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**Single copy rate** for corporate bodies: £40 for UK; €60 for EU; $73 for other countries; and for individuals: £20 for UK; €30 for EU; $37 for other countries.

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**Notes for Contributors**

- Send all articles, book reviews, notices, and other correspondence to:
  The Editor, Democracy and Development: Journal of West African Affairs
  3L Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP, UK
  Tel: +44 (0)20 7359 7775, Fax: +44 (0)20 7359 2221
  or: 2 Olabode Close, Ilupeju Estate, P.O. Box 15700, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria
  Tel: +234 (0)1 804 3221 / 473 0705, Fax: +234 (0)1 493 4420
  E-mail: cddnig@cddnig.org, Internet: www.cddnig.org

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- Submitted articles and/or reviews should be typed double space and with a wide margin on the left. Articles should not be more than 8,000 words; reviews, 1,500 words. Articles can be submitted by email as MS Word attachment or as a MS Word document on a floppy disk by post.

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- Notes should be presented as footnotes at the bottom of each respective page. References should appear on a separate page at the end of the article, and should be listed as follows:
Editor’s Note

A core objective of this journal is to bring both mainstream scholarship and policy analysis into a fruitful coincidence with regard to the examination of socio-political and economic processes across the West African sub-region. Our choice of articles in this edition has been largely informed by this binocular vision, the aim being to capture the significant events taking place in different parts of West Africa, while acknowledging the fact that some of the issues under focus are yet to be fully resolved and as such may require further research before any reasonable conclusions can be reached. One such issue is the ongoing impasse in Cote d’Ivoire which has continued to stimulate scholarly reflections from a variety of disciplines, not least history, conflict studies, international relations, political science and social anthropology. W. Alade Fawole’s article borrows perspectives from each of these approaches, although his main attention is focused on the problems of peace-making in general. In the process, he sheds crucial light on the genesis of the conflict, the historical responsibilities of individual actors, and perhaps most crucially, the way in which the political instrumentalisation of both religion and ethnicity has plunged the country into a crisis which even the most pessimistic observer of the Cote d’Ivoire scene could not have anticipated, say a decade, ago. Fawole situates the intervention of ECOWAS, still smarting from its controversial involvement in the crisis in Liberia, within this tragic cauldron, and concludes that lasting peace can only return to the country if ECOWAS and other interested actors (including those outside the region) can put aside their differences to work together for peace. For the beleaguered country, it would seem, the future looks heavily overcast, especially given the vagaries of peacekeeping and peace making in general.

It is tempting to think that the Cote d’Ivoire can learn a lesson or two from Nigeria, clearly the driving force in ECOWAS, and itself riddled with endemic ethnic and religious contradictions. For all their apparent divergence, Fawole’s article on the crisis in Cote d’Ivoire and Abu Bakarr Bah’s reflections on the dilemma of nation-state building in Nigeria share a poignant commonality – the continuing salience of religion and, in particular, ethnicity, as different (West) African countries attempt to build democratically viable states. Thus, the theme that Abu Bah’s analysis privileges – the antinomies of national integration within the ambit of inter-ethnic struggle for resources – is one that clearly resonates, not only across the sub-region, but generally in the continent as well. Indeed, if there is any moral to be drawn from the Nigerian experience, it is that issues bordering on ethnicity and identity tend to enjoy a certain resilience, making them not problems to be solved, but historical conditions to be managed. Crucial to this process of management, Bah argues, are such factors as civic education and, more important, a deeply embedded democratic disposition.

Okechukwu Ibeanu and Nkwachukwu Orji powerfully underscore the importance of what might be called the habit of democracy in their dissection of the role of political despotism in the breakdown of relations between Nigeria and South Africa in the crucial period between 1993 and 1999. While their overarching proposition is that inter-state intercourse is more likely to be conflictive in the face of fundamental differences in regime type and attitude to established international
conventions, they amply illustrate it with the case of the regime of General Sani Abacha in Nigeria. For them, while Nigeria and South Africa may historically have been at daggers drawn for a variety of reasons (apartheid rule in South Africa and the conviction of the two countries’ respective elites of a ‘manifest destiny’ to lead the continent are two examples that come to mind), mutual tension was arguably deepened by the apparent refusal of the Abacha regime to respect the basic tenets of both domestic and international law. A good example of this stubbornness was the hasty execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight fellow Ogonis on November 10, 1995 (what Ibeanu and Orji define as ‘the threshold of irreversibility’), prompting widespread international condemnation and inevitably putting the regime on collision course with many countries, including South Africa.

Following Nigeria’s return to civil rule on May 29, 1999, tensions between the two countries seem to have cooled off considerably, although strains have manifested from time to time over a number of issues, most recently the crisis in Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, Nigeria and South Africa would appear to have turned a crucial corner, and the leaders of the two countries (Olusegun Obasanjo and Thabo Mbeki respectively) have been at the forefront of initiatives aimed at achieving greater economic and social development for the continent. The most laudable of such efforts is the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).

While it is possible to attribute the new phase in relations to the political transformation in Nigeria (and both Ibeanu and Orji make this clear, although they also emphasise the importance of the international environment), there is a clear danger of romanticising what at the end of the day remains an unfolding process of democratisation in Nigeria. Indeed, as citizens of many West African countries are beginning to learn, elections and rule by civilians, important as they may be, do not necessarily guarantee real democracy. This is the focus of Nantang Jua’s paper on the democratisation process in Cameroon where a new constitution, general elections, and rule by civilians have failed to translate into genuine participation in governance by the mass of the people. According to Jua, in what amounts to a dampening of popular expectations, ‘political reform has sought to privilege the will to power rather than the will to participation’. His may be a distressing summary of the specific dynamics of democratisation in Cameroon, but its ramifications for the sub-region in particular and the continent at large can hardly be disputed. Philosophically speaking, Jua’s thesis can be construed as a fundamental rejection of the certitude underlying the dominant reading of the progress of democratisation as a continuous journey towards an increased participation of the common in the running of their affairs. If Jua is to be believed (and his argument surely has its merits), this process has actually unfolded in fits and starts, seemingly stalling in the particular case of Cameroon in what he calls ‘appeasement democracy’.

The preceding scenario pretty much sets a clear intellectual agenda for social and political research in the sub-region: the need to begin to question afresh many of the ‘truths’ generally taken for granted about liberal democracy in Africa and the role that ordinary citizens must play in bringing about social justice. These and corollary issues are taken up in the two articles by J. Oloka-Onyango and Francis Nyamnjoh in the ‘Briefings’ section.

We are hopeful that you will be stimulated by this diverse, yet interrelated, collection.
Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the Ford Foundation, in particular its Governance and Civil Society Unit in New York, for financial assistance towards the publication of this journal.

Ebenezer Obadare, Editor
The story of West Africa’s transition from colonial to accountable government, as in many other parts of the world, has been long, slow, fraught, and bloody. Far from nearing completion, it is still work in progress. The course of this transition has been characterized by several unconstitutional changes in government, political assassinations and other forms of extra-judicial executions, forced displacement of communities and vast settlements, many rigged elections, large scale corruption, and many wars.

Together, the regional picture is arguably more than the sum of its individual country chapters. Each country of the sub-region has an interesting tale of its own transition. The current wave of transitions taking place in West Africa is not, however, the first of its kind since independence. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, many West African countries, including Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and neighbouring Cameroun in Central Africa, undertook different forms of transition. The promise of those transitions was short-lived. Those transitions failed arguably because they were not informed by a candid appraisal and acknowledgement of the wrongs that preceded them.

Recent transitions in West Africa have instituted different mechanisms of transitional justice with varying degrees of popular credibility. The declared objective of these mechanisms in each case was to address historical wrongs and provide sustainable foundations for legitimate governance. Some of these processes, as in Sierra Leone and Liberia, are taking place under international supervision; others, as in Ghana and Nigeria, have taken place ostensibly under the impetus of domestic leadership. The Conferences Nationale in Benin Republic and Togo in the early 1990s are radically different from the more recent transitional justice processes in their English-speaking neighbours. It is arguable that these processes are comparable as much for the differences in their mechanics, as for what may be mixed perceptions about their outcomes. The fact that these mechanisms of transitional justice and Conferences Nationale can be mentioned in the same breath calls into question the meaning and content of transitional justice in itself. It also necessitates an investigation into and assessment of the various experiences of transitional justice in West Africa so far.

Against this background, the Board of Editors of Democracy and Development has authorized this call for papers for a Special Issue on Transitional Justice in West Africa. Articles in this Special Issue will:

- provide the context and meaning – both theoretical and experiential - of transitional justice in West Africa;
- provide regional perspective for understanding transitional justice in West Africa;
• describe and analyze specific processes and mechanisms of transitional justice researched by or known to the authors and their outcomes;
• describe and analyze the interplay of national and international factors in instituting or conducting processes of transitional justice in West African countries;
• How these processes affected or addressed violations affecting women, transnational communities, and other vulnerable groups or communities;
• investigate the social, legal, political, and anthropological significance or impact (if any) of these processes in their immediate milieu and beyond;
• indicate any unique contributions or notable regional trends specific to West African processes of transitional justice;
• analyze the engagement of West Africa’s citizens and institutions with transitional justice in West Africa as survivors, citizens, activists, actors, communities and organizations; and
• address any other aspects or features of transitional justice in West Africa.

