or prototype of such a state. Somalia’s ‘cadaverous’ state is a case in point.

There are thus minimal and ideal typical definitions of statehood. *Minimally*, and in accordance with the min-strategy, based on the empirical record of statehood in the contemporary world, a state comes into existence when and if it is recognised as such for purposes of international law and diplomacy by other international actors, notably other states and international organisations such as the United Nations. For this to happen there needs to be a government that acts as the state’s representative, for example in order to sign legal documents on behalf of that state (Clapham 1996; Dugard 2005)

Although the min-max strategy resonates with Weber’s own approach, it is important to note that the state *definition* itself in the min-strategy departs from a strictly Weberian approach. Weber’s definition refers to *internal* criteria and aspects of statehood, and reflects what Jackson above calls ‘empirical statehood’. As Harbeson and Rothchild (2002) point out, and as is evident in Jackson’s notion of ‘judicial statehood,’ the neo-Weberian school adds Tilly’s notion of the state system to the Weberian ideal type. This notion seeks to capture the wider system of regional and international statehood a single state exists in, and how this supports or enables the existence of a state. The focus of the state system contrasts with the exclusive focus on internal factors in the traditional Weberian ideal type. This is a necessary addition in an African context due to the colonial legacy. Most observers of African states see them as colonial creations that were superimposed on Africans from above and without. The borders by and large stem from the 1884 – 1885 Berlin conference where Africa was partitioned among the European colonial powers. Herbst (2000) complains that this Eurocentric understanding of statehood as essentially a territorial entity inhibits a comparative and historical approach to the exercise of precolonial, colonial and postcolonial political authority. He agrees, however, that colonialism brought a new era to African politics, in that borders assumed salience for the first time. For Herbst, today’s postcolonial states are in some ways synonymous with their borders, and he maintains that their originally arbitrary demarcation and contemporary porousness have not disabled them from fulfilling their primary function of preserving territorial integrity.

Ideally and in accordance with the max-strategy the state is much more than this. Here, Weber’s definition as spelled out above applies: states enjoy an unchallenged monopoly of the

legitimate use of coercion within a given territory and over the population within that territory. This monopoly is exercised through the use of impersonal, bureaucratic rule to govern citizens and subjects. At the same time, the state plays the role of the provider of basic welfare to its population; a relatively recent phenomenon in Western states. Coupled with this are a number of legal, administrative institutions that work on behalf of the state, such as a judicial system. In order to function, the state needs income to finance its operations and sustain its survival and reproduction; hence, the ability to tax and otherwise obtain rent is also central to the definition of the state (Clapham 1996; Herbst 2000; Samatar & Samatar 2002; Moore 1998; Harbeson & Rothchild 2000). In agreement with Herbst, Moore (1998, p.92) goes so far as to contend that “the capacity to raise taxes is increasingly used by political scientists as a key indicator of state capacity.”

As an extension of the max-strategy and a further modification of the Weberian ideal type, most neo-Weberians also include a more fluid and less tangible trait that can be referred to as the state as a social construct in addition to the formal requirements for statehood. There are different ways to conceptualise this feature, but essentially it refers to how the “idea of the state” (Buzan in Clapham, 1996, p. 9) needs to be believed in by those it interacts with in order for the state to exercise power, and in the last analysis, to exist (see also Harbeson and Rothchild 2000; Clapham 2000; Herbst 2000). Samatar and Samatar (2002) call this the most complex, yet most fundamental trait of the state, and refer to ‘the idea of the state’ as a commonwealth. The state as a commonwealth implies a conception of the state as an ‘imagined community’ where it forms “a neighbourhood of strangers” (quoted in Samatar & Samatar 2002, p.7). That is, the state binds together people that do not know each other by giving them a sense of belonging to the same place or country. People believe in the idea of the state and feel some sort of ownership towards it. The concept of ‘commonwealth’ thus conceived resembles the argument that the state cannot be understood separately from the concept of the nation (Harbeson & Rothchild 2000; see also Herbst 2000).

The State as Structure and the Agents of the State.

States can be understood as a structure of power, and as such they have no agency. In this conceptualisation, the state is a social structure of power made up of its institutions. When the state ‘acts’ the actual agents are the state officials and state leaders. In this vein, Harbeson and Rothchild stress that it is necessary to distinguish between states, regimes and governments. States can however also be seen as concrete actors. Indeed, some scholars treat the state and the government as if they were almost identical (cf. Reno 1998; Clapham 1996). In a context

of 'negative sovereignty' where formal state structures are weak and the state apparatus' coercive reach does not extend far beyond the capital, the distinction between the state and the government becomes more theoretical than practical. For analytical purposes, what the state 'is' or 'does' is equivalent to the concrete actions of state leaders. The ideal type or 'empirical statehood' posits that the state is bigger than the government, as it were. Notwithstanding errors made by state rulers; the state structure is still bound to stay. But in the context of state collapse, when the state enjoys little legitimacy and is hardly able to live up to the ideal type, "the state [becomes] virtually coterminous with the single individual who rule[s] it" (Clapham, 1996, p. 268). Clapham emphasises that the view of states as a social power structure is a part of the mythology of statehood that underlies the ideal typical approach.

Imagining Power.

Power is corollary to any conception of the state. Weber's own definition of the state emphasises the importance of power, since he equated political power with the ability to exercise coercive power within a given territory (Weber 1947). Weber's own analysis of the state is thus closely linked to his understanding of power. However, the concept of power is typically not clearly spelled out in the neo-Weberian literature, and teasing out how some scholars view power requires a careful reading between the lines. Yet, I hold that it is necessary to do this in order to get to the crux of their approach to the state. I will return to a closer analysis of my understanding of power in chapter four and five. For now, suffice it to say that power is a necessary mix of coercion and hegemony or dominance and consent. It can be economic, social, political, or ideological (cf. Gramsci 1971; Cox 1983; 1987).

Neo-Weberians primarily focus on coercive power. Rotberg (2004) for instance sees the state as a Leviathan that offers security from violence, and is thus only concerned with the coercive aspects of power. Others take more of a political economy approach and focus on the interlinkages of economic and political power (Clapham 1996; Herbst 2000; Bates 2008). Herbst and Bates however see economic power as secondary to political power. In this analysis, the weakness of African economies contributes to and underlies state weakness, but the former is seen as a product of the latter.

Power in its ideational or ideological facets is largely absent from the neo-Weberian literature. It enters the argument in discussions of state legitimacy, the 'idea of the state' or the state as a nation. It is then argued that one of the signal traits of African states is exactly the absence of such power. Clapham (1996) for instance defines the 'monopoly state' as a state that does not

live up to the mythology of the ideal type, and holds that Africans feel little ownership of their states and consequentially do not believe in the idea of the state. From this perspective, then, power relationships between African states and people are thus dominated by political and economic exchanges.

The treatment of ideology as an epiphenomenon has its theoretical foundations in a reading of European history following Tilly (1990), where war making and state making were two sides of the same coin. Herbst, for instance, points out that the political geography of Europe, in stark contrast to Africa, made control over land so important that it was worth sacrificing men and money over. Large populations combined with scarcity of land drove states to expand their boundaries, and European states were thus drawn into a Darwinist struggle where only the strong could survive. States had to earn control over their territories, and depended on taxation to wage war. This experience created a closer tie between people and states and made necessary the forging of the state as a nation. From the perspective of the ruler, state legitimacy was a necessary means to stable rule. The state is, however, not seen as any more benevolent than other sources of violence. Tilly regards state leaders in the same vein as leaders of organised crime. The difference lies in the former's need for legitimacy. Reno's analysis of contemporary African warlord politics is strikingly similar. State rulers and insurgency forces are essentially the same, the difference lies in the fact that the former happens to control the capital and can thus reap the benefits of judicial statehood. Hence, he argues that "a warlord's ability to lay claim to the mantle of sovereignty matters more to the outside world than his actual conduct of politics, even if that conduct violates the norms of territoriality or internal hegemony that characterize most states" (Reno 1998, p.222).

Herbst stresses that the exercise of power is the essence of any state. The main difference between the African and European experiences is reflected in different understandings of what exercising power actually means. Whereas in Europe it came to mean physical control over a clearly defined territory, Africa's political geography of small populations in vast lands meant that the pre-colonial understanding of power more typically saw it radiating in almost perfect circles spreading out from the centre. The exercise of power referred to capabilities to rule, with control over the centre far more important than the hinterlands. Herbst refers to the Ashanti Empire in what is now Ghana that defined its own reach as the distance a messenger could walk within a month. Conversely, kingdoms in the savannah or desert areas were larger because of the use of camels to cover vast distances. The system of power outlined by Herbst is thus one where power becomes 'naturalised' as it expresses the coercive capabilities of the

ruler and realities on the ground. He claims that “overall, precolonial Africa was a state system *without fictions*” and that power was thus “in harmony with the challenges posed by the political geography” (Herbst 2000, p.55, my emphasis).

This fiction-free harmony was ruptured by colonialism, and the Europeans created territorial states based on their own conceptualisation of power. In his historical comparative analysis, Herbst concludes that while contemporary African state leaders have embraced the territorial state, the reality on the ground is that power is exercised in a manner which is similar to the way it was used in the precolonial political economic order. This is why the state’s reach in many African countries is limited to the capital and gradually diminishes towards the hinterlands. To measure a state’s ability to rule, Herbst proposes that road density per square kilometre offers a useful proxy to gauge the security forces’ reach beyond the capital.

Conclusion.

This chapter has reviewed the neo-Weberian school and its arguments regarding African quasi-states and conceptions of power. I stress that the notion of failed states in a failed continent expressed in the chapter title reflects an extreme version of the neo-Weberian argument. Bates (2008) comes closest to this description, with his argument that the political economic order in Africa has ‘fallen apart’ due to state failure. The scholars surveyed are, after all, united by the methodological choice of the ideal type and not their empirical claims. However, I have tried to show that this choice dictates some of the concrete claims that they are bound to make about African states. I argue that if African states call for prefixes such as ‘quasi’ or ‘failed’, it is only because an unhelpful ideal type based on the ‘modern’ European state is postulated. This ideal type dictates the labels, and forms the parameters of the neo-Weberian school and sets its analytical limits. As Weber (1949) pointed out, this is inherent in the ideal type as a constructed methodological tool, as it is designed to be compared against reality to find out how it is different and similar to the construct. While this benefits comparison and structures the analysis according to the parameters set by the ideal type, Kuhn has pointed out the dangers inherent in setting out the borders which determine the nature of the analysis conducted and types of questions asked. In his own words: “a paradigm can, for that matter, even insulate the community from those socially important problems that are not reducible to the puzzle form, because they cannot be stated in terms of the conceptual tools the paradigm supplies” (Kuhn in Reinert 2007, p.1).

To anticipate my later discussion of Cox, I hold that an important role for theory is to detect the *potential* for change. The neo-Weberian functionalist approach is useful for listing and describing what African states can and cannot do, and to compare this to what Weber described as a “rationally ‘correct’ ‘utopia’” (1949, p.42). The potential for change is thus hard to detect, as the neo-Weberian is too busy investigating the distance between the utopian and African state. The approach thus lends itself to an Afro-pessimism that does not see the potential for change because it is a-historical and universalist. The next chapter turns to the question of alternative conceptualisations of statehood and by extension power, viz. the historicist approach.

Chapter Three. Seeing the African State from Elsewhere: The Historicist Approach.

Introduction.

For the purposes of this thesis, I group under the historicist umbrella a wide range of scholars that argue against the usefulness of the ideal typical approach to statehood. An alternative, historicist approach entails a view of the state as part and parcel of society and as such subject to change. For historicists, the a-historic and static state concept inherent in the ideal type is unhelpful, since what a state *is* differs and changes according to the specific historical and geographic context. The (neo-) Weberian approach provides the analyst with a poor conceptual tool to make sense of existing states. Migdal captures the gist of the historicist critique of the ideal typical approach when he points out that, “domination and change have frequently been analyzed as part of the process in which the state is the fulcrum” (2001, p.7). The upshot of this understanding, as Agnew (1994) notes, is that all states are the same; it is nations and countries that change. This is perhaps an unconventional view, and historicists typically motivate their projects in opposition to a perceived statist and Weberian mainstream.

The focus of this chapter is to provide a literature review of historicist approaches to the state in an African context, and in particular the contributions of Bayart (1993; 2000; 2003), Mbembe (2001; 2003), and Mamdani (1996; 1999). However, I emphasise that it is important to recognise that these scholars partake in a wider intellectual project as just alluded to. While by no means the only examples of the historicist perspective, the contributions of Migdal (2001), Agnew (1994), and Agnew and Kuus (2008) represent a helpful introduction and their views on how to analyse states in general resonate with the Africanist historicist approach. While it is important to keep this in mind, I hold that the historicist critique intensifies and becomes particularly relevant when applied to the mainstream literature on the state in an African context. Mbembe, Mamdani and to some extent Bayart adds what I label a postcolonial critique of the neo-Weberian school. This critique charges the scholars surveyed in Chapter two for following a colonial logic in their analysis. They expound a unilinear view of history, according to which the history of non-Western societies is supposed to follow the trajectory of historical change set up by an enlightened and more progressive West. African politics is, to paraphrase Walcott (1974), a simple exercise of mimicry; African states are to ape their European counterparts in order to close the distance between their own ‘failed’ reality and the ideal type.

The chapter is organised as follows. I will first present my understanding of the historicist method. Here, I point to the contributions of Migdal and Agnew at a general level, as well as those of Mbembe, Mamdani, and Bayart in an African context. Second, I will follow the structure from the previous chapter and outline the main arguments related to African states and the supporting evidence. Third, I will specifically focus on the concepts, ‘state’ and ‘power’.

The Historicist Method.

What does a historicist approach to statehood entail? As Young (1999) notes, it is often wrongly equated with *historical* thinking which considers the impact of the past on the present. Historicism goes beyond that. Here, I define historicism as a *methodological* approach that differs from the ideal typical method as defined by Weber in that its conceptual tools are more flexible. In contrast to the neo-Weberian min-max strategy identified in the preceding chapter, the historicist analysis follows what Mahoney (2004) calls ‘iteration.’ Instead of mechanically applying a rigid concept to an empirical case, the historicists move back and forth from real cases and conceptual definitions, in the process re-visiting and re-defining the concept itself. This conforms to what Thompson (1978) calls the historical logic, which is based on a dialogue between evidence and theory. The dividing line thus relates to the way the state is conceptualised. Specifically, this concerns whether the state is an independent or dependent variable, or in other words: if the state is conceived as a static unit around which everything else changes or if the nature of the state is subject to change.

Migdal (2001), Agnew (1994), and Agnew and Kuus (2008) agree on the limitations of the ideal typical approach to statehood. Applied to the scholars surveyed in chapter two, they operate with a static or non-process based state concept. As Migdal (2001, p.15, emphasis in original) notes,

“with Weber’s definition [of the state] as the starting point, variation can be conceptualized and measured only as distance from the ideal type. As long as the *idea* of the state is uniform and constant, the variation of states, even the failure of some states, can be expressed only in terms of deviation from the standard. If real states fell short of the standard, as they were bound to do, all sort of words had to be invented to express the gap between actual practice and the ideal.”

For historicists, the neo-Weberian ideal typical approach in its classical and the modified versions surveyed in chapter two is faulty on four accounts. First, states are treated as ‘containers’ of their societies. This view naturalises the state, as it postulates its existence prior to the society or the nation, and posits that states are superimposed structures containing national societies. Second, acceptance of this fundamental premise underlies what Agnew

(1994) calls the 'territorial trap' of IR: it presents a view of the world as consisting of separate blocs called states, and international relations is about the interaction between these containers. The premise thus maintains a sharp dichotomy between 'domestic' and 'foreign' issues.

Third, applied to specific countries, the territorial trap makes the scholar look for the relative absence or presence of the state instead of its meaning in the concrete situation (Agnew 1994). Hence, intended as a heuristic guide, the ideal type instead makes it more difficult to analyse states' historical trajectories, their integration and disintegration with societies, and their actual practices. Migdal (2001) notes that scholars typically overlook the fact that Weber himself emphasised the heuristic and constructed nature of ideal types. Following the logics of iteration, the ideal type is abandoned in favour of an analysis of the changing nature of political authority throughout history. Historical analysis is thus one primary aim for historicists. Analysis is naturally geared towards a state's genealogy, in contrast to what Agnew (1994, p.63) sees as the neo-Weberian logic: "the actual processes out of which different states have arisen are obscured in favour of an ideal-type territorial state."

Fourth, Agnew and Kuus (2008) further emphasise that states are not sources but outcomes of power relationships within a given society. States are constantly in the making and reflect the struggle for and distribution of power in society. Contrary to the ideal typical view, "the category of the sovereign state is constructed and reconstructed through practices operating in its name. It follows, then, that *states are necessarily always in the process of being represented and hence constituted as such*" (Kuus & Agnew 2008, p.8, my emphasis). Historicists emphasise that this view of states as entities constantly in the making, illuminates the complex relationships between state and society better than the ideal typical approach. Migdal (2001, pp.15-16, emphasis in original) proposes a definition of the state that sees "the state [as] a field of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by (1) *the image of a coherent controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory*, and (2) *the actual practices of its multiple parts*."⁴ He describes the state as a 'field of power'; a term taken from Bourdieu suggesting that symbolic or ideational power has the same importance as material power. Migdal's twofold definition thus requires the analyst to understand the state as a "contradictory entity that acts against

⁴ Migdal's inclusion of territory in the image of the state differs somewhat from Agnew, who underlines that the spatial aspects of political authority are not necessarily territorial.

itself” (2001, p.22). Simply put, states on a discursive level may seek to adhere to its image as a territorial unit; an image that does not differ significantly from the Weberian ideal type. However, Migdal emphasises, analysts must recognise that the image is shattered by the actual practices of the state. The completeness of the state image is always contested by opposing forces in society, and the state’s representatives act in ways which contradict the discursive image. The difference with Weber’s ideal type is that the distance between the image and the practice is not used to analyse what the state would have looked like if it were led by rational leaders. While designed just like Weber’s ideal type to aid comparative studies, the image of the state is rather part and parcel of the legitimisation of the state by its leaders. It is an image they hold up as a strategy to consolidate their own power.

Main Argument.

Enter the Africanist historicists. What claims do Bayart (2003; 1993; 2000) Mamdani (1996; 1999) and Mbembe (2001; 2003) make about African states? As mentioned above, I propose that the relevance of the historicist critique of the neo-Weberian model assumes extra force when applied within an African setting. ‘The state’ as such cannot be approached directly without considering the discursive context within which scholarship on African politics exists. The main argument of the historicist school must thus be divided into two: first, a postcolonial critique; second, the specific claims it makes about African states.

Evoking the Postcolonial.

I locate the above scholars within the broader philosophical genre of postcolonial theory. This aspect of their arguments applies in particular to Mbembe, who uses the term in the title of his book, *On the Postcolony*. Mamdani does not explicitly use the notion but motivates his study in a manner that places him within the postcolonial perspective. Bayart partakes in the postcolonial critique, but to a lesser extent than the others.

What is postcolonial theory? Broadly speaking, it is concerned with questions of positionality, power (especially in its hegemonic manifestations) and identity (Shohat 1992; Pouchepadass 2006; Dirlik 1994) It is inspired by the work of thinkers such as Césaire ([1955] 1972), Fanon (1963; [1952] 1967), and Ngugi (1968; 1986), and Said (1978). These thinkers wrote powerful texts on the dehumanising effects of colonialism on the colonisers (Césaire) what it means to be black vis-à-vis the (former) white colonizer (Fanon), language as a source of domination and identity (Ngugi), and the discourse of European thinking on the Orient since the time of Homer (Said). What unites these writers is their common emphasis on power

relations between the (ex)coloniser and (ex)colonised; on a continuation of colonial rule not through coercion but through hegemonic means. 'Post' suggests not a 'beyond' but rather a new form or mode of domination (Shohat 1992). Dirlik argues that the 'postcolonial' begins, not right after colonialism, but more precisely "when ... a forgetting of its effects has begun to set in" (1994, p.339) He maintains that postcolonial theory is concerned with global power relations after colonialism, how Western dominance has continued, and the discourse that concerns itself with these questions.

Postcolonial theory is thus meant to be a powerful critique of the (Western) narratives and practices used to prolong the domination of the ex-colonised world by non-coercive means. It is however not without its weaknesses. I concur with Pouchepadass' (2006, p.189) review article of *On the Postcolony* where he argues "postcolonial thinking ... essentially stops with [an] acknowledgement of the essentialising and culturally mortifying arrogance of Western social scientific objectivism, and is content with elaborating an opposite position, developing an apologetic of difference." He notes that instead of getting stuck here, Mbembe's novel contribution is to use postcolonial theory, not as a point of arrival, but as a point of departure.

The postcolonial critique as a point of arrival, I think, has led to claims that Western concepts and theories, *by the virtue of being Western*, do not apply to the experiences of non-Western locales. Bayart (1993), in critiquing dependency and development theorists for negating African agency in colonialism, implementing democracy, and responding to economic pressures from a contemporary globalised world, claims that he "put the finger on the major problem that black Africa poses to conceptual apparatuses constructed from Western historical experiences" (1993, p.21). Bayart's logic is slippery. The Western nature of Foucault's (2006) notion of governmentality does not bother him, and he uses the concept without any qualification. Foucault himself makes it clear that 'governmentality' springs from an analysis of "the great forms and economies of power *in the West*" (2006, p.143, my emphasis).

How do Mbembe and Mamdani go beyond the postcolonial critique as a point of arrival? Mamdani (1996) motivates his study by noting that the predicament facing Africa does not merely reflect incapability at the political and practical level to handle issues such as poverty. It is also the result of a dire theoretical weakness inherent in what he calls 'history by analogy' or what I label the neo-Weberian school. For Mamdani, the labels given to contemporary African states (prebendal, predatory, etc.) suggest that they are best understood

as mirroring the history of state formation in early modern Europe. Mamdani does not object to comparative studies, but argues that the neo-Weberian approach denies the African experience any historical specificity. It takes Europe as a privileged starting point and thus disables the use of Africa as an independent unit of analysis. Crucially, 'history as analogy' is partially responsible for (re)creating the African predicament, as it informs the world view of the major actors in policy making circles. Mamdani (1996, p.12) contrasts this with a "history as process" – a historicist methodology – which looks at the meaning of the state in its specific historical context.

The pronounced postcolonial impulse comes perhaps more naturally to Mbembe. He and Mamdani both dwell on how the colonial state created by the Europeans was based on racism and a view of Africans as "Peter Pan children who can never grow up, a child race" (Fyfe in Mamdani 1996, p.4). This view still prevails, according to Mbembe. He (2001, p.2) argues that "discourse on Africa is almost always deployed in the framework (or on the fringes) of a meta-text about the animal – to be exact, about the beast." This prior discourse can present an image of African identities as timeless and primordial. In the context of Somalia's politics in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Siad Barre, Samatar (1992) thus had to argue that against the prevalent notion that Somali society can be understood primarily in terms of bonds to different clans or tribes. His argument is not that the 'tribe' does not exist, but that other social cleavages such as gender and classes matter too, and that what a 'tribe' means changes together with other historical dynamics (see also Jones 2008).

The Politics of the Belly, the Bifurcated State and Fractionated Sovereignty.

The postcolonial perspective fills the first pages of Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject*, Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* as well as Bayart's *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, and thus serves as a backdrop against which their specific arguments about the state in Africa must be understood. These claims, viewed in isolation, do not differ radically from those of the neo-Weberians. It is timely to emphasise again that the main dividing line between the historicists and the neo-Weberians is methodological. Indeed, the nature of the claims made against the 'failed state' argument is thus not as Sangmpam (1993) claims in the title of an article: "Neither Soft nor Dead: The African State is Alive and Well."⁵ Armed with

⁵ He argues that the soft or failed state thesis rests on an unrealistic assumption that all states are supposed to be the same and act in the same way. Instead, he maintains that it makes more sense to focus on forms or types of states and explains these with reference to social relationships. He later (2007) develops this idea into the hypothesis of the 'overpoliticized' state in the so-called Third World. This notion intends to capture the fact that

a different conception of both state and power, the historicists offer alternative explanations to account for what has become of African states, but draw an equally damning picture of them. Here, I must highlight the fact that, on the empirical level, some of the neo-Weberians do not differ substantially from the scholars surveyed in this chapter. In particular, the arguments of Reno (1998) and Clapham (1996) resonate to some extent with both Bayart and Mbembe.

Bayart, Mamdani, and Mbembe propose three terms to account for the workings of African states: the politics of the belly, the bifurcated state, and fractionated sovereignty. Bayart borrows the Cameroonian expression of ‘the politics of the belly’ and the Nigerian ‘sharing the national cake’ as ways to account for the pathways of social inequality produced by the state (1993, 2003). He (1993) defines the politics of the belly as food shortages, as the idea of accumulation or the possibilities inherent in the state of pulling oneself up the social ladder, as the corpulence of men in power, nepotism, and as the more nebulous “localisation of forces of the invisible control over which is essential for the conquest and exercise of power” (Bayart 1993, p.xviii). ‘Politics of the belly’ thus encompasses more than notions of personal rule or corruption, which Bayart chides for simplicity and reductionism. Bayart’s state is a manufacturer of social inequality and cleavage. In short, “the State in Africa – no matter what the political experience – has diverted the surplus and the rent of agricultural exports into its own pockets” (1993, p.63). Bayart stresses *ad nauseam* the role of agency in this process, contrary to the claims that external structures have superimposed poverty and dependency on the continent: “Africans have been active agents in the *mis en dépendance* of their societies, sometimes opposing it and at other times joining in it” (1993, p.25; for an updated defence of the same argument see also Bayart 2000) These agents are of course the few who have control over the state apparatus. The anticolonial moment belonged to an urban elite that was disconnected to and uninterested in the vast majority of rural Africans. He refers to the example of Angola, where “the MPLA in Angola did not take root in the countryside and represents above all urban creole interests” (1993, p.66).

Mamdani’s *Citizen and Subject* is about how Europeans ruled Africa and how Africans responded to it. Mamdani emphasises how Africans were included into the state apparatus and structure of power, as the racial exclusion inherent in colonial rule is well-known and documented by thinkers such as Fanon (1963). Mamdani’s main argument is that the structure

poverty in Third World countries means that the social good is limited, and that the state becomes the site of access and hence societal struggle over the precariously few resources that exist.

of power, in particular the state institutions at the local level, have survived decolonisation and thus function as a major impediment for development on the continent. The postcolonial state is as bifurcated as its colonial predecessor: it has been deracialised but not democratised.

The colonial roots of today's African states thus provide important insights into their undemocratic structure and the consequent inability and unwillingness of state leaders to work for development on the continent. European colonial rule was of course brutal and exclusionary in nature, but by necessity had to find ways to include Africans into the state apparatus. Why? This necessity was the only answer to what Mamdani calls 'the native question' or the question of how a tiny minority of white officials were to rule over the African majority. Given the limited European personnel, Africans had to be included in the state apparatus in some manner. This marks the transition from direct to indirect rule. The former was the initial model of European colonial rule in Africa. The aim of direct rule was to 'civilise' the African continent: to make Africans to be like Europeans. However, racism and direct rule presented the colonialists with severe problems. The problem with race was that it worked under 'unite and rule' logic by treating the African population as one whole. Oppressing the majority as a single group created a fertile ground for anticolonial resistance. Armed with the experiences from colonial rule elsewhere and having to work with relatively meagre resources, first the British and eventually the other colonial powers replaced direct with indirect rule.

Instead of treating Africans as one race, indirect rule worked on the assumption that all Africans belonged to a tribe, and that each tribe had a male chief that was supposed to be in full control over his tribe. The colonialists created a dual or bifurcated state structure, where the rural areas fell under the domain of a Native Authority that, through the institution of the chief, was given the right to tax, a Native administration, and a Native court. The Native Authority was, in short, an autonomous institution but still accountable to the colonial centre. The colonisers justified this system by arguing that it was supposed to preserve the traditions of the colonised. Mamdani argues that it was a way for the minority to rule the majority. The Native Authority was supposed to uphold custom, but its aim was to rule by creating consent. Sir Theophilus Shepstone drove the point home when he told the Cape commission of 1883 that "the main object of keeping natives under their own law ... is to ensure control of them" (in Mamdani 1996, p.67).

Indirect rule created a bifurcated, institutional structure in all of colonial Africa, South Africa included. At independence, the Native Authority was deracialised through affirmative action schemes, but it was not democratised. This, argues Mamdani, is also why the postcolonial state has failed to contribute to the development on the continent, albeit in the context of uneven international relations.

Mbembe's (2001) diagnosis of the African state resonates closely with Mamdani's. On the one hand, he emphasises the importance of contingency and stresses that the continent is moving in several different directions at once. Because of this, an Afro-pessimistic view of the continent as a site of an all-pervasive war is not warranted, Mbembe contends. He then notes that "not that there is no distress" (2001, p.8). The better part of the book is in fact concerned with the nature of this distress and the role of African states and their 'potentates' in creating it. African countries are today either marked by civil war, or "where war is still avoided, chaos is descending, the implosion taking the form of a general social breakdown" (2001, p.50). Where and if state leaders attempt to exercise ideational power to create legitimacy, they are unable. Mbembe (2001, p.42) underscores that "we must avoid explaining everything by coercion. But the general practice of power has followed directly from the colonial political culture and has perpetuated the most despotic aspects of ancestral traditions, themselves reinvented for the occasion." The poverty facing postcolonial state regimes means that the state has little left to distribute to buy itself support and allegiance. As a result, the difference between government and coercion is fading.

Towards the end of the 1980s, many African states were deprived of significant traits of their sovereignty, notably in fiscal and financial matters; hence the term 'fractionated sovereignty'. Under the tutelage of the IMF and the World Bank, African states sought to re-structure their economies. Where the result has led to economic growth, it has not been accompanied by increased employment. Mbembe proposes that it is now possible to theorise the end of wage work with the replacement of precarious forms of day-to-day employment.

Like Mamdani, Mbembe underscores the importance of the colonial legacy. Postcolonial regimes built on the practices and rationality inherent in the colonial state. The colonial form of power, termed commandment by Mbembe, rested on a "very specific *imaginary* of state sovereignty" (2001, p.26, emphasis in original). The exact opposite of the liberal model of the European state, the colonial state was built on the principle of a simultaneously weak and inflated notion of right. Undoing the racial exclusion, postcolonial regimes appropriated from

the colonial states the principle of impunity, privileges for state officials, and the arbitrary use of violence. Postcolonial regimes operated within a circular notion of sovereignty, where the purpose is to create submission and obedience to the state and not provide any public services. This circularity is reflected in the nature of the instruments and imaginary that the state employs in order to sustain itself. The result, in short, is a postcolonial African state ruled by leaders uninterested in the rights and freedom of its peoples.

States and Power or the Power of the State.

The scholars surveyed in this chapter do not operate with a clear cut definition of ‘the state’ as such, in contrast to the neo-Weberian school and Migdal’s definition above. The logic is clear: precisely because the meaning of what a state is differs according to the context, it makes sense to analyse specific states in concrete situations. A general state definition would be of little interest to the strict historicist. Mamdani’s (1996) discussion of private property in precolonial Africa provides insight into the logic underlying his method. He contends that it is uninteresting and insufficient to note absence of the institution or notion of private property, as this does not capture what it means for the people concerned. To understand what this absence means, the analyst needs to come to grips with the institutional context it existed in.

However, viewed in relation to the scholars’ conception of power, an image of the state emerges nonetheless. States are treated as structures and instruments of power. Mbembe at various times describes it as “technology of domination” that is sustained by an imaginary of legitimacy but implemented in an authoritarian manner (2001, p.42). This structure rests on economic power as it needs resources and a continuous inflow of money to sustain itself, it is coercive in its immediate expression as evident in the state leaders’ violent oppression of oppositional forces, and it seeks ideological power by trying to create a legitimate image of itself. The three scholars agree that the latter aspect is far from prevailing in most countries. Mamdani’s bifurcated state does, however, depart from the primary focus on the state’s coercive facets, in that the dual state structure he presents is an attempt to rule by hegemonic means. The attempt may be incomplete, but Mamdani’s unique contribution to the debate is how – even in a context where coercion seems to prevail – hegemony is still sought and indeed to some extent needed for power to function at all. Chapter five details this argument in the context of the Angolan state.

Mbembe (2003) comes the closest to presenting a general conception of the state. He states that “the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the

capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (Mbembe 2003, p.11) This understanding builds on Foucault’s notion of biopower, meaning the aspects of life that power has assumed control over. Concretely, it concerns the limits states set with regards to the taking of life, especially in the context of war. Mbembe distances himself somewhat from the *bio* part of the concept, and presents a “reading of politics as the work of death” (2003, p.16) and the notion of necropolitics. The idea is simple but leads to a disturbing conclusion: if the defining trait of the state is the ability to decide over life and death, the archetypical state is the Nazi state. No other state in history has exposed its ‘stateness,’ so to speak, as did the national socialists in their concentration camps and the *Endlösung*. Mbembe states: “in doing so, it became the archetype of a power formation that combined the characteristics of the racist state, the murderous state, and the suicidal state” (2003, p.17). The colonial project and the state apparatus it set up are not qualitatively different from the logic that drove the Nazi regime, based as it was on notions of social Darwinism, racism and eugenics. Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* (1972) argues that Europe, through its maintenance of the colonies, was calling for a new Hitler, and that Nazism was a logical extension of a colonial project based on racism and with it, the justification to kill peoples of ‘lesser value’. As theorised by Mamdani, the colonial state set up a dual system, where citizenship and thus the subject of law was reserved for the ‘civilised’. Mbembe (2003, p.15) states that “in ... European political science, the colony represents the site where sovereignty consist fundamentally in the exercise of a power outside the law (*ab legibus solutus*) and where ‘peace’ is more likely to take on the face of a ‘war without end’.”

As Mamdani’s bifurcated state, Mbembe’s postcolony is not the direct and unchanged continuation of colonial rule. Appropriated by the post-independence leaders, the postcolony operates with its distinct rationality and logic. Mbembe maintains that the weak material base of postcolonial power has led to the commodification of coercion and the emergence of enclave economies like in Angola. His analysis in this respect is strikingly similar to that of Reno (1998; 2000b) set out in chapter two.

Conclusion.

At the end of chapter two, I introduced this chapter by pointing to the apparent weaknesses in the neo-Weberian approach. My critique is shared by the scholars surveyed here: the neo-Weberian state concept invites a functionalist approach where analysis proceeds by noting what a state is supposed to do and be, and measure how far existing states fall short. The disagreement, I have emphasised, is primarily conceptual and methodological. The

historicists do not counter the failed state thesis by claiming that all is well in African states, quite the contrary. Their critique of postcolonial regimes is, if anything, even harsher. Mamdani, Mbembe, and Bayart also operate with different understandings of power, and chide the neo-Weberian emphasis on coercion for its simplicity.