Articles to be considered for publication in this Special Issue will be between 6,500 and 8,000 words long. Submissions (preferably by e-mail as MS Word attachment) should be accompanied by abstracts of not more than 250 words. Inter-disciplinary submissions and joint authorships are encouraged. Selected papers will be peer reviewed and authors will be asked to make corrections where necessary. While notes should be at the foot of pages, references should appear on a separate page at the end of the article in the following format:


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RELIGION AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY IN MALI: THE DOG THAT DOESN’T BARK

By Stephen A. Harmon

Abstract

This article examines the role of religion, especially Islam, in Mali’s democratic transition over the past fifteen years. It provides an overview of the religious demographics in Mali and a brief history of Malian Islam and its relation to political power, whether traditional, colonial, or post-independence. It argues that Islam in Mali, unlike in many other predominately Muslim countries, has a tradition of tolerance and accommodation and has not disrupted or hindered democratic transition. Rather it has facilitated and nurtured that transition, partly because of the willingness of most Islamic leaders to remain politically neutral and partly because Mali's Islamic associations, along with other elements of civil society, have participated in conflict and crisis resolution, notably in the Tuareg rebellion and the ‘school crisis.’ The article concludes that despite anecdotal incidents of sectarian violence and a perceived recent increase in the numbers and influence of Islamist groups, both domestic and foreign, Islam continues to play a constructive, tolerant role in the political arena as Mali moves through its second decade of democratic transition.

Introduction

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 have cast new light on the role of religion, especially Islam, in community life in Africa and elsewhere. To be sure, Islam has been identified with intolerance and horrific acts of violence in Africa. Recent history has seen the spread of extremist strains of Islam in Africa, such as Wahhabism, as well as decades of war in Sudan perpetrated by the Muslim North against the Christian and traditionalist South, not to mention the deadly religious riots that have plagued parts of Nigeria. Yet, the view of Islam as intolerant and violent, as well as refractory to democracy, is belied by the Malian experience. Mali, unlike many other predominantly Muslim countries, has managed to avoid what has been called ‘enchantment of the public realm’, or the loss of secular purpose in society, by not imposing shariah law, the veiling and cloistering of women, the banning of alcohol sales, and other customs that represent an intolerant approach to non-Muslim faiths. The Malian model is one of deference to Islam and acceptance of Mali as an Islamic society, but the state is secular, and other

1 Pittsburg State University, Kansas, August 15, 2004, sharmon@pittstate.edu
religions, including Christianity and traditional beliefs, are freely practised. Malian Islam is tolerant. Women are not secluded, and family law is a mixture of local tradition and Islamic practices. People of one religion freely attend marriages as baptisms, of others. The lack of a wall of separation between the government and religion has not led to the imposition of Islam on the private religious domain of non-believers.

Mali is a secular state; its constitution calls for freedom of religion. The government respects this right and in fact contributes to the free practice of religion. There is no state religion, though Islam clearly predominates. The population is roughly 90% Muslim, almost all Sunni. Of the remaining 10%, half are Christians, evenly divided between Catholic and Protestant, and half are practitioners of traditional religions. Despite the presence of non-Muslim minorities, Mali sees itself as a Muslim country, and Islam is a major component of national identity. However, Mali has been relatively free of the kind of religious strife that has plagued other African countries such as Nigeria and Sudan. An obvious reason is that Mali, which also straddles the Sahel region, is not characterised by a Muslim North and a Christian South. Though Mali’s Christians do reside primarily in the South, the entire country is predominantly Muslim. Therefore, the religious cleavage does not reinforce any ethnic cleavage. Less obvious reasons include Mali’s traditions of religious tolerance and inter-ethnic cooperation. These traditions have cemented the coexistence of different religions and ethnicities, while generating a national awareness. Many Malians believe that their tradition of co-existence and tolerance in matters of religion and ethnicity has spared them the twin traps of Islamic radicalism and ethnic strife that have derailed so many democratic experiments in the Muslim world.

Undoubtedly, Islam has not hindered Mali’s on-going democratic transition. Indeed, Mali has earned a reputation as a model of democracy in the Muslim world. Jane’s Intelligence Review describes Mali as ‘the Islamic world’s strongest democracy’. The New York think tank Freedom House lists only two of 47 Muslim majority countries as fully ‘free’, Mali and neighbouring Senegal, while Italian journalist, Sandro Magister, sees Mali as an ‘oasis of democracy’ in the Islamic world. Yaroslav Trofimov of the Wall Street Journal regards Mali’s ‘rare

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7 I am using the term ‘transition’ here in two senses. In the broader sense, I use it to refer to the transition from single-party dictatorship to multiparty democracy, a process that I consider to be ongoing. In the narrower sense, the term refers to the transition from military government to civilian government from the coup of March 1991 to the inauguration of President Konaré in June of 1991.


success’ as a ‘free’ Muslim country as an example to the rest of the Islamic world. As Mali’s President, Amadou Toumani Touré, recently expressed: ‘What we have here is an Islam that is very ancient, tolerant and enlightened. We see nothing in our religion that would prevent us from being democratic.’

Not only has Malian Islam not hindered democracy, it has supported and facilitated it. After presenting a review of Mali’s religious background and a synopsis of the events of its democratic transition, the paper argues that Mali’s non-confrontational brand of Islam has helped consolidate the democracy for two reasons. One reason is the open support shown for democracy by Muslims and their leaders, especially their choice to remain politically neutral with respect to political support for individuals and parties. The other reason is the involvement of Muslim religious leaders and Islamic associations, along with other elements of civil society, in decision-making processes and conflict resolution, notably in the Tuareg rebellion in Mali’s northern regions and the decade-long educational confrontation known as the ‘school crisis’. No Islamic agenda or movement figured as a cause in either of these crises, but Muslim leaders, reflecting Mali’s spirit of tolerance in religious and ethnic relations, were involved in their resolution.

Mali’s Religious Background

Much of Mali’s religious history revolves around a tension between Islam and traditional religion, with Christianity not being a factor until modern times. The traditional religions are generally based on knowledge of a high god, a creator god, but a god that is remote and unapproachable. As a result, intermediary spirits are approached instead as intercessors, including territorial spirits and ancestral spirits. Islam appeared in Mali in medieval times and became important among elite and commercial sectors by around 1000 A.D. It arrived from North Africa via the trans-Saharan trade routes. Since Muslim merchants from the Maghrib dominated the lucrative international trade, some Malian merchant families embraced Islam. As Richard Warms explains, ‘trade facilitated the spread of Islam while Islam facilitated the spread of traders’. As the new, universal faith became entrenched in the commercial towns, ruling classes and their retainers also began to convert. But the masses, millet farmers, warrior-aristocrats, artisans, and country folk, clung to traditional practices.

Islam, as the faith of kings, merchants, bureaucrats, diplomats and scholars, took on political dimensions in late medieval Mali, when large, multinational empires dominated. But the Muslim rulers often had to walk a line between Islam and traditional practice. If they catered too much to the ‘pagan’ elements, the merchants, bureaucrats, and scholars would desert them. If they catered to strongly to the Muslim community, the war leaders would desert or depose them. Commercial cities, especially Timbuktu, became centres of Islamic scholarship and creativity. A substantial body of literature developed in such

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12 Christopher Ehret, *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002), p. 50. Traditional practice in Mali includes local variants of Bamanan and Mandinka pre-Islamic belief, as well as the more famous Dogon cosmology.
centers, including Timbuktu’s famous Sankoré University. Texts on governance, law, theology, history, grammar, and other disciplines proliferated, some written in Arabic and some in Malian languages rendered in Arabic script. Long known of and studied by today’s Africanist scholars, this body of literature has recently captured the world’s attention due in part to new finds of caches of texts. Some of these newly rediscovered texts were feted at ‘Day of the Book’ celebrations held on 10th January of 2002 at the U.S. embassy in Bamako, Mali’s capital. Journalists covering the event highlighted texts that seemed to preach tolerance and conflict resolution. This Malian tradition of tolerant and pacific Islam persists down to the present day.

The political dimensions of Islam became more important, as Mali and much of West Africa moved into a period dominated by jihad movements. These jihads resulted in the establishment of a series of imamates, Islamic theocracies, which began in Senegambia in the seventeenth century and ultimately spread across West Africa to Nigeria by the nineteenth century. Mali, in particular, came under the rule of one of the harshest of these jihad regimes, the Umarian state founded by al-Hajj Umar Tall in the 1850s. Eschewing the balance of earlier centuries, Sheikh Umar and his son and successor Sheikh Ahmad attempted, with some success, to impose Islam on Mali by coercion. Sheikh Umar, a leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood, was a bona fide Islamic scholar as well as an effective state builder. His writings were cited among the examples of texts promoting tolerance and conflict resolution at the ‘Day of the Book’ ceremonies.

The advent of French conquest in the 1890s, which ended Umarian rule, caused further changes in the religious-political mix. Ironically, the regime of the Christian French touched off a period of expansion of Islam, far surpassing that which the Umarians had been able to achieve by force. Richard Warms sums up this phenomenon, saying that two things led to the enormous success of Islam in Mali in the last century. First, the disruptions that began with the Umarian jihad and continued throughout the colonial period weakened traditional practice. Here, he cites Kathryn Green, who notes that these disruptions discredited traditional religions that could not protect the people. At the same time, these very disruptions exposed Malians as never before to outside influences, including Islam. Secondly, colonial rule, along with the associated market economy, drew many people into

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18. L.J. Brown, ‘U.S. Helps Preserve Ancient Islamic Manuscripts in Mali’, U.S. Department of State, International Information Programs, January 11, (2002), p. 1. As scholars who study Sheikh Umar’s career, such as John Hanson and David Robinson, have observed, however, not all of his writings were so pacific. His seminal work, commonly known as ar-Rimah (The Spears), has its full title: The Spears of the Party of the Faithful against the Throats of the Party of the Damned. Clearly, generalizations about the tolerant nature of Malian Islamic traditions, however valid, must take into account notable exceptions.