The arguments about the weak and failed African state thus seem to rest on a definitional fallacy, where the conclusions are inherent in the assumptions made in the definition of the state. The historicist school is in many ways an oppositional project, founded in a resistance towards what it sees as the mainstream approach. It attacks the neo-Weberians from different directions at once. Their state concept is simplistic and simply unhelpful, the argument goes. Applied to Africa, the postcolonial perspective detects a unilinear, modernist assumption at work in the neo-Weberian literature. The analysis of the difference between the African state and a European ideal type reduces the analysis of African politics to a quest for how Africans can 'catch up' and follow the trajectory and enlightened path set up by the European historical experience. African states are supposed to mimic European states.

However, as I indicated in chapter one, I am not satisfied with choosing one approach over the other. Since the historicists and neo-Weberians arrive with different research questions and focus on different aspects of reality, combining their insights leads to a fuller understanding. Historicism is well suited to historical analysis and explanation, whereas the ideal typical approach is more tailored for policy making and analysis of concrete and short term questions. The boundary is of course always blurry. In the next chapter, I will return to that distinction as I look at the question of how to understand the relationship between African states and the world order they operate in. There is little agreement on the importance of including the global level in the analysis. When is Africa the appropriate unit of analysis? The answer depends on what research questions are raised. Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject* is for instance explicit in its insistence that Africa constitutes the unit of analysis. Against this, I argue that Mamdani neglects how the global context impacts on the internal structures of the societies he analyses. Mamdani's historicism contextualises in time, but not in space. What is thus lost in the analysis? Castells (2000a) highlights the fact that structural changes in the world economy in the 1970s corresponded to political crises across the African continent. He maintains that without reference to this global, economic history and how it has impeded development and affected the inner workings on the continent, the analysis remains incomplete and borders racism by implicitly suggesting an innate African inability to rejuvenate the continent.

This perhaps obvious statement on the importance of the global context needs to be problematised in order to be made meaningful. The problem, of course, arises only when 'global' and 'local' explanations are seen as competing categories. Following Marston (2000), I hold that the choice of the appropriate geographical level to conduct analysis implies a choice of what actors and processes are thought of as relevant. Inasmuch as this choice has crucial implications for what the theory will argue and what it considers the driving forces of social phenomena, the choice of geographical level needs to be explicitly justified rather than tacitly postulated. For Marston, level is one facet of scale. Conceived of as operational scale, level denotes where the processes considered relevant take place. One way to think about this is that analysis can use different degrees of resolution, ranging from coarse or large scaled to fine or small scaled. The gist of Marston's argument is that the choice of scale itself informs how the phenomenon itself is construed. That is, instead of seeing the different scales available for analysis as ontologically given categories ranging from the household, the community, the nation, the region up to the globe, the choice of scale is itself a choice of what processes or elements of the complex social reality are thought of as important. The challenge for theory is how to incorporate a multi-scalar approach that can account for how the different levels interact. In chapter four, I seek to propose a theoretical framework to that end.

Chapter Four. Keeping the Promise of Critical Theory: Towards a theoretical framework for studying African State / Society Complexes.

Introduction.

The theoretical framework I have in mind is a synthesis of Mamdani (1996) and the critical theory of Cox (CCT) (1981; 1983; 1987). In this chapter, I want to bring these scholars into conversation beyond pointing out the rather obvious ways their theoretical approaches converge. I will make three distinct claims. First, I note that they converge in their historicist method, their conceptualisation of the state as constituted and contested by social forces in society. Second, I argue that bringing together their theories adds to both by addressing significant shortcomings in their work. Third, I propose that bringing Mamdani and Cox into conversation creates a synergic fusion that points towards the contours of a theoretical framework for analysing states and their relationships to, and inherent embeddedness in, societies. I posit that it is hard to separate state and society even analytically because the state is part and parcel of society and changes alongside other social processes. This underlines the usefulness of synthesising Mamdani and Cox, which I will show by situating them in a wider academic debate about state and society in Africa. The resulting contours of this theoretical framework, I hope, can help resolve some of the major disagreements in social science's attempt to make sense of African politics. As I hope to make evident in the following, there is a *prima facie* case for applying CCT to an African context, especially with regards to the economic marginalisation of the continent in the world order. As O'Brien and Williams (2004) point out, the main contribution of CCT is to ask critical questions about the system of international order as a way to create a more just and egalitarian world. I will problematise this *prima facie* case somewhat, drawing on Murphy's (2007) critique of the partially kept promise of critical IR theory.

This chapter is structured as follows: I will first outline the main tenets of Cox's critical theory. This section will focus on his main argument, methodology, and four central concepts (production, power, world orders, and the state / society complex). Then, I will criticise Cox's conceptualisation of the 'third world' in the singular as a major shortcoming. This shortcoming is related to what Murphy (2007) identifies as the reason of the failure of critical theory to access the worldviews of the 'wretched of the earth,' to borrow a term from Fanon (1963). Thirdly, I will bring in Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject* as a way to meet the challenge

for critical theory as identified by Murphy. The chapter concludes by identifying the main elements of a Coxian / Mamdanian synthesis and suggesting how this addresses some of the main disagreements among Africanists.

Main Argument of CCT: a Critical Approach to World Order.

The central argument of CCT is that a critical approach to the interplay of power, forms of states, national and global social forces, world order, and production is needed to understand “current historical change” (Cox 1987, p.1). A *critical* approach does not take power relationships in the world as a given, but steps back and asks how the order arose in the first place. This is done to provide a historical account of the origins of the current world order, and in the process to detect where configurations of power are weakest (Cox 1981; 1987). Cox presents an open structure or system of power; a system that is in constant motion as contestation of power is a historical constant. Following Braudel’s (1972) three modes of historical narratives (*la longue durée*, the narrative of the conjuncture, and event-time), Cox (1987) recognises that certain structures in society have a long and durable life whereas others are more conjunctural or short lived. Applied to the global political economy, for instance, the domination of the core over the periphery may appear to be set in stone. However, inherent contradictions in the system will eventually lead to its downfall. CCT is thus a “theory of history in the sense of being concerned not just with the past but a continuing process of historical change” (1981, p.89).

The ‘critical’ in critical theory goes further than questioning the order of things and calling for a more egalitarian society. Critical theory starts by being critical of itself (cf. Cox 1981). This is the reflexive element of CCT and implies that Coxian epistemology rejects the positivist distinction between subject and object. Gramsci (1971, p. 324) expounded this basic point in his *Prison Notebooks* when he argued that

“the starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory.”

Cox’s (1981, p.87) version of the same argument is found in his frequently quoted statement that “theory is always for someone and for some purpose. All theories have a perspective. Perspectives derive from a position in time and space, specifically social and political time and space.” Social theory inherently contains ideological elements in the way it frames issues. Cox’s ‘solution’ to this conundrum is first an awareness thereof, and second a wish to

transcend “its own perspective” albeit “the initial perspective is always contained within a theory and is relevant to its explication (1981, p.87).

The Method of Historical Structures.

How does Cox substantiate his arguments? To ‘go beyond traditional international relations theories’, he proposes what he calls ‘historical materialism’ (1981, p.95; 2002, p.27) or the “approach” (1987, p.395) or “method of historical structures” (1981, p.100). Recall that the gist of CCT is its own reflexivity (the need for theory to be critical of its own perspective) and that power, forms of states, national and global social forces, world order, and production are inherently and dialectically interlinked. To make this argument, Cox proposes to think of these concepts as historically produced, that is, traceable throughout history. Power relations are thus conceived as emerging from historical processes. This method permits the observer to recognise inherent weakness (or the historicity) of the seemingly most durable structures, such as the existence of an interstate system and a world economy. In other words, the method of historical structures de-naturalises institutions, ideas, and material capabilities to recognise the agency of humans that are born into and (re)create historical structures. Cox (1981) emphasises that a theoretical model of historical structures is merely a way to simplify as a means to understanding social reality. Historical structures are heuristic devices that “like ideal types ... provide, in a logically coherent form, a simplified representation of a complex reality and an expression of tendencies, limited in their applicability in time and space, rather than fully realised developments” (1981, p.100). This implies that elements of the historical structure, for instance a certain form of state, are not conceptualised as being the same irrespective of time and space, but their meaning and impact on society are put into their proper context.

How does Cox define a historical structure? Like Marx before him, Cox stresses that people are both bearers and creators of structures. At an abstract level, a historical structure represents a model of a certain set of power relations that define the opportunities and constraints facing people and social groupings (Cox 1981). More specifically, Cox considers a structure as the configuration of a triangle of three forces expressed as potentials: ideas, material capabilities, and institutions. First, material capabilities can be productive or destructive, and refer to the availability of natural resources, organisational abilities to exploit these, wealth and technology. Second, ideas have a dual nature. Intersubjective ideas refer to “those shared notions of the nature of social relations which tend to perpetuate habits and expectations of behaviour” such as the belief in private property or diplomats as the official

representative of states (Cox 1981, p.98). Collective images in contrast are perceptions of the social order held by different groups in society. Whereas the former are largely shared by everyone, different social groups can operate with opposing collective images. Third, institutions are a way to secure power within the historical structure by stabilising it and making it more permanent. They can influence the types of ideas held in a society and the way material capabilities are utilised. At the same time, institutions are reflections of the nature of the material capabilities and ideas prevalent in a society. To determine which of the three facets of a historical structure is more salient is a question open to empirical investigation, and depends on the historical context in question. Cox initially emphasised the importance of material conditions for global power relations. Now however, he “would put more critical emphasis on the ‘ideas’ point of the triangle” (Cox 2007, p.517).

Four Coxian Concepts.

Production.

CCT has been criticised for overemphasising class and conceiving production in a reductionist manner, and Cox (2002) concedes that there is some merit to this charge. However, he maintains that critics forget production provides CCT with a starting point for exploration and not with its final unit of analysis. *Production, Power and World Order* examines “power relations in societies and in world politics from the angle of the power relations in production” (1987, p.ix). As any other angle, the emphasis on production delimits the analysis. Cox justifies by positing that “production creates the material basis for all forms of social existence, and the ways in which human efforts are combined in production processes affect all other aspects of social life, including the polity” (1987, p.1). Production encompasses more than actual physical work. For instance, ideas have no material basis but must be understood from the material context they arise from (Cox 2002). Cox’s view on production can be related to Gramsci’s anti-economism, which is recognised as Gramsci’s most significant contribution to Marxist theory (Femia 1981; Hall 1996; Butler, Laclau & Žižek 2000; Mouffe 1979). Gramsci criticised orthodox Marxism for overemphasising economic factors and viewing ideology as an epiphenomenon. Indeed, for Gramsci (1971, p.377) ideologies have “the same energy as a material force.” Importantly, material and ideational power are dialectically interlinked and as such cannot be analysed separately. The concept of the dialectic for Cox has a twofold meaning. Analytically, it is used to seek knowledge by exploring contradictions. It also recognises that a proposition about social reality contains its opposite and as such both parts illuminate certain aspects of reality.

Because this reality is in constant motion, as stipulated by the method of historical structures, the concepts that explain or account for reality must be flexible and can never be seen as capturing any eternal truths. More concretely, viewing production as a dialectic interplay between ideas and material capabilities implies a view of history where change occurs through the confrontation of divergent societal groups. This view of history thus contains an implicit recognition that alternative constellations of power are constantly in the making.

Coxian Power.

Production and power for Cox are inherently interconnected. First, production determines who has power: what is produced, under what conditions, by whom, and for what purposes. Conversely, production takes place in already existing structure of power relations, where certain social groups have accumulated social power over time by controlling the material basis of society's productive capabilities. This social power translates into political power, which is the ability to control the formal institutions of the state to affect government policy. Access to power is thus the ability to affect the nature of production of a society.

Cox's concept of power is inspired but not taken directly from Gramsci and his notion of hegemony.⁶ A useful way to open up this concept is to consider the distinction between what Gramsci called 'war of position' and 'war of manoeuvre'. The latter is a strategy of resistance applicable to polarised situations with clearly visible conflict lines, such as the end of capitalism envisioned by *the Communist Manifesto*. A war of position, in contrast, applies to situations where power lines are blurred and multifaceted. The reach of modern capitalist states extends far beyond their formal institutions as they are deeply embedded in civil society. This gives them strength and endurance, and enables them to rule by hegemonic means. For Gramsci, power is always a mix of coercion and consent, of domination and legitimate rule. In Cox's (1983, p.127) interpretation,

"Gramsci took over from Machiavelli the image of power as a centaur: half man, half beast, a necessary combination of consent and coercion. To the extent the consensual aspect of power is in the forefront, hegemony prevails. Coercion is always latent but is only applied in marginal, deviant cases. Hegemony is enough to ensure conformity of behavior in most people most of the time."

⁶ In agreement with Leysens (2008), I thus take issue with the label neo-Gramscian on Cox. As Cox points out, Gramsci's readings are fragmentary and open to interpretation, and the relevant question for CCT's application of Gramsci's concept of power is not how closely it follows the letter but rather if Cox's interpretation of Gramsci has explanatory power. For Cox, the gist of hegemony is that dominant groups create consent by giving concessions. There are ways to read Gramsci that make for a more constructionist or postmodern understanding of hegemony (cf. Mouffe 1979; Butler, Laclau & Žižek 2000).

Hegemony can thus be conceived of as a type or facet of power, and a strategy to retain power by dominant groups. Its antithesis, counter hegemony, is conversely a type of resistance that aims to establish a new hegemony or a new historical bloc (see below). In Cox's reading of Gramsci, the leading class creates consent by offering concessions. In his analysis of the development of capitalism in Europe, he gives the example of tripartism, which is the creation of a harmonious triangular relationship between the state, the dominant employer class and the "articulate class of established workers" (1987, p.74). The function of tripartism is to consolidate the power of the leading class by sustaining a perception of shared interests with the more affluent workers that are capable of organised and coherent political activism. Recall the three facets of Cox's historical structure: ideas, material capabilities, and institutions. The closer the 'fit' between the three is (for instance the less contested the governing institutions of society are) the stronger the hegemony of the dominant group. Hegemony in this sense is precisely the ability to create commonsensical notions of the nature of the institutions needed in a society or what constitutes sound economic policy or a fair distribution of the wealth. The state's coercive elements are unfit for this task. In a hegemonic society, power resides predominantly in civil society; media, religious institutions, and the educational system. Civil society and the state are thus two sides of the same coin. In hegemonic societies, the formal apparatus of the state is but an "outer ditch, behind which there stands a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks" (Gramsci in Cox 1983, p.128). Since real hegemonic power is exercised through civil society, the state "cannot be separated ... from the social classes that sustain it" (Cox 1987, p.409).

Hegemony and the World Order.

Cox's (1983) argument that hegemony is applicable to international relations is one of his main contributions to the field (cf. Hoogvelt 2001).⁷ The concept of hegemony has been used in situations where there has been a transition from a war of manoeuvre to a war of position. For instance, Hall (1996) notes in the context of the multifaceted nature of modern racism that "it is precisely in the direction of 'complexifying existing theories and problems' that [Gramsci's] most important theoretical contribution is to be found" (Hall 1996, p.415). Precisely the point about 'complexifying existing theories and problems' is where Cox's application of hegemony to world order is a novel and illuminating contribution to the study

⁷ Gramscian scholars disagree whether the concept of hegemony can be applied to a global level. Femia (1981) notes that Gramsci distanced himself from Trotsky's internationalism and talked about (counter) hegemony specifically as a national phenomenon. This underscores my point above that Cox's concept of power is not neo-Gramscian per se but rather an attempt to apply the spirit of Gramsci's work to a new context.

of global power relations. Take the debate about globalisation and the nature of the current world order, where an argument of common currency is that the signal trait about globalisation is that it de-territorialises power and thus presents us with an increasingly blurry and complex world of interdependence.

Cox presents an analysis of the current world order where he identifies the various networks of states, corporations and intellectuals that work to create a policy consensus for global capitalism as a *nébuleuse* – “something that has no fixed and authoritative institutional structure, but which has emerged out of discussion in bodies like the Trilateral Commission, the World Economic Forum meetings in Davos, the regular meetings of the central bankers of the OECD, IMF, the World Bank, and WTO, and the G7 and G8 summit conferences and their preparatory meetings” (Cox 2002, p.33).

If it is true that power in the current world order is exercised in more discrete, less visible manners, and that Gramsci’s (following Hall 1996) speciality is to illuminate such fuzzy orders, then Cox’s application of hegemony to the world order has the potential of explaining the nature of today’s multifaceted world. Cox’s concept of world order refers to the distribution of power on a global scale. From a political economy viewpoint, it conceives of the world since the industrial revolution in terms of “the duality of interstate system and world economy” (Cox, 1987: 107). The concept includes an international division of labour, or in Coxian terminology, a difference between countries’ material capabilities.

As with historical structures, this materialist facet of world order is linked to ideas and institutions. Cox (1983; 1987) maintains that a principal distinction between world orders is whether or not they are hegemonic, that is, how closely the ‘fit’ referred to above are between material capabilities, ideas and institutions. In his own words:

“hegemony at the international level is thus not merely an order among states. It is an order within a world economy with a dominant mode of production which penetrates into all countries and links into other subordinate modes of production. It is also a complex of international social relationships which connect the social classes of the different countries. World hegemony can be described as a social structure, an economic structure, and a political structure; *and it cannot be simply one of these things but must be all three*. World hegemony, furthermore, is expressed in universal norms, institutions, and mechanisms which lay down general rule of behaviour for states and for those forces of civil society that act across national boundaries, rules which support the dominant mode of production (Cox 1983, p.137, my emphasis).