20. This dramatic expansion of Islam, which begins in the early colonial period, was the subject of my doctoral dissertation (Stephen Harmon, ‘The Expansion of Islam among the Bambara of the Middle Niger under French Rule: 1890 to 1940’. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, UCLA, 1988).
commerce, that facilitator of Islam, and/or into migrations and colonial service, both of which pulled people away from their home-based traditional beliefs, including belief in territorial spirits, and exposed them to Islam. Thus, by mid-century, Islam had become the majority religion of Mali.\(^{21}\)

As Islam attracted more and more adherents during the colonial years, the political dimensions of Islam also took on new aspects. On the one hand, the French saw Islam as superior to traditional faiths, a suitable way station for Malians on their way to assimilation into French civilization. On the other hand, they feared Islam as a disruptive, even subversive force within their territories. This vacillation led them to favour supportive, or collaborating, marabouts, Islamic clerics, especially the Tijaniyya shaykhs linked to the old Umarian state, while despising and vilifying strains of Islam that rejected and shunned French culture, especially the Tijaniyya splinter movement of Shaykh Hamallah of Nioro.\(^{22}\) As the colonial enterprise wound down in the post war period, many of Mali’s Muslims, both pro and anti-French, became forward in the political parties that developed as independence approached.\(^{23}\) Ultimately, it was Muslim Malians, particularly those educated and trained by the French, who led Mali to independence.\(^{24}\)

While Mali’s post-independence, single-party regimes were based on secular nationalism and socialism, rather than Muslim principles, Islam remained central to Malian culture, and very important in Mali’s political culture. Mali’s dictators were careful to maintain close ties with the country’s religious leaders. It was for this reason that the single-party regime of then President Moussa Traoré supported the creation in 1980 of the Malian Association for the Unity and Progress of Islam (AMUPI), an umbrella group of Islamic associations that served as an interlocutor between the regime and the Muslim community or ummah.\(^{25}\) Although Traoré’s ruling party UDPM (Union Démocratique du Peuple Malian) kept tight control over student groups, women’s groups, labour unions, and other civic organizations,\(^{26}\) the Islamic associations, most of which were represented by the AMUPI, were left to manage their affairs relatively free of party interference, as long as they did not challenge the regime’s authority.


\(^{22}\) C. Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960* (New York: Cambridge, 1988), p. 174; Stephen Harmon, *Op Cit.*, Chapter 8. Many scholars have explored the peculiar love-hate relationship between the French administration and Islam. In addition to Harrison, see Donal Cruise O’Brien, and Christian Coulon. The French conquered the Sudan (Mali) with an army and a corps of bureaucrats and servants from thoroughly Islamized Senegal, virtually all of whom were Muslims. These became the commanders and supervisors of the army of Malian conscripts, forced laborers, petty bureaucrats and servants recruited from the Bamanan and other Sudanic ethnic groups. Malians in colonial service, cut off from home and family and eager to curry favor with their superiors, often converted to Islam. Add to this, incidental factors, such as the anti-clericism of the French republicans in the colonial service, cut off from home and family and eager to curry favor with their superiors, often converted to Islam. Add to this, incidental factors, such as the anti-clericism of the French republicans in the colonial service, who restricted the activities of Catholic missionaries, and you have a situation that, by default or design, favored the rapid expansion of Islam.

\(^{23}\) These included the Union Soudanais (US) and the Rassamblement Démocratique Africain (RDA).

\(^{24}\) Shaykh Hamallah of Nioro, despised by the French for his rejection of their culture, had uncannily predicted in the 1930s that, ‘It will not be me who chases you from this land but rather those whom you have educated’. (Stephen Harmon, *Op. Cit.*, Chapter 8).


As mentioned above, Mali has been largely free of major religious strife since the jihad period of the nineteenth century. 27 There was also relatively little religious violence in the twentieth century, with the notable exception of a crackdown on Mali’s small Wahhabi community in the mid-1950s. 28 This relative lack of sectarian strife is partly due to the bitter memories of the Umarian period that still linger in the Malian collective consciousness, and partly due to the fact that the vast majority of Malians are Muslims. Other factors include the Malian tradition of tolerance in religious matters and the balance struck between the authorities and the Muslims that date from medieval times. Where the Umarians had tried to impose Islam by force, and the French had remained aloof while at the same time inadvertently facilitating the expansion of Islam, the single-party regimes were satisfied to maintain good relations with the ummah and its leaders, contenting themselves with control over politics, the economy, and the flow of foreign aid. These good relations between the government and the Muslim leadership have continued into Mali’s democratic transition.

Democratic Transition and the Malian Model of Islam

From independence in 1960 until the pro-democracy coup of 1991, Mali was a single-party state organised loosely on African Socialist models. 29 The pre-coup regime, the Second Republic, established in 1968 under the leadership of then Lt. Moussa Traoré, 30 combined benign neglect, crony capitalism, and neo-patrimonialism, along with elements of electoral politics within the single-party framework. 31 Unemployment was widespread, and poverty was abject. In the face of desperate conditions for the masses and blatant kleptocratic behaviour on the part of party and government officials, popular frustration with the regime grew. By the late 1980s it was common belief that corruption and mismanagement by the single-party state were the causes of Mali’s poverty and stagnation. 32 Pressure on

27 Sporadic outbursts of violence did occur in the interwar period between followers of the Umaran Tijaniyya and the Hamalist movement, though this violence, which culminated in 1940, had as much to do with tribal rivalries among the desert-side Moors as with Tijaniyya doctrines. See Harrison (1988), p. 179.
31 Richard Vengroff & Moctar Koné, Op. Cit., p. 46. During the Traoré regime, candidates were allowed to contest elections within the party, and some turnovers did take place.
32 Richard Vengroff and Moctar Kone (Ibid) argue that President Keita's socialist policies in the 1960s, the oil crisis and Sahelian droughts of the 1970s and the world economic downturn of the 1980s put Mali in a recession from which it has not recovered. Michael Bratton et al. note that popular discontent with the Traoré regime coalesced around three factors, violent repression of the opposition, confiscation of rural food surpluses, and failure to pay public salaries sand student
Traoré to allow political openings boiled to the surface by late 1990. Following months of popular agitation for multipartyism, the ‘events’ (événements) began in March of 1991. For three days, street protests by students, unionists, women, and democracy activists, sometimes violent, raged across the country. Army troops and police fired on protestors, resulting in over 200 dead. Shocked by the spectacle, senior army officers acted, arresting ‘life president’ Traoré on March 26, and proclaiming a transitional government. Coup leader Amadou Toumani Touré, commander of elite paratrooper units, then surprised Africa and the world by announcing he would turn power over to an elected government. Touré, affectionately known as ‘ATT’, proved his sincerity by bringing a civilian majority into his transition council, the Transitional Committee for Public Welfare (CTSP), including leaders of the recently formed student and pro-democracy groups. The CTSP convened a national conference and drafted a democratic constitution authorising political pluralism and a presidential system. The constitution was ratified by popular referendum in January 1992.

Mali subsequently went through three regularly scheduled election cycles. In the first, held in early 1992, the legislative and presidential elections were carried by the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA), one of the principal pro-democracy organisations of the coup period. ADEMA’s leader Alpha Oumar Konaré, an historian and former government minister, became Mali’s first elected President. His inauguration in June ushered in the Third Republic. Mali’s second election cycle in 1997 was marred by the Constitutional Court’s cancellation of legislative elections in April after opposition complaints of ‘technical irregularities’. A subsequent boycott of the Presidential elections in May by 21 opposition parties resulted in a tainted victory for Konaré, who ran almost unopposed. Konaré won his second term and remained popular because of his leadership during the transition to civilian rule, though his party suffered from allegations of corruption and patronage. ADEMA’s perceived corruption, disappointment over the slow pace of economic recovery, as well as outrage over the simmering school crisis, discussed below, had sparked the opposition boycott. In 2002, having fulfilled the constitutional limit of two five-year terms, President Konaré could not, and did not run in Mali’s third election cycle, held that spring.

36 This election was judged fair and legitimate by most national and international observers, including the Carter Center (see Stephen Harmon, ‘Civic Resurgence, Domestic Calm, and New Political Norms: Keys to Mali’s Democratic Decade, 1991-2001, Unpublished paper presented September 29, 2001, pp. 4-6). Konaré served as Minister of Sports and Culture under the Traoré administration.
37 These ‘technical irregularities’ stemmed largely from problems with voter registrations. (see M. F. Lange, 2000, p. 242). The Constitutional Court, which was formally established on 9 March 1994, has the authority to rule on the regularity of presidential and legislative elections.
ADEMA was turned out, and the winner and current president of Mali is Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT), hero of the pro-democracy coup and former head of the transitional government, who ran as an independent.\(^{39}\)

With this landmark election, a first for Africa,\(^{40}\) Mali passed Samuel Huntington's 'two-turnover' test, his requisite for determining if democratic reforms have taken firm root.\(^{41}\) Rachel Swarns lists Mali, along with Senegal, Mauritius, and Ghana, as one of four African countries that have peacefully transferred power to elected opposition rivals since 2000.\(^{42}\) Thus, Mali has become, in addition to a model of religious tolerance for the Islamic world, a model for democratic reform for the rest of Africa as well.\(^{43}\) Numerous observers have commented that Mali’s Third Republic, despite chronic poverty and isolation, is leading the way for African nations in the throes of democratization. Eric Edi of the Independent Media Center of Philadelphia says that Mali's 2002 election 'set an example for the rest of the continent'.\(^{44}\) Le Monde described Mali as a 'showcase for democracy'.\(^{45}\) Democraf said that Mali gave the rest of Africa a lesson in good electoral conduct, having conducted a peaceful, legitimate election with 'no serious incident reported'.\(^{46}\) Democratization watchdog organisations, such as Freedom House and the Polity IV Project, have rated Mali highly.\(^{47}\) Alfred Stepan and


\(^{40}\) AllAfrica.com, ‘Mali: History Made as One Elected President Hands Over to Another’, June 7 (2002), p. 1; R. S. Taylor, ‘Alpha Oumar Konare: Getting Back to Work, World Press Review. Vol. 50, No. 10 (October 2003), p. 1. Taylor says that Konaré 'stepped aside in 2002 when his term ended, graciously passing the post to his elected successor—and thereby becoming the first democratically elected leader in Mali’s history to relinquish power to another democratically elected leader'.


\(^{44}\) Eric Edi, Op Cit. p. 2.


Graeme Robertson list Mali as a ‘Great Electoral Overachiever’ among Muslim majority countries when ranked by per-capita income.48 Larry Diamond adds:

If democracy can emerge and persist (now so far for a decade) in an extremely poor, landlocked, overwhelmingly Muslim country like Mali – in which the majority of adults are illiterate and live in absolute poverty and the life expectancy is 44 years – then there is no reason in principle why democracy cannot develop in most other very poor countries.49

One might well ask where the role of Islam is in all of this. As Sherlock Holmes notes in the short story Silver Blaze, the dog that doesn’t bark may tell us more than the dog that does bark. The fact that Islam did not play a highly visible role in the transition, nor was a major causal factor in either the Tuareg rebellion or the school crisis, tells us much. It tells us that Malians, though for the most part thoroughly Muslim, have not made Islam the focal point of their political agenda.

As noted above, Mali’s experience forces us to rethine the facile stereotype of Islam as intolerant, violent, and contrary to democratic values. In the Islamic world, religious conflict has usually been associated with one or more of three patterns: 1) sectarian strife between Muslims and Christians, as in Sudan and Nigeria, 2) one strain of Islam tries to impose its standards on other strains of Islam, as with the Taliban in Afghanistan, or 3) the secular state tries too hard to keep Islam separate from the political realm, as in Turkey. Mali has avoided all of these patterns and, as a result, has managed to escape serious religious conflict. The Christian community is too small to be a threat to Islam in Mali. The tradition of tolerance within Malian Islam moderates inter-Muslim rivalries. The state, while secular, and protective of religious minorities, does not try to deny the centrality and predominance of Islam in Mali’s culture. Recently, President Touré, along with Prime Minister Ousmane Issoufi Maïga and members of his government, attended Friday prayer at Bamako’s Grand Mosque. After readings from the Quran conducted by leaders of AMUPI and HCIM (Islamic High Council of Mali, a recently formed umbrella group of Islamic associations), the imam preached his Friday sermon (khutbah), calling for a good rainy season and a strengthening of national unity.50

In Mali, unlike in most Islamic countries that have attempted democratic transitions, Islam, rather than being part of the problem, has been part of the solution. Islam has not seriously challenged or threatened the democracy, and to the extent that Islam has played a role in the transition, it has been a supportive one. Similarly, in examining the role of Islam in Mali’s two most serious problems since the pro-democracy coup, the Tuareg rebellion and the school crisis, Islam either plays no role or has a moderating effect. Neither of these challenges had a major Islamic dimension. While the Tuareg are, of course, Muslims, their rebellion was over political, ethnic, and development issues, not religious differences. And while Quranic education has always been a feature of education in modern Mali,

48 Alfred Stepan & Graeme B. Robinson, Ibid, p. 34.
the school crisis was not over religious instruction or lack thereof. Islam, with respect to the democratic transition, has been the dog that doesn’t bark.

**Muslim Support for Mali’s Democratic Transition**

A study that compared attitudes towards democracy by religious identity in four African countries shows that in Mali, Muslims express more support for democracy than do non-Muslims.\(^{51}\) Muslim support for democracy was evident in Mali from the very beginning. A large contingent of *marabouts* marched in the victory celebrations in the capital the day that the arrest of President Traoré was announced, passing by the reviewing stand holding up open copies of the Quran.\(^{52}\) Religious leaders also participated in Mali’s national conference of 1990, along with leaders of civic organisations, including student groups, women’s groups, and labour unions.\(^{53}\) Since 1991 coup, the democratic regime has enjoyed the support of Muslim leaders, who have, by and large, refrained from fomenting religious tension and have, indeed, participated in conflict resolution. A distinct lack of religious tension has characterised church-state relations during the transition to democracy.

One major reason why Islam now works in Mali, and less so in Sudan and Nigeria, is that it is tied to civil society and has become part of the decision making process.\(^{54}\) Bréhima Touré, a Malian journalist, recently credited the role of Islamic associations, especially AMUPI, for maintaining peaceful and constructive relations between the government and the Muslim community. He said that President Konaré, speaking at the January 2002 consultative congress for the formation of the Islamic High Council of Mali (HCIM), also noted that Mali has been spared the religious conflicts caused elsewhere by hatred and intolerance. He credited Mali’s traditional values of tolerance and mutual respect, adding that these values have also characterised Malian Islam, resulting in Mali escaping the destructive religious conflicts recently common in other African countries.\(^{55}\) Anecdotal incidents of religious-based violence have been reported in recent years, in particular, two clashes that occurred in 1998. Though tragic, these episodes are in no way typical and were sharply criticised by mainstream Muslim leaders.\(^{56}\)

Malian Islam is better represented by the Islamic associations, especially the umbrella groups that speak on their behalf, including AMUPI and HCIM. The elder of these two groups, AMUPI, enjoys wide respect and authority in Mali, partly due to its strict policy of political neutrality. Because of its reputation for

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\(^{52}\) A home videotape in my collection shows *marabouts* marching in the victory parade of March 26, 1991.

\(^{53}\) Andrew F. Clark, *Op Cit*, p. 260.

\(^{54}\) AFP, ‘Les religieux s’invitent dans la campagne électorale’ (2002), p. 1


\(^{56}\) On April 28, some 300 Muslims attacked Christian missionaries and NGO workers in Menaka in the Region of Gao, inflicting some injuries. Reports indicated that the incident was apparently touched off by the showing of a film on the life of Jesus. Local Islamic leaders severely criticized the attack. On August 29, a Muslim extremist group called the ‘*pied nus*’ or ‘bare feet’, raided a jail in Diola to free some of their imprisoned members. Police forces subsequently engaged the fleeing extremist *pied nus*, killing eleven of them (U.S. Department of State [1999], pp. 2-3).
political neutrality, the AMUPI is represented on Mali’s National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI). The HCIM, though non-governmental, was formed with government support at a consultative congress at the Palais du Congres in Bamako in January of 2002. Its mission is to coordinate the affairs of all the Islamic associations in Mali and to serve as an intercessor between Islamic associations and the government. Officially it is the most senior Islamic body in the country, and most Muslim groups recognise its authority. One of the official responsibilities of HCIM is to regulate radical preaching by ‘false devotees’ of Islam, especially on radio. Though some Muslim leaders present at the HCIM consultative congress openly called for the establishment of an Islamic state in Mali, this view was not supported by most representatives present at the congress, or by AMUPI. President Konaré, for his part, speaking at the congress, condemned Islamic extremist violence, from the attacks of 9/11 to murders of women and children by Muslim insurgents in Algeria.

Some Islamic leaders do take partisan stands on political issues. During the 2002 election campaign, a collective of some 20 Islamic associations openly expressed support for presidential candidate Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, urging their followers to vote for him. Several imams, prayer leaders at Friday mosques, urged support for Keita from their pulpits, and the collective spent money on radio endorsements of him. The majority of Mali’s Muslim leaders, however, did not support this endorsement. Issiaka Traoré, president of AMUPI, officially declared his group’s neutrality in the election. He rejected the call of the collective for support for Keita saying, ‘Nous avons demandé á chacun de voter pour le candidat de son choix’ (‘we asked each voter to vote for the candidate of his/her choice’). HCIM similarly rejected the call of the collective’s imams, declaring its neutrality as well. So while some Muslim leaders were prepared to support Keita in the presidential race, the mainstream leadership was not willing to endorse any candidate.

The value of political neutrality is widely recognised by the Muslim leadership. In particular, AMUPI leaders have stressed that abandoning its neutrality could cost the group its representation on the Electoral Commission (CENI). AMUPI representation on the CENI reflects the participation of Islamic

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61 Bréhima Touré, Op Cit, p. 2.
63 AFP, Op Cit, p. 1.
64 Jean-François Mayer, Op Cit, p. 2; AFP, Op Cit, pp. 1-2.
65 Keita (IBK), leading a splinter group of ADEMA, came in third in the first round of the presidential election, narrowly missing a spot in the runoff to Soumaila Cissé, ADEMA’s official candidate. Cissé subsequently lost in the runoff to ATT, who ran as an independent.
associations and Muslim leaders in the broader civil society that has emerged so dramatically since the fall of the single-party state. This expansion of civil society has been mirrored in a similar growth in the number of Islamic associations in Mali from fewer than a dozen in 1991 to more than 150 in 2002. As will be discussed below, the participation of Islamic leadership in decision making processes, as part of the broader civil society, has played a significant role in conflict resolution, which in turn has helped preserve Mali’s democratic transition.

The Role of Mali’s Islamic Leadership in Conflict Resolution

AMUPI President Traoré expressed the Islamic leadership’s commitment to a role in Malian civil society, saying, ‘Nous insérons notre action dans le cadre de la société civile, pour mieux jouer notre rôle d’arbitre et de médiateur en cas de crise’ (‘we place our action within the framework of civil society, the better to play our role of arbiter and mediator in case of a crisis’). Traoré, who served as the head of the Division of Religious Affairs within the Ministry of the Interior during the Konaré administration, stressed that Islam’s role in Mali is to promote amity and peaceful relations among the various sectors of society. The International Monetary Fund includes AMUPI on an official list of Malian civil society organisations. Representatives of AMUPI are called in periodically by government agencies to help resolve civic and religious conflicts. We will now examine the role of Islamic leadership, as part of the broader civil society, in the two major crises to challenge the Mali’s democratic administrations.