Global hegemony is thus a type of dominance of a powerful country or groups of countries and their leading classes by sustaining an ideology based on a broad level of consent or support from the subordinate countries. Cox’s interpretation of hegemony implies that this

end is attained by providing concessions to the periphery: world hegemony “ensure[s] the continuing supremacy of the leading state or states and leading social classes but at the same time offer[s] some measure of prospect of satisfaction to the less powerful” (Cox 1987, p.7). A concrete example of this is, according to Cox (1987), how the United States after 1945 created a world hegemony based on the principles of neo-classical trade theory, such as the notion of comparative advantage. According to this notion, each country, no matter how poorly endowed it is, has something which it is *relatively* better at doing than other countries. That is its comparative advantage, and the country should seek to enhance this while relying on imports of goods and services that it does not have a comparative advantage in. Hoekman (2001, p.9), in his analysis and ideological defence of the World Trade Organisation, presents this theory as common sense: “economic theory suggests that countries should pursue liberal trade policies and exchange goods and services on the basis of their comparative advantage.” ‘Economic theory’ is conceived of in the singular, as if there were consensus about what that constitutes. The implication is that a country is poor because it has failed to specialise in its comparative advantage. Reinert (2007) chides this theory for encouraging poor countries to specialise in being poor, since their comparative advantage necessarily lies within labour intensive industries that yield little economic profit. ‘Economic theory’ in Hoekman’s sense gives poor countries ‘some measure of prospect of satisfaction’ while in fact it reinforces their peripheral position in the world economy.

CCT’ s State / Society Complex: A non-State Centric Theory of the State.

Given that Cox (2002 p. 32, emphasis in original) states that he is “shy of discussing ‘*the state*’” as it “may be seen as a Eurocentric concept – a vestige of the Western imperialism that spread a certain concept of political authority around the world” it may appear odd that he concludes his major work by stating that “although production was the point of departure of this study, the crucial role... is played by the state” (1987, p.399). How to make sense of this apparent contradiction?

CCT was initially formulated as an oppositional project to ‘go beyond international relations theory’ (Cox 1981). States remain in a broad sense CCT’s basic units of analysis in the world order. But, “it is more complicated than that” (Cox 2002, pp.32-33). For Cox, relations of production and class relationships within countries do not simply exist within boxed containerised national units, but are linked to a world order that bypasses the national state. Conversely, leading social classes in rich countries are constitutive of, and form an integral part of, the social forces that (re)create the world order. World affairs are in other words more

complex than the interaction between states as posited by neorealism (cf. Waltz 1979). Cox problematises neo-realism's conceptualisation of states as unitary actors. To make sense of what states do internationally, they must be 'opened up' and dissected from within, as they are expressions of the dominant classes nationally.

Cox proposes a state theory that combines the insights of the historical Marx by seeing it as a site of struggle where different social groups contest for power and the functionalist view offered by a Weberian ideal type. Cox's approach to the state is non state-centric in that he does not treat states as primary actors. Instead of discussing 'the' state, he prefers the "more cumbersome term 'state / society complex'" (Cox 2002, p.32). This term recognises the state's embeddedness in society. Cox is thus sceptical of the traditional separation of state and civil society, proposing that "today ... state and civil society are so interpenetrated that the concepts have become almost purely analytical" (1981, p.86). Building on Gramsci's notion of the integral or extended state and historic bloc, Cox (1987) presents a diachronic and synchronic analysis of the state. To conceive of the state as an ideal type, Cox detects structural similarities in state / society relationships as they have evolved historically, and creates an elastic, content-empty ideal type. Ideal types for Cox are an indispensable part of social science's explanatory tool box. Their function is to "'stop' the movement of history" and thus "conceptually arrest" an element of a complex social reality (Cox 1987, p.4). They are a part of CCT's historicist method in that they present a coherent picture of historical structures. The ideal type of the state specifies its traits and functions; applied to a particular state it measures the distance between reality and the concept. This approach thus gives a "functional view of the state in relation to society and economy. ... *But it cannot explain how that particular form of state came to exist or how it may change* (Cox 1987, p.129, my emphasis). To do that, Cox argues, the state must be seen as a site and outcome of political struggle. The concrete, historical expression of what a state means for a society is found what Gramsci called the historic bloc. Cox defines this as the "particular configuration of social classes and ideology that gives content to a historical state. The term directs our attention to the analysis of the concrete nature of a particular state" (Cox 1987, p.410, fn 10).

Having grounded his theory of the state in the 'state / society complex', Cox argues that there are different forms of states, conceived of as ideal types, characterised by the nature of the social forces that support them. The example of tripartism given above underpins what Cox terms the liberal state. In the contemporary world order, he sees the hegemonic alliance between business, the state and the affluent workers in Europe coming apart, creating a hyper-

liberal state that enjoys less consent than the liberal state. This analysis in turn forms the premise for his claim that in the world order of the late 1980s, “hegemony has given place to dominance” (1987, p.229). He later (2002) focuses his analysis on how to explain the loss of legitimacy in the modern world, of which 9/11 was an extreme expression. Thus, the forms of state in the core and the nature of the social forces that support it are inherently linked with the nature of the world order, and whether the world order is hegemonic or not. The interconnected nature of structural changes in the world order and forms of state play into and strengthen each other.

The Promise of Critical Theory for Africa, Partially Kept.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of applying CCT to an African context? I argue that CCT is theoretically sound but empirically weak in an African setting. Seen as a theory and methodology, CCT offers a promising approach to investigate African state / society complexes as well as the continent’s role in the world order. The main shortcoming of CCT is its treatment of the ‘third world’ in the singular, thus lumping together Africa, Latin America, and Asia without much empirical analysis. This makes sense inasmuch as it highlights how the international division of labour privileges rich countries in the core and impedes development in the periphery, but it ignores difference within and internal power struggles in the South (Samatar and Samatar, 1987). This is to acknowledge the limitations inherent of looking at power in the world order from the perspective of production.

Indicative of his empirical shortcoming, Cox puts forward a notion of a “Third World state” (1987, p.261). The signal trait of this state, manifested as different forms of “protostates” (1987, p.231), is a stalemate in the relationship between state and society. Development and integration into the world economy is imposed from without, and hinges on external capital and technology. Whereas the state and civil society in the core are deeply intermeshed and hardly distinguishable, the various forms of third world protostates display “political structures that try more or less successfully to monopolise the capacity for exercising political force within the national territory but have not acquired either a firm social basis of consent or the administrative capacity to formulate and apply effective economic policies” (Cox 1987, p.218). Protostates are thus void of hegemony and characterised by what Gramsci called a passive revolution. A passive revolution is defined as “introduction of changes which did not involve any arousal of popular forces” that is, as a creation of a social order imposed from the outside without any or little popular support from the masses albeit in collaboration with local elites (Cox 1983, p.129). In such a situation, power is exercised through domination and

coercion rather than consent. The relationship between civil society and the state is, in other words, antagonistic. Gramsci's original analysis of passive revolution emphasised how fascism brought capitalism to Italy without destroying the old social order. This required, first, a strong leader, and second, a move to co-opt and assimilate would-be leaders of suppressed groups. The introduction of capitalism in 'the third' world happened in Cox's analysis in a similar manner with the geographical expansion of the hegemony of the leading social groups in the core:

"a world hegemony is thus in its beginnings an outward expansion of the internal (national) hegemony established by a dominant social class. The economic and social institutions, the culture, the technology associated with this national hegemony become patterns for emulation abroad. Such an expansive hegemony impinges on the more peripheral countries as a passive revolution" (Cox 1987, p.137).

Third world protostates remain marginal and structurally irrelevant from the point of view of the world economy, although some supply the core with valuable raw materials. However, the third world plays a crucial role in Cox's analysis of hegemony and the stability of world orders. It is a fundamental premise for his analysis for current historical change. The logic of the argument is clear: whereas the consent of subordinate groups in the core are secured with a number of concessions, global capitalism provokes resentment in poor countries as it is more openly imposed by outside actors. World hegemony thus wears thin on the fringes, and this is where it is most likely to be opposed.

If this is so, it follows that CCT's research agenda should focus on the sources and forms of resistance to world hegemony. Here, critical theory has fallen short. The subheading for this section is taken from Murphy's (2007) article "the promise of Critical IR, partially kept." For Murphy, the promise of critical theory refers to its rejection of positivism and consequent commitment to empathic understanding. Moreover, it refers to the promise to put itself in the service of creating historical change and a more egalitarian world, but its failure to do so as the social realities facing the majority of critical scholars are so distanced from the world's most marginalised peoples that it would amount to sheer arrogance to purport to provide the intellectual backbone of a counter-hegemonic movement. This is partly due to the positionalities of these scholars, but also has to do with the research agendas they employ. Murphy proceeds to claim that ethnographers and feminist scholars have succeeded better in getting in contact with social movements representing disadvantaged people in the South. In a response to Murphy, I propose that a synthesis of Mamdani and Cox is one way to fulfil the promise of critical IR in an African context.

Enter Mamdani.

Why have I chosen Mamdani over Mbembe or Bayart? Simply put, Mamdani fits the purposes of this study better. When brought into discussion with Cox, he speaks the same language about the state. This contrasts with Mbembe's analysis, which is less fit for a concrete analysis of the modes of rule facing Africans and historical trajectory of African states. Mbembe takes great strides to reach beyond postcolonial theory as a point of arrival, but nonetheless gets stuck at the critique of power rather than identifying its weakness as a means to promote emancipation in a Coxian manner. Critical theory has been criticised in a similar vein, and I am in agreement with Linklater (in Leysens 2000, p.265) who argues that "the success or failure of the critical theory of international relations will be determined by the amount of light cast on present possibilities and not just by its performance in the spheres of philosophy and historical sociology alone."

As for Bayart, I concur with Young (1999) that *The State in Africa* in fact says little about the state, and that its historicism translates into the truism that 'everything is complex'. While this is for sure, the role of theory is to account for this complexity in a comprehensible manner. Bayart's historicity in the last analysis means that Africans throughout history have retained their agency. The rather absurd implication is that the problems of the continent from colonialism to structural adjustment programs consequently have been inflicted by Africans instead of outsiders. Mamdani's historicity instead "wants to ground African agency in (real) history but not at the price of explaining away the period of colonial domination" (Young 1999).

Citizen and Subject represents a seminal attempt to dissect the historical trajectory of African state / society complexes. It focuses squarely on the nature of power in African countries: how Africans are ruled and their response to it. I read Mamdani's analysis as both a theoretical statement that offers a methodological framework on how to analyse states in Africa, and as an empirical application of this framework. Reviewers of Mamdani criticise him for historical sloppiness and overstatements.⁸ For my purposes, however, I am interested in the soundness of his methodological approach rather than validity of specific empirical claims made.

⁸See Austen (1999), Tignor (1997) and Herbst (1997). Significant parts of Herbst (2000) are devoted to arguing against some of Mamdani's empirical claims. For more favourable review, see Young (1999).

Mamdani's empirical claims are summarised above in chapter three. Here, I focus on his methodology and its relevance to the synthesis I seek to present. His thesis about the bifurcated African form of state is closely related to his conceptualisation of power and the relationship between structure and agency. He argues that "to understand the nature of struggle and of agency, one needs to understand the nature of power. The latter has something to do with the nature of exploitation but is not reducible to it" (1996, p.23). Mamdani states that his approach builds on important insights from political economy but that he is sceptical of its holistic claims. He emphasises that the political economy approach to South Africa has opened up rich debates, but criticises scholarship north of Limpopo as viewing Africa as a site of backwardness or modernity in waiting. According to Mamdani, an analytical shift from the mode of production to the mode of rule highlights the historical specificity of the African experience. It is only from a political economy perspective that the South African example appears as an exceptional case on the continent. Mamdani's analysis is worth quoting at length:

"From the perspective that has come to be known as political economy, I learned that the nature of political power becomes intelligible when put in the context of concrete accumulation processes and the struggles shaped by these. *I began to question the completeness of this proposition* when I came to realize that the form of the state that had evolved over the colonial period was not specific to any particular agrarian system. Its specificity was, rather, political; more than anything else, the form of the state was shaped by the African colonial experience. More than the labour question it was the native question that illuminated this experience. My point is not to set up a false opposition between the two, but I do maintain that political analysis cannot extrapolate the nature of power from an analysis of political economy" (Mamdani 1996, p.23, my emphasis).

This provides the starting point of what I call a Gramscian undercurrent in Mamdani's conceptualisation of power. For the purposes of this chapter, the crucial point is that Mamdani argues that there is an inherent link between power located in social relations of production and power exercised through the state apparatus. Thus, Mamdani's critique of political economy does not affect CCT, precisely because Cox levels the same critique against economistic approaches that ignore the role of ideas and institutions.

Synthesising Mamdani and Cox: Contours of a Theoretical Framework.

Synthesis as convergence.

Cox and Mamdani approach social analysis in strikingly similar ways. This regards their historicist method in general and their approach to the state in particular. They both motivate their projects in opposition to the unhelpful analysis of the mainstream. Just as Cox (1981) argues for the need to go beyond traditional IR theory, Mamdani's (1996) motivates his study by noting the theoretical poverty of Africanist scholarship. The targets of their criticism are

the same: scholars that operate with reductionist and static ideal typical approaches to the state that disable them to see how ‘the content of the state’ changes throughout history. Applied to Africa, Mamdani argues that this approach becomes a ‘history by analogy’ that understands contemporary African states as mirror images of the history of state formation in early modern Europe. This universalistic approach does not recognise the historical specificity of Africa. Theorising about African states consequently becomes a search for the most appropriate label appropriated from a historical experience that was specific to Europe: prebendal, predatory, weak, or soft. This type of history by analogy is faulty because it lacks explanatory power and offers a limited perspective on what the challenges and potentials are for African states. It further narrows the debate about the future role of the African state to either undemocratic single party solutions or a wholesale acceptance of liberal democracy and free market ideology.

Mamdani’s historicist method (‘history as process’) seeks a space between universalism and particularism. To historicise is to interrogate “the relation between outcomes and contexts by locating both in time” (Mamdani 1999, p.860). What does this mean in practice? In his analysis of the role of how the customary was used by indirect rule, Mamdani (1996; 1999) argues that the colonial state sanctioned and enforced a selective version of the customary through the Native Authority. To historicise this claim means to identify the context in which this happens. Mamdani emphasises that the process of defining what could pass as ‘custom’ was highly contested, but favoured the authorities appointed by colonial authorities (1999).

Mamdani’s and Cox’s historicist methods are particularly apparent in their approach to the state. For both, it is inadequate to list the functions a form of state is to fulfil. In the example above, that would amount to describing the customary under indirect rule as a state invention used to rule the majority. As Cox points out, a functionalist ideal type account presents a check list of what the state is supposed to do but does not shed light on the particular state’s genealogy. Crucially, for both Mamdani and Cox, the state is seen as a site of power where different social groups compete for influence. This perspective underlies Cox’s term ‘the state / society complex’. It also constitutes the gist of Mamdani’s analysis of the ‘mode of rule’ in (post)colonial Africa. Informing this historicist method is a criticism of the incomplete, albeit necessary, insights offered by ‘economistic’ approaches to political economy that reduce power to labour relationships and ignore how the consent of the marginalised is created by the powerful.

Synthesis as a way to Address Shortcomings.

As stated at the outset, bringing Mamdani and Cox together addresses important shortcomings in both scholars. For Mamdani, this means bringing the global context into the analysis; for Cox, it means rectifying his treatment of the third world in the singular. The analysis presented in *Citizen and Subject* remains on the continent, and as such it remains an area studies book. It contextualises in time, but not in space. Mamdani presents a theoretical framework to create a historical narrative of the internal power struggles in African states after independence, but notes only in passing how these struggles are affected by a changing global context. Here, CCT's insights can come to aid. Cox's assumption that third world societies are void of hegemony may say something important about the external imposition of, for instance, what constitutes sound economic policy. Neo-classical economic theory dictates that poor countries adhere to the theory of comparative advantage. To the extent that this theory dominates thinking about development, it exemplifies how commonsensical ideas are part of an ideologically based world hegemony. This is one way to bring in an analysis of how forces on the global level impacts African states, and as such a necessary supplement to Mamdani's argument about the postcolonial state (cf. Taylor 2001 for a South African example).

However, an overemphasis of this aspect overlooks how power struggles within African countries recreates a structure of indirect rule set up by the colonial state. African states are acted upon and molded from without by global forces, but also have agency to (re)constitute the world order. A global hegemony requires the active consent of African state leaders, and as such cannot be understood in isolation from local and domestic power structures. Adding Mamdani to Cox is thus a significant contribution to critical theory. Importantly, this is consistent with CCT's own theoretical approach to forms of states, and as such gives the very empty Coxian ideal type of the protostate more content.

From the perspective of CCT, is Mamdani's bifurcated state more than a specified version of the third world protostate? Coxian ideal types are 'content empty', and the bifurcated state could then be seen as content to make Cox's general claim about third world states more specific. Recall that for Cox, the signal trait of the state / society complex in the South is the absence of hegemony. This proposition makes logical sense if the economic and political structure is seen as simply superimposed on society from without. Nonetheless, it remains a claim with little empirical substance as opposed to a developed argument in CCT. Mamdani's argument about the nature and purpose of indirect rule, the bifurcated state institutions it

created in Africa that have survived postcolonial reform, can correct this assumption in CCT. The native question can be placed in a modern African context: how do African leaders actually rule? For Mamdani, an unreformed Native Authority is a central piece in the attempt to create hegemonic rule. The fact that the power of many states is fiercely contested underscores that hegemony is never complete. Some element of consent is nonetheless a necessary component of power. They need some level of support and consent lest they become all out dictators.