Perhaps, the most serious challenge to Mali’s democratic transition was the Tuareg rebellion in the country’s northern regions that broke out in 1990. It bedeviled the last months of the Traoré regime, eluded resolution under the transition government, and persisted until the mid-1990s, severely testing the democratic administration of Alpha Konaré. Its roots lay in what the Tuareg considered systematic neglect of the northern regions by the centralised single-party state. Islam was not a causal factor, but Muslim leaders played a role in its ultimate resolution in March of 1996, which has become a model for conflict resolution in Africa. While ethnic based conflicts have threatened to tear other regional states apart, including Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire, Mali’s Tuareg rebellion was resolved largely through the intercession of civil society, including Islamic associations and Muslim leaders.

The breakthrough came as a result of a series of regional conferences called ‘concertations’. In a speech in June1994, President Konaré called for ‘a series of regional ‘concertations’ in which every current of opinion will be able to express its views’, the purpose of which was to ‘seek the necessary consensus to achieve the transformations which we have started’. Beginning in mid-August,

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66 Jean-François Mayer, Op Cit, p. 2.
67 AFP, Op Cit, p 1.
these concertations were convened throughout the country, seventeen in all, to allow the public to express its will on national reconciliation and peace in the North. The concertations were modeled on the national conference phenomenon that had played a major role on the early phases of democratic transitions in many African countries, including Mali. As many scholars have observed, these concertations, like the earlier national conferences, tapped into a traditional African political pattern known as consensus democracy. They were open to everyone, traditional leaders of various ethnic groups, members of student groups, women’s groups, labour unions, democratic associations, professional organisations, NGOs, local government officials, as well as religious notables. Their purpose was not to make decisions, but rather to air grievances and precipitate national brainstorming on the rebellion and other pressing national issues. The concertations lasted typically from two days to one week. They were each guided by a facilitator, with the idea of achieving a consensus. The regional meetings were summed up by a national concertation at Bamako that included participants of the regional concertations, government officials, parliamentarians, and leaders of civil society groups, including Islamic associations. The concertation process, especially the national concertation at Bamako, represented a reprise of the national conference of 1991, which was itself based on the African tradition of consensus building through community dialogue.

The success of the concertations led to the use of similar methods focused specifically on the northern conflict. A new round of peace initiatives began in November of 1994, started by leaders of civic groups, buoyed by their successes during the regional concertations. The idea was to hold inter-community meetings, modeled after the regional concertations, and based on the traditional models of inter-ethnic complimentarity and consensus building. These meetings were large local gatherings held throughout the North, including civil society groups, traditional leaders, former refugees, and members of the rebel movements. Tuareg religious leaders, as well as members of Islamic associations from other parts of the country, also participated. Konaré endorsed this initiative, but, realising that his government’s active involvement might cause the Tuareg movements to become suspicious, he wisely held back. While the inter-community meetings, using the consensus process, were working on ceasefire arrangements, Konaré’s government

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72 George B.N. Ayittey provides a good, concise description of the traditional pattern of consensus democracy and articulates it to the role of consensus in the modern national conference phenomenon. See George B.N. Ayittey Africa in Chaos (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1999), pp. 313-314.
75 European Centre for Conflict Prevention, ‘How the Touareg rebellion came to an end: Peacemaking by consensus in Mali’ People Building Peace: 35 Inspiring Stories from around the World (1999), p. 3.
77 Konaré withdrew some troops from the North and ordered others confined to barracks. Regional government authorities were ordered to stand down and not interfere with the delicate process. See Kåre Lode (2002a), p.7.
made plans to repatriate refugees, integrate former combatants into the army, police and civil service and decommission weapons.\textsuperscript{78}

Elements of the Malian peace process included, in addition to the involvement of civil society and religious leadership, reconciliation through mediation by national and international figures, decentralisation of governance, disarmament, demobilisation, and re-integration of former combatants.\textsuperscript{79} Mediation and reconciliation, as well as promises of more equitable distribution of state resources, helped create the conditions for bringing peace. Disarmament and reintegration of rebel fighters brought the process to culmination. MFUA (United Fronts and Movements of Azawad), the umbrella group of Tuareg resistance movements formed for the peace talks, began implementation of the repatriation and reintegration agreements.\textsuperscript{80} The entire process culminated with the symbolic ‘Flame of Peace’ ceremony in Timbuktu on March 27, 1996, where President Konaré set fire to a pile of more than 3,000 surrendered small arms.\textsuperscript{81}

Mali’s second greatest challenge to its democratic tradition was the crise scolaire, or ‘school crisis’ that threatened to destabilise the democratic government from its inception in 1990 to its resolution in 2001. Here again, Islam did not present as a rallying point for the protesting students or their leadership, but rather leaders and members of Islamic associations, as part of the broader civil society, played a role in bringing the crisis under control. The school crisis was part of a larger, continent-wide phenomenon, which saw student protests against austerity measures that had slashed education budgets and student scholarships.\textsuperscript{82} The conditions that gave rise to the school crisis included the poor state of repair of many of the schools. Reports of broken windows, holes in roofs, broken toilets, and broken furniture were common, as were chronic shortages of basic educational materials, not only texts and maps, but even chalk. Added to these inadequacies were things like budget cuts imposed by structural adjustment programs, split-day and oversized classes, lack of proper training and supervision of teachers, and unsatisfactory evaluation standards.\textsuperscript{83} Deeper problems included the fact that many students were not benefiting from their diplomas because of a lack of jobs in the fields for which they were being prepared.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{78} Mali’s ‘Security First’ Approach to Conflict Resolution and Development, n.d., p. 1; Malian Experience, 2000, p. 2; Kare Lode, (2002a), pp. 7-8.

\textsuperscript{79} European Centre for Conflict Prevention, Op Cit, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{80} ‘Malian Civil War: 1990-1996’, OnWar.com, 2000, p. 1; Security First, n.d., p. 1; ‘Tuareg Chronology’ Center for International Development and Conflict Management. Minorities at Risk Project. n.d., p. 9. Azawad is the word for Mali’s northern regions in Tamasshek, the Tuareg language. By late 1994, some 7,000 Tuareg fighters were re-integrated into the army, police, and civil service. In 1995, 3,000 more fighters accepted the process of re-integration, and another 10,000 did so in 1996, exchanging their weapons for reinsertion into civilian life.

\textsuperscript{81} European Centre for Conflict Prevention, Op Cit, p. 5; Kare Lode, (2002a), p. 8. Ghana’s Jerry Rawlings, then ECOWAS chair, and leaders of MFUA, as well as delegations of international observers were present.

\textsuperscript{82} Carline J. Edie, Politics in Africa: A New Beginning? New York: Wadsworth (2003), p. 124. Typically, these protests were met with harsh measures from governments, including university closures, often for extended periods. Mali’s school crisis differed from these broader educational crises in that it spread to the secondary, in some cases even primary, levels, in contrast to the rest of the continent where such strife was centered in the universities.


\textsuperscript{84} Drissa Diakité, Ibid, p. 9.
Another dimension of the crisis was the student unrest provoked by the conditions in the schools. A new student organisation, the Malian Association of Pupils and Students (AEEM), founded in October of 1990, a few months before the pro-democracy coup, gained legitimacy through its support of the coup and the transitional government.\(^\text{85}\) It was AEEM that originally called attention to what became known as the school crisis. Increasingly, however, their excessive methods and tactics became a part of the crisis. Examples of excessive AEEM tactics included repeated disruptions of the educational process by students at the secondary and post-secondary levels, numerous protests, sometimes violent, and strikes and boycotts.\(^\text{86}\) The agitation reached a new high in April of 1993 when students ravaged and set fire to the National Assembly. Clearly, the level of violence had become destabilising, severely challenging Mali’s democracy. The students were angered by the failure of the democratic government to deliver on economic promises.\(^\text{87}\) By February 1994, student violence had resulted in indefinite closure of all secondary and post-secondary schools in Mali.\(^\text{88}\)

The school crisis peaked during the 1997-98 academic year. Continuing violent actions by students were met with draconian measures by the government, including preventive detentions for student leaders and more school closures. In December, new student strikes began over AEEM demands for a 75% increase in government spending on education. The government countered that such an increase would jeopardise Mali’s structural adjustment commitments. In January, the government ordered all public and private schools in the country shut down, a move that nearly wrecked the entire 1997-98 school year.\(^\text{89}\) The crisis also fueled the opposition’s election boycott of 1997, and again threatened to derail Mali’s democratic transition.\(^\text{90}\) Mali’s school crisis began to wind down in 2001, as the Konaré administration agreed to raise student stipends and augment the education budget by 27%, helping to diffuse the tension.\(^\text{91}\) In addition, the government’s ongoing decentralisation initiative contributed to a resolution, as locally elected communal councils gained control of commune tax revenues and could budget money for local schools.\(^\text{92}\) Finally AEEM Secretary General, Mahamoudou Aldianabangou, called for an end to the school crisis on March 10, 2001.\(^\text{93}\)

\(^\text{85}\) M. Bertrand, ‘Un an de transition politique: de la révolte a la troisième république’, \textit{Politique Africaine}, (1992), Vol. 47, pp. 10-11. The legitimacy of AEEM came from three factors: 1) the number of student martyrs during the ‘events’; 2) the presence of student leaders in the transitional organs, such as the CTSP and the national conference; and 3) their persistent demands for the setting of national priorities. AEEM’s leader was medical student Oumar Mariko (Green, Kathryn L.’ ‘Mali: Amadou Toumany Toure, Interim Head of State’ (New York: Current Leaders, 1991), p. 2.