Mamdani thus modifies CCT's blanket statement that the third world is characterised by passive revolution. If his concept of the bifurcated state has explanatory value, and its signal trait is an institutionalised system that *attempts* to create hegemonic rule in Africa, then the world order may be more stable than it initially appears from CCT's perspective. Of course, this attempt may or may not be successful, and the bulk of Mamdani's empirical analysis is indeed devoted to the types of resistance that the mode of postcolonial rule has spawned. He maintains that in order to be successful, would-be challengers to power need to address the structure of the bifurcated state. Unsuccessful, radical attempts to create an alternative order have faltered precisely because they have not dealt with the structure of the local state institutions sufficiently.

Conclusion.

The above illustrates how Cox and Mamdani converge and diverge. Their points of convergence can be used to address shortcomings in both, and thus use the divergence as an entry point to create a synergy between the two. What emerges after bringing Cox and Mamdani in conversation is two scholars that speak the same language about the state. They agree that the state cannot be viewed apart from society to understand what enables its existence. The form or nature the state assumes depends on the social groups that underpin it and oppose it. Mamdani argues that the state has to be historicised. CCT argues for analysing the state / society complex and form of state that emerge from it. CCT is thus in line with Mamdani's historicism, albeit in a theoretically more comprehensive manner.⁹ CCT needs the analysis of Mamdani as a way to keep the promise of critical scholarship: to pinpoint the places in the world order where conditions are more favourable to change. The result is the contours of a theoretical framework for analysing state-society relationships in Africa contextualised in both space and time.

⁹CCT's historicism adds a crucial aspect which I do not detect in Mamdani, viz. the reflexivity identified above.

With Cox and Mamdani, I have proposed a theory of the state that is non state centric – if by state centrism one means an exclusive focus on the state which ignores other sites of power in society. CCT analyses the state / society complex from a political economy viewpoint as well as what Mamdani calls a ‘mode of rule’ perspective. Therein lies the potential of a synergy between Mamdani and Cox. For the purposes of my argument, the soundness of Mamdani’s methodology is more important than the accurateness of his empirical claims. Mamdani proposes an approach to the state in Africa in the spirit of CCT’s state / society complex. The African form of state, a proposition Mamdani makes based on the mode of rule in (post)colonial Africa, constitutes a significant contribution to CCT by emphasising power struggles in the South. Adding Mamdani’s analysis to CCT is thus a way to keep the promise of critical theory. This synergy thus points to the contours of a theoretical framework for studying the state / society complex in an African context.

I suggested above that combining Mamdani and Cox could contribute to solving some of the major disagreements in Africanist literature. The first controversy refers to the relevance of the state as a unit of analysis. I propose that a Coxian / Mamdanian synthesis addresses the main concerns of ‘state denialists.’ Consider the ‘New Regionalism’ approach of Bøås et al (2003; 2005) referred to in chapter one. Their concern is that states are not the sources of the (political) authority under which most Africans live. This argument for the state’s irrelevance assumes a neo-Weberian state, especially the reach of the formal institutions within the state’s territory. The Coxian / Mamdanian state concept includes but goes beyond a strictly ideal typical perspective. It views the state from the standpoint of the social forces it includes and excludes, and sees the state as an expression of the historical trajectory of the mode of rule in a given country. The distinction between the state and civil society is more analytical than anything else, in weak and strong states alike. Weak states are also parts of their societies, not simply superimposed on them. This, I believe, can satisfy the research agenda of New Regionalism, albeit the emphasis is explanatory rather than descriptive.

The quarrel between neo-Weberians and historicists can now be settled. The essence of the approaches is the usage of an ideal type and the focus on coercive power versus a combination of a flexible state concept with ideational power. I simplify somewhat when I argue that they are not necessarily competing perspectives. The schools are broader than their essences, and the postcolonial charge from Mbembe et al is serious. Nonetheless, a Coxian / Mamdanian synthesis constitutes a half way meeting point. Combining them adds complexity to social analysis, true to the Coxian tradition.

The next chapter takes this theoretical framework to Angola. How does it compare to the dominant approaches? How will it enable me to say what the Angolan state is a case of? Emerging out of a civil war, Angola lends it self to a problem solving approach. There are a number of rather obvious problems that demand attention: security, lack of infrastructure, reconciliation, and consolidation of democracy. With Cox, my approach recognises that political and economic security is inherently interlinked (cf. Leysens 2000).

Chapter Five. The Volatile Balance: Sustaining Hegemony in Angola.

“Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. ... Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content.”

(Fanon 1963, p.63)

“My point is simple and yet fundamental: you can turn the world upside down, but still fail to change it. To change the world, you need to break out of the worldview of not just the cat, but also the rat; not only the settler, but also the native.”

(Mamdani 2002, p.17)

“[Angolan] politics in 2000 was as unresponsive to public opinion as it had been in 1969, though the dictator who balances the powers of the several factions of the property owning class was now a member of the home-grown Luso-African elite of Luanda rather than of Portugal’s imperially-oriented *haute bourgeoisie*. ... The colonial class of 300,000 privileged and semi privileged expatriates had been replaced by a similar number of black Portuguese-speaking Angolans who retained many of the old colonial attitudes of the social and moral superiority and who worshipped in the same Catholic churches that had sustained Salazar’s [Portugal’s Prime Minister 1932-1968] brand of authoritarianism.”

(Birmingham 2002, p.184)

“If others can make use of the situation, then why shouldn’t I, especially since it’s a just cause? We’re now living under a market economy, and there are three centuries of capitalist ethics to demonstrate how legitimate it all is.”

Protagonist Carmina of Pepetela’s *The Return of the Water Spirit* justifying her decision to be both MPLA cadre and business woman using her political connections to import guns after the renewal of the civil war in 1992.

(Pepetela 2002, p.48)

Introduction.

The above quotes illustrate the logic that underwrites Angolan politics. Angola reached independence in 1975, but the people of Angola are still ruled by a small minority that cares little about their well-being. In this chapter, I seek to answer how and why this situation came about.

To do so, I will interrogate the Angolan state and ask how it is best conceptualised. My main argument is that the conceptual lens offered by the Coxian / Mamdanian synthesis offers a fresh and illuminating perspective to explain the historical trajectory of the Angolan state. With reference to Cox’s conceptualisation of historical structures as the triangular configuration of material capabilities, institutions and ideas, I will make four distinct claims to

support my argument. First, I propose that Angola's political economy has retained the same basic structure since the 1500s. Since the slave trade, it has been based on the export of one or few primary commodities to the international economy. Second, I suggest that the form of state, or more precisely the political authority accompanying this export-oriented political economy, has maintained a similar basic structure from the precolonial through the colonial to the postcolonial periods. The current Angolan state structure thus has long historical antecedents on the level of a Braudelian *longue durée* (cf. Braudel 1972). In short, this form of political power is based on the predominance of a small elite deeply entrenched in and benefiting from the country's political economy. Third, I posit that the Angolan state must be conceptualised as an expression or function of the power balance between various social groups in society rather than an alien or imposed structure. Here, I make the case that the state's quest for Gramscian hegemony or legitimacy assumes particular importance. Given the general state of inertia and poverty in the country, the regime is pressed to design sophisticated strategies to legitimise itself and fend off criticism from other social actors in society. I therefore analyse Angola's move to multiparty democracy and a market economy as a hegemonic strategy to reproduce existing power structures. In this context, the global forces connected to Angola's political economy of oil play a crucial role. They have a vested interest in maintaining a status quo, defined as an orderly and functioning market economy that enables Angolan oil production and export. Lastly, I note that the current power balance in Angola is a precarious and volatile one. On the ideational level, the bulk of the Angolan population has legitimate reason to be discontent with the state. Inside the state itself, there are also serious ruptures and disagreements between a clique centred around the President and other elements of the ruling party. In this socio-political context, it is important to analyse the effects of Angola's recent economic growth and how it impacts the relative weight of different sectors in the country's political economy. Economic changes have, together with popular discontent, the potential of upsetting the existing configuration of power.

Angola's Political Economy.

It is commonplace, "almost a ceremonial ritual" (Power 2001, p.489) to start an analysis of Angola by noting the apparent paradox between the country's wealth and abundance of natural resources and the stark poverty of its people. As Munslow (1999, p.551) puts it, the plight of the Angolan people is attributed to its economic base: "oil and diamonds are the twin pillars of the country's wealth and the reason for its poverty". Life expectancy is 41.7 years. The discrepancy between human development and gross domestic product (GDP) is

illustrated by Angola's GDP per capita of US \$ 2335 compared to Madagascar's mere US \$ 923 (2005 numbers). Angola is number 162 out of 177 on UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), whereas Madagascar occupies place number 143 and has a life expectancy of 58.4 years (UNDP 2007). Natural resources and predominantly oil account for Angola's relative economic wealth, but the nature of this economic activity creates little employment: Santana (2007) reports an unemployment rate of 60-70%.

The argument of this section is simple, yet of crucial importance. The Angolan economy has been globalised or internationalised since the slave trade started in the 1550s (Bauer & Taylor 2005; Newitt 2007). Angola has since then been an attractive site for international capital and has offered high profits for the select few. Historically, the international companies operating in the country have had a vested interest in reproducing the economic order that enables the export of the commodity in question – be it slaves, palm oil, rubber, coffee, diamonds or oil. Angola's economic base is, and has been, the export of one or a few primary commodities that have been sold to the world economy. This is a process that requires the cooperation of international capital as well as a powerful domestic class.

Economics has everything to do with politics. As le Billon (2005, p.110) notes, “the transformation of nature into tradable commodities is a deeply political process; involving the definition of property rights, the organisation of labour, and the allocation of costs and profits.” If politics is broadly conceived as a question of who has power over whom and under what conditions, the political nature of economics is perhaps nowhere as clear as in the slave trade. The commodification of the human body underwrote the political system of precolonial and colonial Angola. First this happened through the slave trade, then, after Portugal's abolition of slavery in 1840, in the form of coerced labour. As Newitt (2007, p.22) notes, “capital was people” and precolonial rulers used slaves as warriors and items for trade with Portuguese traders. The slave trade was organised by a group Newitt (2007) calls the Afro-Portuguese. This group was based in the Kongo kingdom, and developed a distinct Creole culture that adopted Christianity, Portuguese names, dressing styles and daily habits.

The Portuguese arrived at the Congo River as early as 1483, and established a full-scale embassy and a permanent trade port in the Kongo kingdom eight years later. Unable to find the silver that they had hoped for, the Portuguese quickly turned to the slave trade. Luanda was established in 1575, and by 1617 they had set up a second port in Benguela, some 300 miles south of Luanda. As the slave traded yielded huge profits for those involved, the Afro-Portuguese settled differences with opposing forces from the highlands of Angola. Against the

commonplace view that slavery destabilised the political system, Newitt (2007) argues that it became the glue that held the system of power together. It helped elites cooperate as they developed a shared interest in maintaining the mutually beneficial economy. The slave trade led to the departure of an estimated eight million slaves, of which half made it across the Atlantic to Brazil (Bauer & Taylor 2005; Malaquias 2007). In the latter part of the 1800s, palm oil, ivory and rubber replaced the export of slaves. Coerced labour enabled the production of these items: as stipulated by the 1899 labour law Africans had a 'moral obligation' to work. The Portuguese built a diversified colonial economy, centred on the diamonds industry. The output of diamonds increased by 50% between 1957 and 1967 (Newitt 2007).

Today, Angola's economy is based on the export of oil and diamonds, though other sectors such as manufacturing are expanding rapidly (IMF 2007b). Angola possibly has Africa's largest resources of diamonds (Malaquias 2001). According to IMF (2007b) estimates, it is the third fastest growing sector of the Angolan economy after manufacturing and trade and commerce, growing by 30.9% in 2006. Its economic importance is however dwarfed by that of oil (IMF 2007a; Reno 2000a). After Nigeria, Angola is sub-Saharan Africa's largest oil producer. Oil constitutes roughly 90% of official exports, 80% of government revenue, and 61% of GDP (Bauer & Taylor 2005). Angola has been a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) since 2007, and exports 62.7 % of its oil to North America (OPEC 2008b). Oil represents a special case in the global political economy. In the words of Chabal (2007, p.13) "oil is king and those rulers who control it are mighty." This control has cushioned the Angolan regime from changes in the global economy, and has financed its ultimate victory in the country's 27-year civil war (le Billon 2005; Malaquias 2007). Like the slave trade did in precolonial times, oil serves to hold the system of power together.

How did oil come to acquire such an important role in Angola? De Oliveira (2007) argues that the answer lies in the extraordinary place of the state company Sonangol in postcolonial Angolan politics. As *Africa Confidential* has pointed out, Sonangol is "not a normal company in any sense of the word" (in de Oliveira 2007, p.608). It was founded in 1976, and has since then financed the political ambitions and clientelist networks of the President. Crucially, it remained isolated from the rest of Angola's economic and political structure. According to de Oliveira (2007, p. 601) "there was a general perception that the oil sector was a matter of life-or-death, ensuring the viability of the MPLA state and paying for its Cuban protectors."

De Oliveira further points to three main reasons for the company's success. First, it cooperated willingly and professionally with Western oil companies. Due to high technological entry barriers, it had no choice but cooperate with Western companies. In a Cold War context where the USA strongly opposed any Marxist-Leninist regime, Sonangol had to do its utmost to ensure that it sustained a reputation as a reliable partner. To date, it has never defaulted on a loan and is able to borrow against future production (Reno 2000a). The US company Gulf Oil (in 1984, it merged with Chevron) became a major operator in the Cabinda oil fields. In May 1976, Gulf Oil paid outstanding royalties to MPLA, indirectly recognising it as Angola's legitimate government to the dismay of the US government. Gulf Oil's involvement in Angola led to one of the Cold War's most absurd situations: Cuban troops were protecting the oil installations run by the US corporation – against guerrilla forces backed by the US government. Sonangol operates Angola's oil field through joint ventures with Western companies, and managed to diversify its numbers of foreign partners already in 1979 with the entry of French Elf-Aquitaine (from 2003, Total).

Second, the oil sector was exempted from the nationalisation policy of the Angolan regime, and has always worked according to the principles of liberal capitalism. In the words of a former executive, its "compass was the international oil economy, not domestic policy fads" (in de Oliveira 2007, p.600). Third, Sonangol has become by far the most competent and professional company in Angola. Much of the Portuguese staff from the colonial oil company stayed on, and Sonangol's pragmatic-minded senior management accumulated technical know-how. By the 1990s, it had become "an island of competence thriving in tandem with the implosion of most other Angolan institutions" and is one of the sub-Saharan Africa's most competent and professional corporations (de Oliveira, 2007, p. 595). Sonangol has recently diversified and is now active in the hotel industry, the manufacturing of luxury housing, and runs the investment bank Banco Africano de Investimentos (African Investment Bank).

The Angolan State Form.

With Cox (1981; 1983; 1987) and Mamdani (1996), I posit that the question of power cannot be reduced to or extrapolated from a materialist conception of political economy alone. It is also related to the institutions of the political economy and the ideology that underwrites these institutions. In this section, I consequently focus on what Mamdani calls 'the mode of rule' in Angola to interrogate the social forces that constitute the Angolan state. I organise my argument around an analysis of the impact of colonial rule, the transition to independence, the 1977 coup attempt, and post-war Angola's so-called 'triple transition' from war to peace, a

command economy to a market economy, and from a socialist state to a multiparty democracy.

Chabal (2007) highlights three singularly Lusophone aspects of postcolonial Angola. First, Angola was a settler colony that brought in an influx of poorly qualified and poor rural Portuguese. This made the racial discrimination different from the British settler colonies, as the Portuguese occupied low status jobs. They thus undermined the relative privilege of the Afro-Portuguese, which laid the grounds for their involvement in the anticolonial struggle. Second, Portugal considered Angola to be the 'jewel of the crown' in her colonies, and was militarily prepared to continue colonial rule, at a time when other European countries were decolonising. Third, the postcolonial state inherited a backward and inflexible bureaucracy, and the sudden Portuguese exit did not make for a smooth transition. In addition to this, I want to emphasise that Angola's belated independence in 1975 implied that the regional context it decolonised in was different from other African countries as its neighbouring countries intervened to support their respective allies.

Colonial rule in Africa differed but there were similarities. According to Mamdani (1996) the latter concerns the logic of colonial rule, the state structure it set up and the distinction between non-natives and natives or citizens and subjects. Newitt (2007) supports his argument that Portugal used indirect rule as an answer to the 'native question' but dates it back to as early as the end of the nineteenth century. She maintains that "in the years immediately following the Berlin conference the Portuguese found that working with the chiefs was the quickest and most cost effective way of carrying out the international obligation to establish effective occupation, suppress the slave trade and control the trade in drink and arms" (2007, p.41). Colonial rule differentiated between *indígena* and *não indígena*, native and non-native. As theorised by Mamdani, Newitt emphasises that whereas the *não indígena* was seen as a civilised Portuguese citizen, the *indígena* was under the 'traditional' law of the tribal chief. The boundary between the two could be crossed. The colonial state adopted the French practice of assimilation, and stipulated that to become an *assimilado*, you had to adhere to Portuguese culture and language and be economically independent. For Malaquias (2007), the assimilation policy was aimed at creating a colonial subject, and underscores that the certification process of becoming 'civilised' implied a rejection of your own values and culture. Newitt notes that the assimilation policy of 1954 lasted only five years but had important implications. All Afro-Portuguese became *assimilados*, as did some 50 000 *indígena*.