\(^\text{88}\) Tuareg Chronology, n.d., p. 7.

\(^\text{89}\) Tuareg Chronology, n.d., p. 12


Notably absent in this crisis atmosphere is a religious dimension, often so prominently featured in educational conflicts in other countries, both Muslim and Christian. For example, neither AEEM nor the mainstream Islamic leadership chose to complicate the crisis by inserting demands for expanded Quranic education in the public schools. In fact, Quranic education has been a feature of Malian education, both public and private, since colonial times. To the extent that Islam and Muslim leadership were involved in the school crisis, they exercised, as was the case during the Tuareg rebellion, a moderating influence. Muslim leaders and associations, as part of civil society, moved to get in between the government and the students to try to restore calm and order. Privately funded medersas (Muslim confessional schools) helped provide alternatives for frustrated parents who were tired of the continual disruptions and strikes in the public schools and the government’s seeming inability to deal with the situation. Medersas, as well as Catholic schools and private secular schools proliferated in the urban areas during the period of the school crisis as more and more parents were pulling their children out of the troubled public schools. Indeed, radical Muslims, who in other countries would have relished such an opportunity to press their agendas in the educational arena, seemed conspicuous by their absence. Again, as was the case with the Tuareg rebellion, the school crisis appears to have lacked altogether an Islamic dimension. What little Muslim involvement there was was of a mollifying and moderating nature. These moderating efforts by Muslims, as part of the broader civil society, helped contain and resolve the school crisis, thus averting another major threat to Mali’s democratic transition.

Conclusion

The Muslim presence in Mali dates back more than a thousand years. While it had a political dimension from the beginning, and exerted a dominant influence in the political arena in the mid to late nineteenth century, Islam’s net impact on political development in Mali seems to have been constructive rather than destructive. Islam provided literate scholars, bureaucrats and diplomats to support political development, as well as skilled merchants and economic models to stimulate commercial growth. Only during the Umarian period did a radical Islamic theocracy seize the reins of power. More typical has been Islam’s role as a moderating and unifying factor, a facilitator in conflict resolution, and a voice for tolerance in Malian history. This role as moderating influence and facilitator of conflict resolution has continued into Mali’s democratic transition. Muslim support of the democracy began with the visible show of support by Malian marabouts who marched in the victory parade celebrating the fall of the dictatorship and the participation of Muslim leaders in the national conference of 1991. It continued with the public position of political neutrality taken by AMUPI and HCIM. It is also evident in the participation of religious leaders in civil society, including representation of Muslim leadership on governmental bodies such as the Electoral Commission and the participation of Islamic notables in consensus building.

94 The French were forced by public opinion to create the system of Ecoles Franco-Arabes, which featured Quranic education in the morning sessions and French-style secular curricula in the afternoon sections. This solution was the only way that most Malian parents could be convinced to send their children to the French schools (Harmon, 1988, Chapter 4).
95 Robert B. Charlick and Susanna D. Wing, Op Cit, p. 5.
processes like the regional concertations. It can also be found in the criticism leveled by mainstream Muslim leaders at the anecdotal incidents of Islamic violence that have punctuated recent Malian history, as well as in these leaders’ rejection of calls for an Islamic state. It is likewise apparent in the distinctive lack of Islamic dimensions in Mali’s two most serious challenges to its democratic transition, the Tuareg rebellion and the school crisis.

Some scholars do see in the past two years the possible emergence of a trend towards radical Islam in Mali. Nicolas Colombant argues that ‘hard line Islam’ is on the rise in Mali after ten years of democracy. He says that Muslim activists have become the government’s main critics, noting that imams of some Friday mosques criticise the government’s failure to deal with chronic corruption and poverty. Some imams have openly called for the creation of an Islamic state, including some who voiced such opinions at the opening conference of the HCIM. Reportedly, two women journalists were attacked at the conference because they were not wearing headscarves. Some imams have openly called for the creation of an Islamic state, including some who voiced such opinions at the opening conference of the HCIM. Colombant and other observers note the huge increase in the number of Islamic associations since 1991. This proliferation may merely reflect the general expansion of civil society since the fall of the dictatorship. Or it may reflect a trend toward a more activist strain of Islam in Mali.

Whether or not we are witnessing a radicalisation of domestic Islam, there is some evidence that foreign extremists are establishing a presence in Mali. Recently, all the Sahelian states, Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad, have been seen as vulnerable to penetration by extremists because they have borders with radical neighbours, including Algeria, Libya and Sudan. At least one al-Qaeda-linked figure from Algeria, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, has been active in Mali and Mauritania near the Algerian border. Malian troops have pursued Belmokhtar and his partisans, but have made no arrests. In particular, the Malian region of Kidal, formerly a centre of the Tuareg rebellion, has been suspected of being the site of activities of Islamic extremists and proselytisers. Kidal’s border with Algeria is porous because it lacks a consistent army presence. Paul Marshall of Freedom House’s Center for Religious Freedom lists Mali as one of several West African countries experiencing Islamist unrest’ provoked by extremists from abroad. U.S. State Department officials have likewise noted the operations of foreign Islamist preachers in Kidal. However, they believe that these clerics attract few followers because, ‘their fundamentalist views clash with the country’s traditional approach to Islam’. Colombant, who feels more strongly than do most analysts that there is a trend towards radical Islam in Mali, argues that this trend is due to continuing poverty and the perceived inability of the democratic government to address it. He mentions that some Malian hard line groups have accepted funds

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99 Jean François Mayer (*Ibid*, p.3) notes that portraits of Ousama bin Laden appeared in Mali in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. However, Mayer sees these portraits as more a rejection of western influence and disapproval of the Malian government’s hasty agreement to join the U.S. let war on terror, rather than real support for al-Qaeda.
from Saudi donors to support their Islamist agenda.\textsuperscript{103} Indeed, Muslims of Mali, like those of many West African countries, have accepted Saudi funds for the support of mosques and medersas for years. And while Saudi-trained preachers, usually of Wahhabi persuasion, often come attached to these funds, it is not clear that such links with Saudi Islamists indicate a rise in Muslim extremism in Mali. Nonetheless, USAID has, in recent years, increased development for Mali’s northern regions, believing that poverty makes Malian Muslims susceptible to foreign extremists.\textsuperscript{104}

Signs of an upsurge in activist, political Islam in Mali have appeared in recent years, including increases in the number of Islamic associations, some partisan political involvement by imams, muted calls for an Islamic state, and even the presence of foreign extremists and proselytisers, some with alleged links to al-Qaeda, in Mali’s Northern regions. Yet, these signs do not prove that conclusively, if at all, that Islamist extremism has taken firm root among mainstream Malian Muslims. On the contrary, spokesmen for AMUPI and HCIM have rejected political endorsements and calls for an Islamic state. The President of AMUPI bitterly condemned the 9/11 attacks ‘a shock to all humanity.’\textsuperscript{105} So far, at least, it appears that Mali’s tradition of tolerant, moderate Islam seems to be holding fast, and that Islam will continue to be a central aspect of Malian culture and society, including civil society, but not a major agitating factor in the country’s political, economic, ethnic, and social problems. Despite a few tragic episodes, the level of religious strife in post-coup Mali has never approached destabilising proportions.

There is, however, an even more serious and on-going challenge to Malian democracy, one that has received scant attention in this study, namely the chronic poverty of the majority of Mali’s citizens, urban and rural, Muslim and non-Muslim. It was this poverty and the resultant frustration felt by Malians towards their governments, whether dictatorial or democratic, neither of which has been able to deal with it effectively, that underscored the other challenges. Poverty was a factor in the Tuareg rebellion because of the neglect that the Tuareg felt as the dictatorial regimes tended to funnel foreign aid to the more populous southern parts of the country. The transitional and democratic regimes displayed, at first, little likelihood of doing otherwise. Poverty also drove the school crisis as students became angry over cuts in education budgets and chronic joblessness, even among those who did receive an education. And poverty seems to be listed as the likely cause of the recent rise in Islamist extremism in Mali, if there is one. Observers who have commented on the possible growth of radical Islam, including Nicholas Colombant and USAID, have consistently cited poverty as the probable cause.

Islam has emerged as a powerful social mobiliser in countries where secular mobilisers failed to deliver on promises. Mali’s democratic transition emerged as an exciting new social mobiliser, and hopes were high that the democracy could succeed in generating jobs where the dictatorship had failed. If the democracy is unable to address chronic poverty and generate meaningful, widespread economic growth, Mali will continue to be at risk for social crises like ethnic based rebellions or student protests. Likewise, failure to address endemic poverty may yet generate genuine radical Islamic movements in Mali. Religious

\textsuperscript{103} Nicholas Colombant, \textit{Op Cit}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{104} Christine Holzbaur, \textit{Op Cit}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{105} S. Dembele, 2001, p. 2.
social mobilisers may replace secular social mobilisers, leading to enchantment of the public realm, as well as to more strident calls for an Islamic state and increased popular support for outside Islamic influences. Such social and/or religious crises could yet derail Mali’s democracy.

Until that time, however, Mali continues to provide a political model for democratic development in Africa and a religious model for the entire Islamic world. It is a model of an overwhelmingly Muslim nation striving to meet secular ambitions without giving itself over to intolerance and extremism. This model of a tolerant, non-violent version Islam exercising a moderating influence within a secular state is the result of deliberate institution building, reliance on traditional recipes for consensus and decision-making, and the incorporation of Islam into civil society. It is certain that Islam will remain central to Malian identity and a dominant force in the social and cultural realms. Whether it will continue to exercise a low-key presence and a moderating influence in the political realm or whether it will start to bark, and even bite, remains to be seen.