Decolonisation in Angola was a messy affair. Newitt (2007) reports that there was no coherent nationalist group before 1958, and the armed resistance to colonial rule between 1961 and 1975 was relatively low key. Together with Messiant (1998), she asserts that independence came more as a result of a left wing military coup in 1974 in Portugal by army officers who were opposed to colonialism. When the last Portuguese governor handed over power to ‘the Angolan people’ on November 11th 1975, it was by no means clear who represented them. Heywood (2000) identifies four groups that contested for power: the MPLA, UNITA and FNLA¹⁰ all contested for state power. The fourth group were 500 000 right wing settlers sought to install a Rhodesian style government, but they were sidelined relatively quickly. The three nationalist groups had military backing from Cuba (MPLA), Congo-Brazzaville (MPLA), Tanzania (MPLA), Zaire (FNLA), South Africa (FNLA and later UNITA) and the United States (first FNLA and UNITA, after the Cold War MPLA). Each movement depended on its foreign patron to survive, and the patrons did not support a power sharing arrangement (Newitt 2007). This setting provided the ideal stage for a brutal civil war between the MPLA and UNITA that lasted until 2002, interrupted only by occasional ceasefires. With Cuban support, MPLA won the initial battle over Luanda and defeated FNLA by 1976 despite South African support. As Herbst (2000) and Clapham (1996) point out, statehood was awarded to the group in control of the capital. In this, the MPLA eventually prevailed, largely due to support from Cuban troops. Having initially recognised UNITA as a liberation movement in 1974, the OAU eventually recognised the MPLA government by the end of February 1977, in the context of important internal divisions in the OAU on who was the legitimate representative of the Angolan people. Most countries with the important exception of the United States followed.

The Angolan civil war had crucial external dimensions to it. Newitt (2007) notes that the MPLA framed their anticolonial struggle in leftist terms early on to obtain the support of the European left. When the MPLA called for foreign assistance after civil war broke out in 1975, only Cuba responded. Cuba remained in Angola until 1987, and in 1993 the Angolan regime was recognised by the United States. Heywood (2000) casts UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi as a Machiavellian politician who picked foreign backing according to need rather than ideology. Savimbi was initially trained in guerrilla warfare in China, and UNITA’s slogan between 1974 and 1976 was ‘Liberty, Negritude and Socialism.’ UNITA later changed from China to Zaire, the United States and South Africa. With the end of the Cold

¹⁰ *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (National Front for the Liberation of Angola).

war and the South African withdrawal in 1987, it turned to criminal trading networks to finance its war machinery with diamonds.

An understanding of the genealogy of the nationalist movements holds the key to understanding the basic structure of postcolonial Angolan politics. Messiant (1998) notes that due to the colonial state's repression in the 1950s, only nationalist movements organised from abroad were viable. As a result, "the Angolan nationalist contest was principally organised by modern elites" (Messiant 1998, p.136) and was formed by "self-appointed leaders who had no real political base within Angola" (Newitt 2007, p.73). The MPLA's leaders were drawn mostly from the Afro-Portuguese elite that was predominant during the slave trade (Newitt, 2007). This group had lost power during colonialism and opposed colonial rule despite its relatively privileged position vis-à-vis the *indígena*. UNITA was similarly dominated by the new *assimilados* and initially had little connection with the Ovimbundu peasants that it later claimed to represent.

The alienated nature of the nationalist movements from any organic Angolan social base set the parameters for the strategies they pursued in their attempts to capture the state. As Malaquias (2007, p.70) notes, "the nationalist leaders, placed personal and group interests – not national aspiration – at the top of their political calculations as MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA engaged in a zero-sum fratricidal struggle for supremacy." In addition to relying on foreign military support, they phrased their struggle in ideological and ethnic terms to cover up for their elitist nature (Messiant 1998; Newitt 2007; Heywood 2000).

Despite the Afro-Portuguese and *mestiço* (Creole) predominance, the power bloc that constituted the MPLA was rift with internal divisions. The movement consisted of the initial leadership of foreign educated *assimilados* as well as a number of black African 'prison graduates' that had resisted colonialism from within Angola and later joined the MPLA (Birmingham 2002). The division between these two groups culminated in a coup attempt in May 1977 to unseat President Agostinho Neto (1975-1979). Birmingham (2002) presents the coup attempt as a conflict between an idealistic minded group of MPLA cadres genuinely interested in creating an egalitarian revolution and a power hungry elitist group around the President. He notes that the coup leaders came from a group of people involved in behind-the-scene political discussions within the football club Sambizanga, and from revolutionary study groups organised by the prison graduates in Luanda's townships. The coup attempt was led by the popular and powerful interior minister Nito Alves, with the support of an army faction (Malaquias 2007). They expected support from the Soviet Union as well as the urban poor,

and killed several top MPLA cadres. However, they were eventually neutralised, and “it was apparently the Cubans who made the decision to back the old guard” (Birmingham 2002, p.153).

The importance of the coup lies in the political legacy that followed it. In the words of de Oliveira (2007, p.615 fn. 5), this understudied event is “perhaps the key event for an understanding of MPLA politics of the past three decades.” Most observers agree that it consolidated the structure of the Angolan state, which came to represent a tiny privileged economic elite group (Chabal 2007; Vidal 2007b; 2007a; Messiant 1998; Malaquias 2007; Birmingham 2002). Vidal (2007b) maintains that it destroyed all previous pretences and claims by the MPLA that it worked for and represented ‘the people’. Birmingham (2002, p.153) notes that it led to “fundamental changes in the country’s management and from aspiring to be a mass movement seeking urban support, the ruling MPLA became a self-selected elite party.” The MPLA set a coercive state apparatus in motion to neutralise all dissent and, in the process, became increasingly exclusionary. Power was centralised around the President and the post of prime minister was abolished until 1991. As a result of more stringent criteria for party membership, numbers dropped from 110 000 to 31 000 in 1980. These criteria resembled those that the Portuguese insisted on in order to become an *assimilado* (Vidal 2007b). The elitist nature of the MPLA was also reflected in a perception of the countryside as a site of primitive ‘bantu’ people, in contrast to the Portuguese speaking urban population (Vidal 2007b).

The legacy of the coup attempt also atomised society, and few possibilities existed to express discontent. Vidal (2007a, p.213) asserts that “the solution of problems which was until then considered a collective action ... became each individual’s problem.” Thanks to the political economy of oil, the modes of social relations of production that the majority of the population were engaged in mattered little from the perspective of the state elite. Due to the logic of a seemingly endless civil war, the regime could use the fear of UNITA as a guarantee to garner a modicum of popular support.

The Angolan state was ostensibly run according to Marxist-Leninist principles, but economic hardships in the 1980s led to a gradual change in the running of the economy. Due to the predominance of the oil sector, these hardships can be explained by the decline in the oil price from around US \$45 in 1980, to approximately \$10 in 1987, which shook the fiscal foundations of the Angolan state (Malaquias 2007). As the oil prices went down, war expenses against a South African and US backed UNITA went up. Birmingham (2002) notes

that the Angolan currency ceased to have any real value during the 1980s. A barter system developed where “the six pack of lager in aluminium cans became the nominal, and often the physical, measure of exchange...”(Birmingham 2002, p.158). At a party congress in 1985 MPLA decided to gradually liberalise the economy, albeit without changing the formal Marxist-Leninist state structure (Messiant 2007). Messiant (2007, p.97) describes this as a turn towards “savage capitalism” which led to the dollarisation of the Angolan economy, a transition to a political economy based on clientilism, and an even tighter control of the state’s finances by the President. The Angolan economy is still heavily dollarised, and high paying jobs are paid in dollars (IMF 2007a).

Oil prices stayed relatively low throughout the 1990s, (Farouk 2008; see figure 2 below) but other developments eventually turned in the MPLA’s favour. In accordance with the 1984 Lusaka accords, Cuban and South African forces left the country in 1987, but UNITA continued to receive US support and financed itself from the proceeds made by the selling of diamonds, amounting to an estimated three to four billion US dollars (le Billon 2005; Malaquias 2001). The turning point came with the end of the Cold War and the Bicesse Accords of 1991. This Portuguese brokered peace agreement led to elections in 1992 that were deemed ‘free and fair’ by the UN (Messiant 2007). Malaquias (2007) points out that UNITA saw itself as incapable of losing whereas the MPLA was certain it deserved to win. On losing the vote and before waiting for the required second run off, UNITA returned to the country and engaged in an even more brutal war which, for the first time, took hostilities to the major cities (Birmingham, 2002). In 1993, the US government recognised the MPLA as the legitimate government. This led to an increase in US investment in the country. By 1999, it had become the second most important destination of US foreign direct investment in Africa (Wright 2001). The war ended in 2002 with the assassination of UNITA’s leader Savimbi.

Peace and democratisation have led to a strengthening of the MPLA’s position and an expansion of its support base. Munslow (1999, p.551) notes that Angola faces three monumental transitions at the same time: “that from war to peace, from single-party rule to multiparty democracy and from a command based to a free-market economy.” Messiant (2007) and Malaquias (2007) maintain that the two latter transitions took place more in form than substance. Messiant asserts that single party dictatorship was replaced by a hegemonic authoritarianism adapted to multiparty politics. Malaquias (2007, p.138) agrees: “the democratisation of the political system, including the peace processes it undertook to bring

the rebels into it, were calculated moves that ultimately ensured continued MPLA hegemony.” The regime applies a combined strategy of divide and conquer and attempts to co-opt oppositional leaders. Only 3000 members are required to create a political party, with the effect that the multitude of political parties created have been unable to form a common front at election time. Only the MPLA has an effective electoral machine, which earned it 81,62 % of the votes in the recent parliamentary elections (Jornal de Angola 2008a). The biggest national newspaper declared that the victory ‘turned a page in history’ and led to the ‘birth of a third Republic’ (Jornal de Angola 2008b).

(Re)conceptualising the Angolan State.

What is the Angolan state a case of? How is it best understood? In this section, I will first point to the limits of the dominant neo-Weberian perspective and then present an alternative reading of the Angolan state using the Cox-Mamdani synthesis.

The Angolan state is a paradoxical case of a state both weak and strong. This is the crux of a neo-Weberian analysis. First, consider the propositions about Africa’s ‘weak quasi-states’ from chapter two. On a descriptive level, the analysis I have presented thus far resonates with the neo-Weberian perspective. Though the protracted civil war may make it an extreme case in some respects, but the Angolan state seemingly represents a ‘typical’ African state in many ways. It is run by and for a small elite that controls the country’s most important economic resources. Throughout most of its history, the regime did not enjoy the monopoly of violence in most of the country. To turn to concrete examples from the literature I surveyed, the Angolan state closely resembles Clapham’s (1996) ‘monopoly state:’ it has a high dependence on personal leadership, regime change through constitutional means has not happened and networks of power are held together by economic rather than moral ties through clientelist practices. The Angolan state also resonates with Reno’s (1998) analysis of warlord politics. From this perspective, the Angolan state is a ‘quasi-state’ faced with a threatening domestic environment. The civil war is a conflict between opposing mafia-like violent groups, and statehood is in the hands of the ‘warlord’ in control of the capital. Sovereignty for the MPLA regime has been a crucial asset in the war, as it has provided the regime with additional resources that UNITA did not have access to. Reno (2000a) highlights the partnerships between Angola’s nominally weak state and foreign non-state actors. Chevron hires private security companies that are used to keep armed oppositional forces in check. Reno does not simply conceive of the Angolan state as ‘failed’ but within the context of such

failure analyses the pursuit of wealth and power by the regime as a rational response to the given environment.

Second, the bulk of the literature I have used in this chapter follows the above logic. On the one hand, the majority of the scholars conceptualise the Angolan state as 'weak'. In 2001, Malaquias sees it as "failed and crumbling" (2001, p.529) and later he (2007, pp.120, 124, 238) 'upgrades' it to a classic "rentier state," a "criminal state" and a "rickety state" characterised by a wide gulf between the regime and the wider population. Power (2001, p.493) sees it as a "phantom state" that does not perform most of the tasks that states should be capable of. On the other hand, a neo-Weberian analysis of the Angolan state also finds areas of considerable state 'strength'. According to Herbst (2000), security forces constitute the essence of a strong state. Angola, in 1996, had 7.2 soldiers per 1000 people, higher than any other sub-Saharan African country (Hodges 2004). Focusing on the highly competent state oil company, de Oliveira (2007, p.596) uses the oxymoron "successful failed state" to characterise the Angolan state.

There are however limits in trying to make sense of the Angolan state from this perspective. After denouncing the state in neo-Weberian terms, Malaquias (2007) argues that a reconceptualisation of the state as such is needed to understand what is really going on. He proposes that the state should be understood as a social actor that acts according to established social rules. Rather than seeing it only as an abstract structure, it is made up of people with diverse identities. In a similar vein, Messiant (2007, p. 96) argues that "state power in Angola is thus not a cold, hard, edifice isolated from society; for those who benefit from it, even if they are no more than a tiny minority, have increasingly come to represent economic and social forces." She highlights *inter alia* the role of professionals that are in a position to affect public opinion, and asserts that the majority has been co-opted and bought off, thus becoming "dependent on the regime, of which they have in effect become 'organic intellectuals'" (2007, p. 114). Messiant thus protests the neo-Weberian tendency of seeing the state as superimposed on and analytically separate from society. To make sense of the Angolan state as an expression of the distribution of power within society sheds more light on the concrete meaning of the state / society relationship.

The nature of the neo-Weberian ideal type forces the analyst to understand it as a paradoxical or contradictory case. This, I argue, suggests the limited usefulness of the perspective. In agreement with Jones' (2008) critique of the 'failed state' thesis, I maintain that the analysis of the Angolan state as a 'successful failed state' captures the basic facts but has little

explanatory power. In accordance with the Coxian / Mamdani synthesis, I maintain that it is necessary to focus to see the state as part and parcel of society. In the context where the majority of the population lives in poverty and see little benefit from the country's economic growth, how does the state actually rule? I will look at strategies to create consent among the population. What steps are taken to prevent popular revolt, beyond the coercive measures of the police?

Hegemonic Strategies in a Context of Social Destitution.

At face value, the answer seems to be that the regime does little to sustain a legitimate image of itself. From a Coxian perspective, the Angolan state is a type of 'Third World protostate' facing a Gramscian passive revolution. The country's political structure aims at monopolising the use of violence within the Angolan territory, but falls short since it lacks a firm social basis expressed as consensus by the population and institutional capacity to carry out developmental economic programs. Angola's economic structure is designed to serve an international world economy. Rather than serving a domestic economic structure, the production is geared towards the world economy. This creates a strong bond between international capital (oil companies in particular) and the Angolan elite in and around Sonangol and the Presidential palace, but as it neglects the local productive structure it generates fertile ground for popular resentment.

This analysis contains important elements of truth, but presents an incomplete picture. The concept of a passive revolution turns the attention to the weak social base of the current regime. The income of the oil production finances the sitting regime and enables its prolonged reproduction. In terms of Cox's historical structure presented in chapter four, the 'fit' or coherence between Angola's material capabilities based on its production structure, its institutions and its governing ideology is loose. This means that the regime rules without the consent of the majority of the population. Recall that for Cox, power is a necessary mix of coercion and hegemony or dominance and consent. This is not a question of either / or, but rather of the relative importance of the consensual or coercive facets of power. In a context such as Angola, the logic of Cox' analyses correctly suggests that dominance rather than consent characterises the relationship between the regime and the population. Power comes from material predominance rather than ideological leadership.

Why is this analysis incomplete? This crucial question concerns the reasons why I added Mamdani to Cox in chapter four. To answer it, I need to further engage with Cox's conceptualisation of historical structures as the triangular configuration of material

capabilities, institutions and ideas. Material capabilities derive from society's production system. This system concerns the question of who produces what for whom under what conditions. A Coxian analysis thereof is principally interested in analysing who benefits from the manner in which production takes place. Institutions are a means to secure or stabilise the production structure and by extension the elites benefiting from the way it is organised. Through institutions such as the state, the powerful make concessions to the weak to appease them and thus further secure their own predominance. This is where the ideational level enters. Cox argues that "there is a close connection between institutionalisation and what Gramsci called hegemony" (1981, p.99). The material capabilities that provide the financial backbone of institutions are important, but if the weak see the basic structure as legitimate, the order becomes more secure. In the words of Cox, "this the weak may do if the strong see their mission as hegemonic and not merely dominant or dictatorial, that is, if they are willing to make concessions that will secure the weak's acquiescence in their leadership, and if they can express this leadership in terms of universal or general interests, rather than just as serving their own particular interests" (1981, p.99). A group is hegemonic in this sense if it seeks to rule by virtue of its moral and intellectual leadership. In contrast, nonhegemonic rulers define their interests more narrowly on economic or corporate interest, and thus are not able to rule by consent (Gramsci 1971).

Does the Angolan leadership see its mission as hegemonic? I propose that it has devised strategies to *express* a hegemonic project. This is of course not to say that hegemony has been attained, or that these strategies aim at providing meaningful (material) concessions to the marginalised majority. Rather, the expression of the hegemonic project remains predominantly at the rhetoric level. I understand this strategy as an answer to Mamdani's 'native question' in a contemporary context. When I argue that the concept of a passive revolution is incomplete, it does not mean it is not useful. It constitutes a necessary but not sufficient analytical gateway to Angolan politics. The Angolan state's attempts to co-opt oppositional leaders, for instance, resonate perfectly with the concept of passive revolution. However, the concept neglects the need for strategies that are created with the aim of shifting the relative balance of hegemony and dominance. Given its meagre social base and the wide discrepancy between the wealth of the elites and the poverty of the masses, how do the Angolan state and the President in particular try to sustain a benign image?

I propose that the answer is found in a sophisticated strategy exemplified by President Eduardo dos Santos' ostensibly charitable foundation, *Fundação Eduardo dos Santos*

(Eduardo dos Santos Foundation, FESA). While Angola's powerful elite tries its best to eliminate discontent, I argue that the foundation of its power is volatile. Attempts to create hegemonic rule add up to an exercise of make believe: while the Presidential power bloc's rhetoric and self-image expresses a hegemonic mission, it fails to follow up with meaningful concessions on the material level.

Apart from the analysis of the 1977 coup attempt, the preceding pages did not problematise the social groups that constitute the regime. Crucially, state power in Angola does not reside primarily in the government or the MPLA per se, but, more accurately, in a clique of technocrats and advisors centred around the President (Chabal 2007; de Oliveira 2007; Vidal 2007a; Hodges 2004; Birmingham 2002; Munslow 1999; Messiant 2007). This group, named the *Futungo* after the Presidential palace, is "a nebulous group of unelected officials and businessmen around President Eduardo dos Santos" which "became the key structure of power in the 1980s, in tandem with the side-lining of MPLA party organs and formal state structures. Sonangol essentially exists to harness and further their agenda (de Oliveira 2007, p.607). As such, it constitutes a structure of power alongside the formal state institutions. De Oliveira (2007, p.607) sees it as a "parallel state" whereas Malaquias (2007, p. 136) terms it "a parallel government – comprising the president and a handful of trusted aides [that] make all key policy decisions with negligible oversight from a weak legislative branch".

The *Futungo* is thus simultaneously part of the MPLA regime and distinct from it. Why would the President want to distance himself from his own party? In the context of the state's inability and unwillingness to deliver social services, dos Santos' strategy is to blame the government while at the same time sustaining an image of himself as a man of peace and reconciliation. In his 1990 Mayday speech, dos Santos criticised government members as "reactionary and corrupt bourgeois elements" who tried to "undermine the unity and cohesion of the party and the state" (in Heywood, 2000, p. 208). Another example is when he in 1998 sacked Prime Minister Fernando Franco van Dunem, who comes from a prestigious old Luanda Afro-Portuguese family (Birmingham 2002).

These developments can be understood as a continuation of the internal power struggle that was the cause of the 1977 coup attempt, although it is not clear that the President's contemporary rivals follow the ideals of Alves. Messiant (2001) notes that the civil war of the 1990s enabled a section of the general staff of the army to become relatively autonomous in economic terms. While it still supports the President, it represents a rival in the Angolan economy. Other disgruntled MPLA leaders have been able to form a common front against

dos Santos, as evidenced in 1998 when the party congress voted against dos Santos' preferred candidate for the position of secretary-general. In her analysis of FESA, Messiant (2001, p.304) contends that "it is in this context of a dangerous degree of delegitimation and of internal strife that the President is developing his political strategy." This strategy is not to secure MPLA supremacy or even the reproduction of the state *per se* but more accurately to sustain the privileged position of the *Futungo*. The MPLA and the formal state institutions are means to be used when convenient rather than ends in that process.

The *Futungo's* hegemonic strategy thus goes further than distancing itself from government. It seeks to actively represent or co-opt potential organised groups of the population. Here, Cox's and Gramsci's insistence that in hegemonic societies civil society is part of the extended state comes to mind. The *Futungo's* political strategy is to attain this, seemingly without accompanying it with any meaningful transformation of the unequal socio-economic structure. While the social reality indicates that hegemony has not been attained, I read the *Futungo* strategies as attempts to blur the line between the 'state' and 'civil society.' However, rather than conceding to social and material demands, the Angolan elite seeks to capture potential oppositional groups and limit their ability to express such demands in the first place. This understanding is in line with Messiant's (2001) and Birmingham's (2002) analysis of FESA, which essentially portrays it as a Presidential attempt to hijack Angola's 'civil society'. The result is a fragmented Angolan society where people have few places to express their discontent. My argument is thus not that the regime does indeed manage to legitimise itself but that it has suppressed the emergence of any real alternatives or leaders. Poorly organised and fragmented, marginalised people have been unable to translate discontent into organised resistance. Unfortunately, little fieldwork on the ground has been conducted that could illuminate how ordinary Angolans experience the situation. One useful hint is however found in Robson and Roque (2001). In their analysis of the urban poor in Luanda, they find little community or solidarity feeling, few examples of collective action to solve community problems such as access to water and sanitation. The large-scale urbanisation process has led to over-crowding in slum areas. This has contributed to the further atomisation of Luanda society, as it prevents most people from living in neighbourhoods where they could have potential social ties with people from their own region or church. This spatial fragmentation of people, Robson and Roque suggest, contributes to their social and political fragmentation.

A disunited people make a weak civil society. Some scholars question the concept's applicability in Africa. Mamdani (1996) and Mbembe (2001) are both sceptical of its relevance to an African context, and emphasise that as an analytical concept it is derived from and tailored to a European context. In his analysis of Angolan civil society, Malaquias (2007) defines civil society as the organised elements of non-state society, and concludes that because it is at best in its nascent stage, it may not be an applicable concept to the Angolan context at all. The Church is the strongest component of organised non-state society, and has its own radio station. Robson and Roque (2001) and Messiant (2007) note that the effects of power politics has been an individualisation or atomisation of society, and that except for some independent media and the Catholic church, there are few organised groups outside the state. The Church managed in 2000, for the first time in postcolonial Angolan history, to hold an anti-war demonstration which was a protest against the 'presidential constitution' (Messiant 2007). The Angolan constitution of 1992 concentrates power in the hands of the Presidency and sidelines Parliament. This deal appeared attractive to both dos Santos and Savimbi, as they thought they would win the Presidential elections. When Savimbi realised the elections would not give him the Presidency, he was not interested in a marginalised position in the Parliament and returned the country to war (Malaquias 2007). It was therefore logical of the Church to focus on the constitution in an anti-war demonstration. Aware of the Church's importance, the response of the *Futungo* has been to co-opt rather than to oppress: after having ignored religion during fifteen years of independence, the state elites have become regular church attendants again. Dos Santos has baptised his son and invited the Pope to celebrate mass for the marginalised at a football stadium (Birmingham 2002).

The *Futungo* creation FESA is a means to usurp civil society. While it is a relatively minor element of Angolan society, Messiant (2001) underscores that it is also a symptom of a larger process of the concentration of power in the President's hands. It is a UN recognised NGO and has chapters in Brazil, Canada and Spain. Officially, its purpose is "technical-scientific, cultural and social," and it aims to assist the educational sector, help rejuvenate the country's economy, promote social programs for the youth and assist public and private institutions to provide social and other services (FESA nd.a, my translation). According to Messiant (2001; 2007), Vidal (2007a) and Malaquias (2007) however, it serves to co-opt and destroy potential opposition to the *Futungo*, and its practices often compete directly with the state itself. An example thereof is the FESA university, financed by Sonangol. This university is built with money that ultimately can be traced back to Sonangol's oil profits in a context where the state

university is neglected in the budget, and some of its staff has re-located to the FESA university (Messiant 2001). Other FESA activities include the FESA week which is held in honour of its founder's birthday, the 'engineer' Eduardo dos Santos.¹¹ FESA itself claims that the theme of the week was 'national reconciliation and social and national reconstruction' (FESA, nd.b) whereas Messiant (2001, p.300) contends it was a week where people are "treated to beer and circuses."

Recent Economic Changes

To conclude this chapter, I would like to add a potentially destabilising element to the above analysis. Returning to the changes Angola's political economy has undergone in the post-war era, the economic base of Angola is changing, evidenced by dramatic increased growth in several sectors. Following Cox (1987), changes in a society's production structure can induce changes in the state form. From this perspective, economic change might unleash new social forces by providing them with the necessary material capabilities to challenge the current historic bloc.

In a sense, Angola's economy is acquiring a more sound and diversified structure. The economy grew by an average of 18.6% in 1996, of which 13.1% is attributable to the oil sector and 27.5% to the non-oil sector. This is strongest in manufacturing (44.7%), trade and commerce (38.1%), diamonds (30.9%) and construction (30%). Angola's GDP per capita is expected to grow to US \$5746 in 2008 and to \$6889 by 2012 (IMF, 2007a). Inflation fell from 268 % in 2001, to 98 % in 2003, to 23% in 2005, and is expected to reach 8% by the end of 2008 (IMF 2007b; 2007a). In a so-called chapter IV consultation report, the IMF (2007a, p.14) describes the Angolan trade regime as "liberal" and average tariffs as "low". It generally praises the state for prudent economic policies but notes the recent gains can easily be reversed.

The political implications of the changes in the economy are hard to predict. On the one hand, Sonangol's predominance in the economy could ensure continued and strengthened *Futungo* power. According to de Oliveira (2007, p.609), business in Angola happens in agreement with Sonangol's standards – "otherwise, it does not happen at all." If so, the recent economic growth would consolidate the existing system of power, which to a large degree hinges on the *Futungo's* financial ability to sustain its clientelist machinery. On the other hand, economic growth could mean new economic opportunities for new players, and the President's

¹¹Dos Santos was educated as a petroleum engineer in St. Petersburg.

economic rivals in the army could increase their relative power vis-à-vis the *Futungo*. In this context, it is important that the IMF (2007a, p.6) estimates that “output growth in the oil sector will plateau around 2010 and then gradually decline; while non-oil sector growth, meanwhile, would support average real growth of 7–8 percent in 2008–12.” This could potentially cause a decrease in the relative importance of the Sonangol financed *Futungo* power bloc. Together with the non-oil growth, changing oil prices is the wild card in the fragile constellation of Angolan power. Figure 2 reviews the oil price from 1861 – 2007, and Figure three presents the numbers for the last twelve months. Oil prices reached an all time high in July of this year, but have since then dropped below US \$ 70.

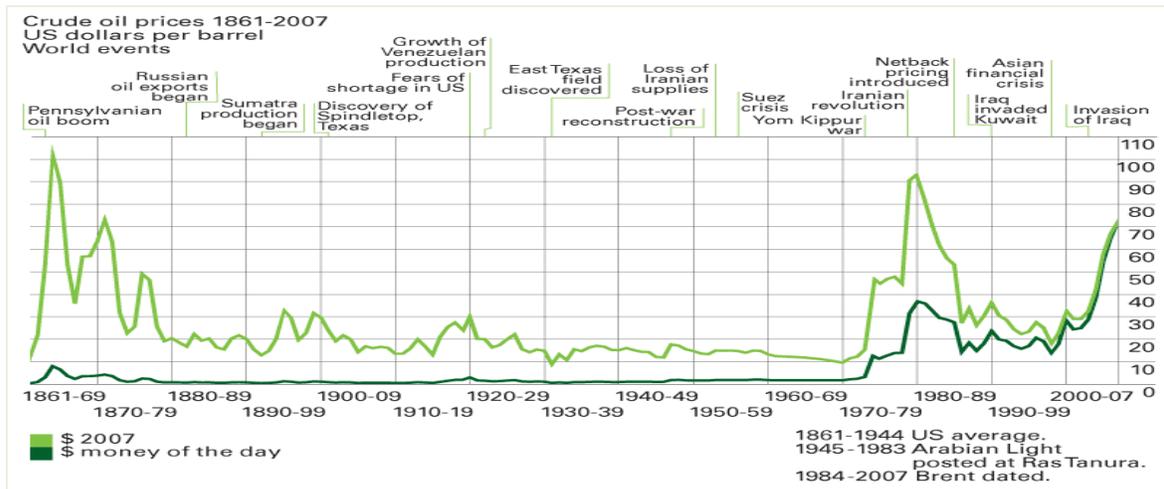


Figure 2. Crude oil prices, 1861- 2007 (Farouk 2008).

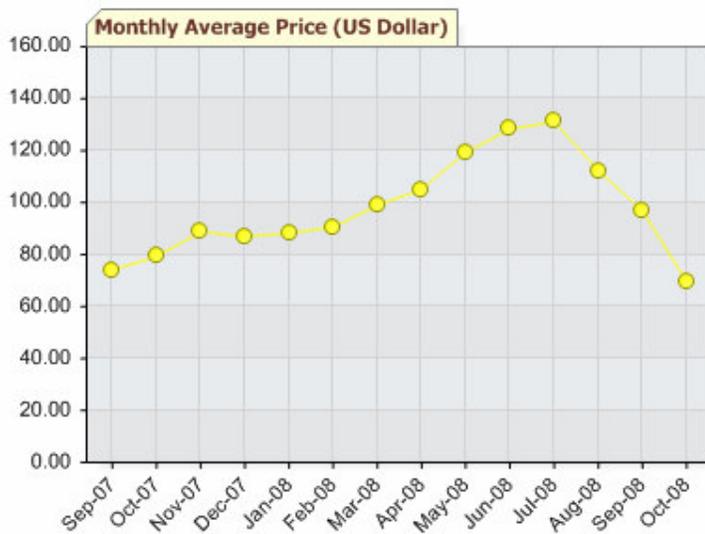


Figure 3. Monthly Average Price of Crude oil (OPEC 2008a).

Conclusion: Balancing a Volatile Power Structure.

The structure of power in Angola is fragile. The rampant poverty and the social neglect on the part of the state create fertile ground for popular discontent. The six years that have passed since the end of the civil war have brought rapid economic growth to the country. The IMF (2007a, p.14) notes that “the public is eager to realize a ‘peace dividend’ after years of civil conflict” but warns against extensive social programs as a “rapid scaling up of public programs, however, could jeopardize recent macroeconomic gains.” Whereas MPLA as a Marxist-Leninist regime in the 1980s made some gains in the health and educational sectors, these were reversed in the 1990s. The inability of the state to deliver social services led to increasing urbanisation on a massive scale, and 53% of the population now lives in the cities (IMF 2007a). In this context, it is not surprising that hegemony eludes the Angolan state. However, the *Futungo* power bloc fends off popular discontent with innovative and sophisticated strategies of co-optation and the fragmentation of possible resistance. These attempts go beyond what the concept of a passive revolution envisions, as they aim at creating a hegemonic mission, albeit on a rhetorical level.

Ultimately, the most important source of support for the Angolan state is found on the world order level. Through the political economy of oil, global forces actively support the status quo and the sitting regime. The oil is the main source of income for the regime and finances the state’s coercive apparatus as well as its strategies to sustain a legitimate image. The continuance of *Futungo* predominance seems firmly rooted from this world order perspective. As Reno (2000a) emphasises, oil brings more than financial returns; it also ensures important diplomatic support for those who control it. This type of support, Reno contends, is not easily captured in traditional state-to-state relations. He (2000a, p. 221) argues that “the presence of large multinational oil firms in Angola helps create new channels for what can be called the ‘private diplomacy’ of Angola’s MPLA regime.” The multinational corporations that run the oil fields, *Futungo* that receive the bulk of its profits and the USA that imports the most of the Angolan oil have a shared vested interest in the maintenance of order in Angola. The number one priority of the international community towards Angola is to ensure the continuation of the oil exports. This requires a certain level of domestic order and security. But order, Reno insists, has for foreign officials in western governments and international financial institutions come to be “synonymous with the facilitation of markets” (Reno 2000a, p. 220). He quotes World Bank analyst Rose-Ackermann’s argument on corruption and neo-patrimonialism. On the one hand, these practices distort the market but are better than opting for reform, because: “reform is risky if it releases opposition forces that undermine the current regime” (in Reno,

2000a, p. 222). Corruption is bad, but disorder and chaos is far worse, is the logic of Rose-Ackermann's reasoning. Reno contends that what the US and international capital fears the most in Angola is the kind of state collapse which would disrupt the workings of the market and thus disrupt oil exports.

The status quo is beneficial for the incumbent regime, the foreign companies operating in Angola, and the countries recipients of Angolan oil exports. The real losers are of course the Angolan population that have failed to see the country's wealth materialise into meaningful development in their own lives. As Santana (2007) emphasises, Angolan oil wealth holds the promise to translate into human development, but the current form of the state has inhibited this thus far. The state institutions are not directed towards human development, and so the wealth does not reach the people. Government expenditure on defence and public order increased from 24.6% in 1993, to 41 % in 1999, while expenditure on social sectors fell from 20.4% to 9.4% in the same period (Hodges 2004).

To conclude, I return to the quotes that introduced this chapter. Mamdani's reminder 'you can turn the world upside down, but still fail to change it' rings true for Angola. From the perspective of the majority of the population, the structure of power in the country is of as little help today as it was during the times of colonial rule and the slave trade.

Chapter Six. Conclusion.

This thesis has contributed to the general debate about African statehood. From the starting point that the state is a necessary element in understanding Africa's political economy and socio-economic challenges, I have identified an impasse in the social theory on the state in Africa. The debate is divided between an ideal typical neo-Weberian school and a historicist school. My aim was to juxtapose these two approaches to see if any common ground could be established. To resolve the dispute, I proposed a synthesis between the theoretical frameworks of Cox and Mamdani, and I used Angola as a testing ground for my approach. The Angolan case illustrates the importance of simultaneously focusing on local and global factors. Contrary to the view that African state / society relationships are *reducible* to its predominantly coercive elements, I paid particular attention to the strategies to sustain a form of rule based on consent in a context where one would not expect it to work.

My analysis started with a general overview of the debate. Why analyse African states? I have posited that they have played a salient role in the continent's postcolonial history. Among Africanist scholars, there is an almost unequivocal condemnation of the state, as Samatar and Samatar (2002, p.4) note: "regardless of the ideological or theoretical wellsprings, the verdict was remarkably unanimous: guilty of mal/de-development." From this perspective, the state's importance is defined just as much by its *inactions* as its *actions*. In the context of deepening global inequalities, strong national institutional capacity is a key to mediate outside pressures in the context of fierce global competition. This is a capacity many African states struggle to attain. For many observers, this can be explained as a result of who has ownership of the state. Mamdani (1996) for instance pinpoints the blame at the failure of African states across the board to undo the unequal and divided structure of the colonial state, whereas Clapham (1996) and Reno (1998) note that in some cases, the state has become synonymous with the leader who runs it.