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November 20.


RELIGION AND CITIZENSHIP IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: THE POLITICS OF SHARI’AH

By Hussaini Abdu

Abstract

The introduction of Shari’ah law in 12 Northern Nigerian states provoked widespread national and international controversy. This paper examines the interface between religion, particularly Shari’ah law, in Northern Nigeria, and citizenship. It argues that years of authoritarian military rule, economic crisis and adjustment, and the uncertainties of democratic transition have combined to transform religious identity and enhanced its political potency. Shari’ah, as practised in some of these states, violates several citizenship rights, especially rights of religious minorities, women’s rights, and has exacerbated settler-indigene conflicts in many states in the northern Nigeria, resulting in violent ethno-religious conflicts in others.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the politics of religion, especially the implementation of Shari’ah legal system in northern Nigeria and its implications for citizenship. Our focal arguments are that although the Shari’ah is not a new issue in the politics of northern Nigeria, its emerging trend is a reflection of Nigerian pre-colonial and colonial history and how they influence the character and dynamics of the post colonial Nigerian state. Religion as a fundamental national question, rises deep-seated question of citizenship some times bordering on ‘secularity’ of the Nigerian state, rights of religious minorities, gender equality, women’s rights among others.

Nigeria has since the 1980s been experiencing growing religiosity, fundamentalism and conflict. Consequently, religious intolerance and conflicts have increased, with northern Nigeria as the epicenter of such conflicts. Shari’ah, one of such religious issues that took the nation by storm since 1999, has deepened the hullabaloo on Nigerian national question and citizenship. The paper attempts to respond to one pertinent question; to what extent does shari’ah implementation impact on citizenship in northern Nigeria?

The paper is divided into five parts. This introduction is immediately followed by conceptual and theoretical framework which captures the interface between religion and citizenship. The sec’tion on

1 Hussaini Abdu is with the Centre for Development Research and Advocacy, Kaduna, Nigeria.
background to religion and politics in northern Nigeria provides in
historical perspective a social characterization of northern Nigeria and
examines how the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history of
Nigeria influences religious identity and politics in the region. Part
four focuses on the history and dynamics of the politics of *Shari‘ah* in
Nigeria, while the fifth section dwells on how *Shari‘ah* influences
citizenship in northern Nigeria.

**Religion and Citizenship: Conceptual and Theoretical Nexus**

The history and essence of religion is still a subject of intellectual debate. Classical
writings on religion have not been able to grapple with the whole essence of
religion; the writings of Durkheim, Weber and Marx on religion, even though
relevant in several contexts, have been argued to be deficient in explaining
contemporary religious trends especially in the third world (Barrett 1991).
According to the classical thoughts, religion is epiphenomena and society
projected. Durkhein, in his study of religion, concludes that God is society. ‘The
worship of God is nothing more than the worship of society, which has the
function of creating solidarity and preserving society’ (Barrett 1991; 9). This,
according to Barrett presents religion as functional, conservative and sources of
shared values of society. For Weber, religion is essentially concerned with the
problem of meaning, human destiny, life and death, suffering and justice (Barrett;
1991). Marx, like Durkhein construed religion to be society projected, a false
reflection of an alienated man and opiate of the people.

Scholars have developed a renewed interest in religion. Bangura (1994)
viewed religion from two related, yet distinct ways. First is the
material aspect which includes the religious establishment (institutions
and officials), social groups and movements whose operations are
within religious concern. Second is the spiritual aspect, which is about
models of social and individual behaviors that help believers to
organize their every day lives. In this sense, religion has to do with
the idea of transcendence i.e. supernatural realities that are considered
sacred and treated with intimacy (Bangura; 1994).

As an identity, religion is about solidarity and setting of boundaries
between those who are considered to be believers and those that are
not. This deals with issues of sentiments, feelings and norms that may
be a result of shared experiences. This identity is used to create sense
of orders, meaning and hope to the insecurity of everyday life or to
what may be perceived as unjust social order (Bangura 1994).

Slightly different from religion, Citizenship is essentially a contested
and historically defined concept and practice. There is yet to be a
universally acceptable definition of citizenship. The difficulty in
arriving at an exhaustive and comprehensive definition of citizenship
led to a common refrain running through literature, reflecting complex
political, moral, social, and ethical issues concerning the individual’s
relationship to the state and the wider society (Lister 1997). HT Marshall arguably provides the starting point of modern revival of interest in the discourse of citizenship. His definition of citizenship is a major departure from the classical conception of early political thinkers and philosophers. Marshall classified citizenship into three components. Each of the components has its historical relevance. First, the civil places emphasizes on the attainment of individual freedom and rights; like freedom of speech, right to own property and the right to justice. The political component entails right to participate in the exercise of political power, particularly the right to free elections and secret ballot (Turner 2001). The social component consists of rights to some economic and social welfare and security to rights to share social heritage and live the life of civilized being.

Marshall’s conception of citizenship has been variously criticized. Important among the criticisms is that his conception of citizenship did not take cognizance of heterogeneous and plural societies or treated them as not so important when compared to social class division. Principally, his definition did not attempt explaining ethnic, religious, or racial divisions in relation to national citizenship.

Like Marshall, Tilly (1996) viewed citizenship from four different perspectives; as a category, role, tie and identity:

As a category, citizenship designate asset of actors-citizens- distinguished by their shared privileged position vis-à-vis some particular state. As a tie, citizenship identifies an enforceable mutual relation between an actor and the state agents. As a role, citizenship includes all of an actor’s relations to others that depend on the actor’s relations to a particular state. And as an identity, citizenship can refer to the experience and public presentation of category, tie or role (Tilly, 1996; 8)

However, Tilly noted that for theoretical and historical clarity, citizenship should be confined to certain kind of tie, ‘a continuing series of transactions between persons and agents of a given state in which each has enforceable rights and obligations uniquely by virtue of (i) person’s membership in an exclusive category, the native-born plus the naturalized and (ii) the agent’s relation to the state rather than any other authority the agent enjoy’ (Tilly 1996; 8).

Kymlicka and Norman (2000) provide another perspective to the explanation of citizenship. They conceive citizenship in three different ideas and phenomenon. First it is a legal status defined mainly by panoply of civil, political and social rights with some responsibilities and duties like obedience of law, payment of tax. Second, it is an Identity, as a member of one or more political community, an identity that is often contracted with her more particular identities like class, race, religion, gender profession etcetera and lastly it is an activity or civic virtues.
From the foregoing discussions, citizenship at the individual level can be seen as a social constract between a person within a political community and the state and the rights and obligations for those who are included in the list of members of such community.

Religion and citizenship are both social constructions and have the tendency to exclude. For citizenship there are differential treatment for citizens and non-citizens. Citizenship affects people’s identity by drawing boundaries that are visible on maps or by colour of people’s skin, ethnic background or religion. Like citizenship, Religion provides for differential treatment for members and non-members of a given faith. In northern Nigeria, two fundamental issues made religion a focal issue in the discourse of citizenship. First is Nigeria’s colonial experience and the binary construction of citizenship and second is the mutually reinforcing nature of religion and ethnicity.

First, the colonial state in all intents and action is a divisive state; its structure was predicated on the logic of dualism of spatial, laws and territorial segregation (Adejumobi 2001). Mamdani (1996) and Ekeh (1975) provide incisive interventions on how colonialism instituted two public or bifurcated states. Ekeh argues that colonialism created two public; an amoral civic public from which one expect benefit but, which is not important in one’s definition of citizenship and two a moral primordial public defined in terms of one’s ethnic group which relation is determined in terms of duties, with strong moral and emotional attachment to such duties. In a related argument Mamdani (1996) examined how colonialism through indirect rule created two legal regimes (one civil and the other customary) and fostered what he called ‘bifurcated state’ or ‘decentralized despotism’ in the social construction of power. In social construction of power, the seat of civic power expressed through civic law was the central state. Although it claims universal rights, the rights are exclusive preserves of the people of the metropolitan origin. Natives were placed under native authority whose power was expressed through a regime of customary law. The colonial state therefore created two distinct citizens: Civic citizens and ethnic citizens or natives. Important implication of this was the construction of fermented ethnic and religious identity which has continued to gain ascendance in national political discourses.

Secondly, religion and ethnic identity are mutually reinforcing. There seem to be a thin dividing line between religion and ethnic identity. Relevant examples include how Roman Catholicism became an integral part of Polish solidarity as against Lutheran Germans, the differentiation between Serbs and Croats provided by Catholicism and Orthodoxy respectively, and the availability of ethnic Churches in the United States (Egwu, 2001; 23).

The interpenetration of ethnicity and religion is more relevant in Nigeria. Studies have shown how ethnic identity and religious allegiance overlap. For instance, Karstfelt (1994 cited Egwu 2001) shows how the Christian religion became an essential component in the definition of ethnic identity among Bachama people and other minority ethnic groups in Adamawa State. Salamane (1991) demonstrates how religions provided means of shaping ethnic identity in the resistance to outside
forces of domination by Hausa, Kambari and Dukuk (Hume) in the pre-colonial Yauri Province (Salamane, 1991; Egwu, 2001). Islamic religion has provided a primary element in the definition of Hausa ethnicity. According to Adamu (1978), the criteria for Hausa identity are broad, and include such as historical claims, cultural traits and social values as well as language and religion. Out of these criteria Islam has been identified to be a ‘powerful social landmark in the acculturation frontier of the Hausa both at home and in migration’ (Adamu, 1978; 3). Paden, also, demonstrated the role of Islam in acculturation and assimilation of ethnic groups into Hausa and the widespread of Hausa as a *lingua franca*. The implication of these is that beyond the ethnic definition of citizenship in some states, religion plays an important role in such definition of citizenship.