For whom is the state important? African states display varying merit lists with regards to state capacity. As Herbst (2000) and others comment, several enjoy but limited control beyond their capitals and fall short of exercising monopoly of violence within their territories. I have argued, however, that it does not follow that the state is irrelevant as a unit of analysis. Understanding the trajectory of the state in various countries, who privileges from its power and who is excluded, is essential to analyse how this situation came about. To argue for the state's irrelevance, as Bøås et al (2003; 2005) do, is to accept society's given structure instead

of interrogating it. My approach follows that of Cox's critical theory, which "does not take institutions and social power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing" (1981, p.88). This historical and critical interrogation of the state in turn illuminates the meaning of its absence.

The social theory that aims to make sense of African statehood is however divided. I have argued that it finds itself in a theoretical blind alley. Two schools of thought disagree how to conceptualise the state to begin with and consequently on what African states are. I have called the predominant school neo-Weberian. It provides a functionalist account of how African states compare to a European ideal type. According to this ideal type, strong states have what Jackson (1990) calls 'empirical statehood' whereby the state enjoys a monopoly of the use of legitimate violence within a defined territory and is run by a modern and professional bureaucracy. The notions of the 'state' and the 'nation' have become conflated; state power is thus a natural expression of the configuration of power on the ground. African states fall short of this ideal, and are thus theorised as 'quasi', 'failed' or 'weak' –labels designed to describe the distance between the ideal type and the African reality. African states do not possess 'empirical' but 'judicial' statehood. They are creations of international law, a result of the fact that the international community awarded statehood to whoever happened to control the capital at independence. If you compare existing states to an ideal type, you understand variance between states as difference from the ideal. Neo-Weberians operate with a notion of 'state strength' where strong states conform to the ideal type and weak states place themselves on a continuum towards the category of 'failure'. They further understand state strength primarily as an expression of the state's coercive capabilities. In this vein, Herbst (2000, p.79) contends that security forces are "arguably the essence of any state".

The other school, the historicists, protests the (neo)Weberian tendency to theorise the state as an a-historical and unchanging category around which other historical processes evolve. They insist that the state as such changes together with the society it is a part of. Consequentially, comparing real states to an ideal type provides little insight into their impact on and relationship with society. While no less condemning of the negative role African states have played, they do not counter arguments about the 'failed' states by claiming they are 'strong'. They maintain that the neo-Weberian conclusion rests on a conceptual fallacy, where the assumptions they make about what states 'are' dictate their arguments.

I have further argued that a synthesis between the theoretical frameworks of Cox (1981; 1983; 1987) and Mamdani (1996) offers a fresh and illuminating angle from which to explore African states. First, an analysis of African states cannot stay on the continent but must acknowledge that they are impacted by configuration and distribution of power in the world order. The world order defines the global structure in which African states operate. This structure hinders and defines the parameters of possible action. It impedes some types of action but enables others. In this sense, a global structure is tantamount to what Braudel (1972, p.18) underscored about historical structures: they “operate simultaneously as a support and an obstacle.” Applied to Angola, locating the global structure means situating the country’s production structure in the global political economy. I argued that considerable political power follows the country’s oil wealth. The oil defines Angola’s predominant link with the global economy, and props up the sitting regime not only financially but also diplomatically through indirect links with the countries that receive Angolan oil. The international community’s policy approach to Angola is to maintain a type of order that secures market access to oil.

The theoretical framework offered in Mamdani’s *Citizen and Subject* pays insufficient attention to the importance of global influences, as its analysis insists on staying on the continent. But it adds a crucial component that Cox’s critical theory has paid inadequate attention to. Structures at the world order level may be important, but they are responded to at the local level. This response in turn (re)defines and (re)constitutes the world order itself. Mamdani’s analysis draws a picture of an ‘African form of state’; a bifurcated and undemocratic state structure that has been incapable to further human development in an uneven world. Mamdani’s analysis is interesting primarily because he focuses on what he calls ‘the mode rule.’ Contra economistic strands of political economy, Mamdani does not reduce the question of power to labour or production alone but focuses on the institutional measures taken by colonial and postcolonial leaders rule as effectively as possible.

I tried to illustrate this theoretical argument in the case study of the Angolan state. As Skocpol (2003) notes, the logic underlying single case studies is often a frustration with existing mainstream theories that motivates an in-depth analysis of a case which again leads to a revisit of the theory. Within the confines of this thesis, this has been an exploratory task. I paid particular attention to attempts of the leadership to express its mission as hegemonic on the rhetorical level. This rhetoric has not been followed up by material concessions, and as such the basic power structure of Angolan society remains volatile. Recent economic growth has

the potential of shifting the relative distribution of economic power in the country, thus increasing disagreements between the power bloc around President dos Santos and other members of the government.

Neo-Weberians and Historicists: Room for Common Ground?

I stated in the introduction that I did not want to compare the neo-Weberian and the historicist approaches with the aim of choosing one over the other. To create common ground, I drew on Cox's theory of the state. He (2002) comments that Weberians tends to provide functionalist accounts that focus on space whereas historicists primarily ask how a certain order came into being and focus on time. Applied to his own theory of the state, he argues that "the two perspectives are not alternative but complementary" (Cox, 1987 p 129). Throughout this thesis, I have taken neo-Weberians to task, not for using ideal types *per se*, but for comparing African states to an ideal typed derived from the European historical experience. In accordance with what Mahoney (2004) calls the min-max strategy, neo-Weberians provide a minimal and ideal typical definition of the state. Implicit in this strategy is a picture of the world where Western 'strong' states are on the top and African 'weak' states are on the bottom. Conversely, theorising what African states are turn into a quest for what they ought to be – that is, how they can cover the distance between their own poor existence and the Western ideal. The conceptual lens of this approach has a hard time accounting for the Angolan state. The Angolan state displays seemingly contradictory traits, and neo-Weberians see it as simultaneously strong and weak. De Oliveira (2007, p. 596) epitomises this with the oxymoron "successful failed state." This label only makes sense if the neo-Weberian ideal type is accepted.

The usefulness of the neo-Weberian approach depends on its ability to shed light on important social challenges. In other words, it hinges on the research questions asked. The main concern of this thesis has in Coxian spirit been to detect the potential for change within a given structure or configuration of power. Here, I maintain that CCT's notion of 'state / society complexes' provides more insight than a strictly neo-Weberian approach. Cox presents a threefold definition of the state. First, a state is a "machinery of coercion"; second it is "machinery of organizing consent" used to create hegemonic rule (Cox, 1987 p 409, fn 10). At this level, Cox's theory is ideal typical and follows the *methodological logic* inherent in the neo-Weberian approach, albeit using a different ideal type. First, Cox identifies the defining traits of a form of state; second, he considers how a particular state approximates the

ideal type thus defined. This conceptualisation of the state does not problematise it historically and postulates that states are the same irrespective of the historical context.

The third and historicist element of Cox's state theory turns the attention to this aspect, and seeks to give a concrete and differentiated account of specific states. The ideal typical approach says nothing about "what [the state] is in a concrete historical instance. That 'what it is' is conveyed by the notion of the *blocco storico* or historic bloc" (Cox, 1987, p 409 fn 10). To account for specific states historically, then, is to see it as the product of a contest between different social groups. When a new historic bloc emerges and captures the state so to speak, "the nature of the state" changes with it (Cox, 1981 p 106; 1987, p 6). This does mean that the state is simply a "conveyor belt" expressing and representing the interests of the leading class (Cox, 2002. p 33). The state perceived in its historicist facet remains a site of contest, and the forces in control of it must respond to and be mindful of the resistance and pressures from other social groups.

This thesis has partaken in the critique of the 'failed state' discourse that comes natural to neo-Weberians (cf. Jones 2008 and chapter two). I maintain however that it is not necessary to throw the baby out with the bathwater. In a word, the neo-Weberian approach faults because it privileges the European historical experience and is unable to recognise the historically specific traits of African statehood. That is the gist of Mamdani's (1996) and Mbembe's (2001) critique of the neo-Weberian school. Postcolonial African states, they both emphasise, are forged out of the colonial encounter. According to Mamdani, its historical specificity is found in the reproduction of the type of power the colonialists construed to rule the continent. Mbembe highlights that the colonial state created an institutional structure where impunity for the leaders was a fundamental principle. As such, it was the opposite of the liberal model of the state that the neo-Weberians base their ideal type on. It follows that a state concept based on the European experience is unhelpful to understand the African experience, but it does not follow that ideal types qua an analytical tool necessarily are Eurocentric.

Understanding the Global Political Economy; Understanding Angola.

To indicate the wider theoretical relevance of this study, I would like to draw the attention back to the world order level. Taylor and Williams (2004) note that the discourse about an African 'crisis' and the condemnation of the continent as 'hopeless' as *The Economist* did in 2000 flows from a view that considers Africa as somehow outside world affairs. Contra this, they maintain that there is an old historical flow of people, goods, and ideas between Africa

and other regions of the world. Angola is perhaps a prime example thereof, exemplified by the tragic history of slave trade. Seeing Africa as apart from and alien to the global political economy, Taylor and Williams note, makes it hard to analyse how the world order impacts the continent's historical development.

An interstate system and a world economy comprise the current world order (Cox, 1987). The interactions and relationships between states still constitute a central element of international affairs. But these states are not the unitary actors posited by Waltz' (1979) neorealism. In the words of Cox (1987, p 6 – 7) “complexes of production relations, classes and historic blocs do not exist in isolated national compartments. They are linked to a world order that bears directly on them, as well as influencing them through their national states.” Cox suggests that states face external pressure from the world economy and internal pressure from domestic social forces. The relative weight of each level depends on the historical structure in question: the closer the ‘fit’ or harmony between a country's material capabilities, institutions and governing ideology, the more resilient it is to external pressure.

As a corollary to the world economy, Cox (1987) maintains that states too are internationalised. The internationalisation of the state means that national policies are geared towards and adjusted to the demands of the world economy. This results in a world order constituted by a variety of forms of states that reflect the country's position in the world economy. These forms of states simultaneously express the nature of a country's historic bloc. Cox sees no one way relationship between a country's historic bloc and the world economy, but holds that the two influence each other in a dialectic manner.

To analyse a specific form of state requires a dual analysis of the world order and national social forces. States must be ‘opened up’ and analysed from within. This thesis contributes to the study of the global political economy by analysing the Angolan form of state, and therein lays its wider theoretical relevance. The Angolan case can be approached from different theoretical angles. The state's most noticeable traits include the predominance of the clique around President dos Santos, the heavy reliance upon oil exports, the appalling neglect of social service delivery in the context of rapid economic growth, the intimidation of oppositional forces by a heavily armed state and the co-optation of potential opponents. This description resonates with Clapham's (1996) contention that the state at times is practically indistinguishable from the person who runs it, as well as Reno's (1998) argument that state

politics in 'weak' states turn into warlord politics reminiscent of a Hobbesian everyone's fight against everyone.

I contend that while Clapham and Reno neo-Weberian conceptual lens captures the basic facts, their arguments are more descriptive than explanatory. I turned to the synthesis between Cox and Mamdani to make sense of the Angolan state. Cox proposes that the Angolan 'protostate' faces a 'passive revolution.' On the world order level, the Angolan state form thus serves the whims of international capital, which is essentially concerned with order understood as the maintenance of a functioning market economy. This order is imposed from without in cooperation with a local state elite, and is characterised by the lack of consensual, hegemonic rule.

There is an important element of truth to this description, but it remains incomplete. I therefore insisted on adding Mamdani's theoretical framework to supplement my understanding of how state power works on the ground. Seeing power in Angola as a simple expression of an order imposed from without with the collaboration of a local elite neglects how this elite is a part of an Angolan historical bloc. Following Cox's reading of Gramsci, this implies that it must rule by a necessary combination of coercion and hegemony. Gramsci underscored that material and ideological power are two sides of the same coin, and can only be separated analytically. He insists on a conception of a historical bloc "in which precisely material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction between form and content has purely didactic value, since the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies with the material forces" (Gramsci 1971, p 377). If so, also a foreign imposed material order ('passive revolution') is sustained ideologically. This is why I wanted to add Mamdani to Cox. My project was not to confirm or reject his thesis of the African bifurcated state in an Angolan context. Rather, I adopted his methodological approach and placed the 'native question' in a modern context: how does the Angolan state actually rule?

The Angolan state relies predominantly on coercive means. Munslow (1999, p. 561) sums up its main strategy to stay in power this way: "peaceful opposition is opposition to be bought off. Armed opposition is opposition to be crushed." In this context however, it still attempts to design strategies for hegemonic rule. In chapter four, I read a Gramscian undercurrent into Mamdani's argument about indirect rule, as it was a colonial strategy to 'keep natives under control' by conceding some autonomy to them. In a contemporary Angolan context, the

attempts of the *Futungo* through organisations such as FESA to create an image of itself as legitimate, concerned with social welfare, national reconciliation and transcending the trauma of civil war, serve the same purpose. I concur with Messiant (2001) that FESA in and of itself is not a major feature of Angolan politics, but it represents and illustrates something more important. Through FESA, President dos Santos actively seeks to ‘hijack’ civil society by marginalising other organisations that might become catalysts for popular unrest. In the same vein, the *Futungo* co-opts intellectuals with the capacity of influencing popular opinion. At the same time, dos Santos has actively distanced himself from his own MPLA party and government as a way to scapegoat negative developments on others. In a context where coercive power and poverty dominate, these strategies to create the “spontaneous consent given by the great masses” that underlies hegemonic rule assume a particular importance (Gramsci, 1971 p. 12). In predominantly non-hegemonic societies such as Angola, the balance of power is necessarily fragile. With Angola’s recent economic growth that has the potential of unsettling the balance between old economically based power groups, the *Futungo* might find itself ever more pressed to strive towards hegemony. From a Gramscian perspective, its power rests in the last analysis on its ability to present its interests and mission as compatible and harmonious with that of other potential contending social forces. Therefore, understanding Angola as an example of a Coxian passive revolution is not wrong, but rather incomplete.

Concluding Remarks.

To analyse the Angolan state as a ‘case’ rather than an ‘instance’ implies claiming that it belongs to a larger family, that it is somehow representative of other (African) states (cf. Walton, 1992). I emphasised that this does not mean that my propositions necessarily apply to, for instance, Nigeria or Mozambique, but that the relevant question is how well they travel to other contexts. My analysis of the Angola state sought to see it from below, as if I were looking at it from the point view of the social groups included and excluded in its ownership. From a Coxian perspective, I motivated this theoretical angle by noting that hegemony in the world order is least stable in peripheral countries. I used Mamdani’s theoretical framework to get a view from below and thus to keep up with Murphy’s (2007) call to keep the promise of critical IR theory.

However, seeing the state from ‘below’ and ‘within’ constitutes a formidable methodological challenge. The rationale to do so is clear: if the form of the state corresponds to a society’s historic bloc, then understanding this state form requires an analysis of what Cox calls

collective images that different social groups have about the state. These images are necessarily contested, indicating that people disagree about how states look like in an ideal world. This contestation is a reminder of the fact that change is a historical constant and a society's power relationships are contingent on developments in a society's material capabilities, institutions or ideology. Methodologically, then, understanding a particular state form or 'state / society complex' requires somehow accessing the worldviews of the people that live under the state in question. Due to data and time constraints, I have not managed to conduct an analysis of how ordinary Angolans experience the state they live under. This constitutes to a major weakness of my study. Instead, I focused on the Angolan state's strategies to express a hegemonic mission on the rhetorical level. This focus on nature and actions of state institutions, I believe, resonates with Mamdani's own analysis. However, it falls short of fulfilling what Murphy understands as the promise of critical theory. To suggest a way forward for critical scholars, Murphy suggests that there is much to learn from ethnographers and feminists. Analysing the state from below comes more naturally to them, as their theoretical frameworks are designed to analyse social orders as experienced by those who live under them. Following the logic of my insistence that states must be approached from below and within, this type of work is a necessary means to that end.

To conclude, I would like to end with an example of the kind of work that could inspire future explorations of state / society complexes. This, I believe, could be a way to keep the promise of critical theory as Murphy argues for. I point to Horst's (2006) analysis of Somalis in the refugee camp of Dadaad in Kenya. Using an ethnographic method, she provides an insightful analysis of how the refugees' aspiration towards migration cannot fully be understood by mere reference to their obvious wish for improved human security and material betterment outside the refugee camp. Instead, analysis must focus on how the refugees exercise their agency in assigning meaning to mobility. Drawing on Appadurai, Horst (2006, p.150) argues that new information technologies have introduced a "new condition of neighbourliness amongst people." Because exchange of information between refugees and migrants is relatively easy, refugees in the camp have clear and distinct ideas of life in Western countries, and are able to compare their own life situation with that of their relatives and friends abroad in very concrete terms. This greatly impacts what migration means in the refugee camp, in ways that in many cases have tragic outcomes: increased knowledge about life abroad increases the aspiration to migrate, but has no affect on refugees' ability to leave. Implicit in Horst's analysis of the ideas surrounding mobility is the meaning of staying put, of being a non-migrant, also changes

because people can think of their own life situation as worse relative to those who live abroad.

Horst's ethnographic methodology allows her to present an analysis of the worldviews of the inhabitants of the refugee camp in Dadaad. Her analysis is simultaneously a discussion of how 'globalisation' impacts on and is experienced by people in the refugee camp, as well as a concrete analysis of their relationship to migration and mobility. Conversely, the same method could fruitfully be employed in an analysis of various state forms from the point of view of those who live under them. I suggest her work should inspire future explorations of state / society relations in Africa and beyond. This would benefit social theory's understanding of the nature of power *within* states and by extension how power *between* states work.

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