**Religion and Politics in Northern Nigeria**

There is always a close relation between religion and politics in most parts of the world. According to Eades (1991), they both involve systems of values, beliefs and systems of action, which are justified in terms of these values and beliefs. In this case, religion lays down fundamental principles of political action and legal relationships between rulers and subjects. In Nigeria, scholars (Eades 1991, Danbazau, 1993, Kukah 1993, Emwen 1995, Mu‘azzam and Jibrin 2000) have demonstrated the relationship between religion and politics and the increasing politicization of religion in the country. Northern Nigeria, like the larger Nigerian state and society is a colonial creation, while the relationship between the diverse communities may predate colonialism, its contemporary definition and dynamics, although still a subject of contention, is a colonial creation. There are strong controversies surrounding what constitute northern Nigeria. Religion, ethnicity, geography, history and culture have variously been used by contending groups to define northern Nigeria. Our conception is simply reduced to *Shari‘ah* implementing states that are located in the areas covering the defunct North Region of the country. They are: Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano, Kaduna, Jigawa, Borno, Bauchi, Yobe, Gombe and Niger.

Three historical and socio-economic developments have combined to shape contemporary dynamics of religion and politics in northern Nigeria. First is the pre-colonial and colonial history of the area. Unlike most other parts of Nigeria, these northern states have a relatively recent history of theocracy: The Sokoto Caliphate and the Kanem Borno were all strong Islamic states before they fell into the hands of British colonial powers (Gwandu 2001). Even under colonialism, these parts of the north remained under strong influence of Islam and gave definition and stability to its social system (Coleman, 1986).

The character of the colonial state also reinforces the division and created series of religious and ethnic platforms that continued to gain
relevance and ascendance even in post-colonial period. The state produced a ruling class with relatively weak economic base and therefore gravitated towards the state in order to achieve economic power. Access to government resources is a major means of acquiring both political and economic power. Graf (1988) rightly observed that,

Since wealth was largely a function of government office, politics centred around competition for positions and political activities were geared to gaining access to state power and the allocation of revenue and patronage connected with it (Graf 1988: 18).

It is in the context of this competition that religion often reinforced by ethnicity became potent weapons of political competition to access the state and its resources. The state therefore became central to political and economic activities. Control of state was important for social consolidation of class dominance. The post-colonial northern Nigeria was therefore influenced to a large extent by religion. Under both military and civil rule, religion has continued to gain prominence in political discourse and competition.

The long years of military authoritarian rule and its resultant centralization of governance structure and national resources, contributed in sharpening religious identities. Like any military administration, Nigerian military governments since 1966 operated a centralized system based on hierarchy of tier of government in which the centre occupies the upper echelon, and instruction flows from above. This centralized mode of administration eroded the autonomy supposed to be enjoyed by the state and local government. This, coupled with the increasing economic crisis occasioned by the implementation of Strategic Adjustment Program further deepened religious identity and politics since early 1980s. The socio-economic conditions of SAP made religious question and conflict inevitable. First, the state became authoritarian and intolerant of opposition; so much the even religious issues are sometimes violently suppressed. Secondly, the economic crisis undermined the capacity of the state to provide welfare services to the populace, and the legitimacy of the state was therefore called to question as various groups began to device strategies and mechanism for coping with the deteriorating economic environment and the social cost (Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996). The inability of the state to meet its previous obligation sharpened religious cleavages, resulting into gradual putrefaction of the state, leading into mass retreat from the state and behind the psycho-social protection of religion and its institutions (Adekanye 1995). Thirdly, with the reduction of the resources to be accessed by the ruling class, there was need to mobilize some primordial and popular sentiment like religion and ethnicity to get to the resources and outplay other groups. This rejuvenated religious identity and solidarity and its mobilization to serve political and economic ends (Olukoshi and Agbu, 1996). It has rightly been observed that:
In a situation such as that of SAP regime and the
government’s adoption of extremely harsh,
contradictory, repressive and conservative policies,
combined with dubious programme of transition to
democracy, the youth, elite and even some key
political figures identified themselves with religious
movements and issues. The level of corruption
exacerbated by SAP and the skewing of the spoils of
office for only those in the corridors of power made
many people retreat back to the Mosques and
churches as alternative modes of economic survival
and political expression of opposition and protest
(Mu’azzam and Ibrahim 2000, 80-81).

Through this period of economic reform and adjustment, especially
during the military government, religion became a fundamental issue in
national politics; it became highly politicized and used in the contest
for power between one groups of elite purporting to represent one
religious group or the other. Jega (1997) correctly observed that, some
of these demands symbolize people’s anger and rejection of their socio
economic condition and an attempt to fashion out a system that will
give them a sense of belonging, thus:

The failure of the state and those associated with
it to cater for fundamental needs and aspirations
translate into material deprivation and alienation
especially in the urban and semi urban centres
leading many to begin to question prevailing ideas
and institutions that directly affect them. (1997:
6).

This period therefore experienced a steady rise in religious mobilisation,
contestations and conflicts. From contestations over issues of subsidization of
pilgrimage, political appointments, secularism, Shari’ah and Nigeria’s membership
of Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) (see Kukah 1993, Mu’azzam and
Ibrahim, 2000, Ohadika 1992) to violent ethno-religious conflicts like the cases of
Kasuwar Magani in 1984, Kano 1983, Zangon Kataf and Gure Kahungu 1984,
(details of some of these crises are provided in Ibrahim, 1999, 1987, 1995; Kukah,
2002, 2003). Most of these conflicts pitch the Hausa-Fulani Muslims against
other Christian ethnic minorities in the North. Often, the conflicts revolved around
issues of land, political leadership, market or definition of who is an indigene and
by extension a determination of their rights to the scarce local and national
resources.
Politics of Shari’ah: History and Dynamics

Scholars often trace contemporary Shari’ah discourse to the 1977 and 1978 controversy in the Constituent Assembly. While it is true that the controversy marked a turning-point in religious contention in the country, shari’ah controversy can properly be traced to the British colonial conquest, consequent collapse of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1903 and the manner in which the colonial state intervened in religious, judicial and administrative matters. While the colonial state retained the civil provisions (personal law) of the shari’ah law, the criminal aspect was reformed by abrogating hudud (Capital) punishments (Bello 2001). From the time of British conquest until 1960, the courts administered shari’ah in criminal matters subject to the changes introduced by the British. However, in mid-1950s, legal lacuna occasioned by lack of clear prescription for many offences resulted to wide scale complains and protests over miscarriage of justice. There were loud protests regarding the manner in which court officials were administering criminal aspect of shari’ah. The main contention then was that, although criminal aspect were written in the Qur’an, Hadith and many other learned books, punishments for many offences were left to the discretion of the judges (Bello 2001).

In response to this, a panel was set up by the Northern Regional government to prepare a Penal Law. The government recommended that the penal law should take cognizance of the diversities of the region and the law should not be in conflict with the injunctions of the Qur’an and Sunnah. A draft, bill based on the penal codes of Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Sudan were vetted by Shari’ah jurists and confirmed not to be in conflicts with the tenets of Islam and then passed to law in 1960 (Bello 2001, Laws of Northern Nigeria 1963). While there were controversies surrounding punishment for some offences, it has always been a regional issue and intra-religion, until 1970s when it took a national dimension.

Since 1970s, all constitution making processes and democratic experiment had shari’ah question to grapple with. The controversy often centres, on the nature of the state, especially its secular tradition and legal frame work. Muslims believe there is no separation of the sacred and the mundane and that the legal system that governs them should be Islamic. These Muslim groups have found a linkage between Nigerian secular state and Christianity; they reject this, and demand for an Islamic state based on shari’ah. For them, shari’ah represents the practical obligations that have been commanded by Allah, an integral part of Islamic religion without which it is incomplete. Non-Muslims on the other hand see this as a threat of Islamization of the country and the imposition of Islamic laws on non-Muslims which is against the secular provisions of the Constitution.

The 1978 Constituent Assembly attracted acrimonious debate between the Christian and Muslim groups over Shari’ah. The debate hinged on two related issues: one, whether or not the Constitution should make provision for the establishment of Federal Shari’ah Court of Appeal and two, the secular position of Nigeria. The Muslim rejected the secularism in the draft Constitution. Some members of the Assembly
argued that the Nigerian state have never been secular, it has been Christian inclined as exemplified by ‘Sunday public holiday, symbol denoting hospital, red cross society and numerous paraphernalia’ (Bako; 1995: 18). On the Federal Shari’ah Court of Appeal, the constitution drafting committee recommended its establishment to hear further appeal from the State Shari’ah Courts of Appeal in cases involving Islamic personal laws, arguing that this will make for better attainment of justice in the administration of Islamic law (Rasmussen; 1993: 63). This was rejected by non-Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly. They argued that it is inconsistent with the secular character of the Constitution. What seems to be a compromise was reached by accepting to create a section in the existing Federal Court of Appeal to deal with shari’ah cases. Nevertheless, this did not go without protest as about 88 Muslim members boycotted the Assembly, protesting against what they called the ‘cavalier manner’ in which the case was disposed of. It took the intervention of the Head of State before they resumed sitting.

Related controversy emerged prominently in the 1988 Constituent Assembly. It started earlier from the political Bureau, where members were divided on Shari’ah issues. While majority of the members who were non-Muslims insisted that section 10 of the 1979 constitution which prohibits the government of the Federation or State from adopting any religion be retained, the minority position called for the recognition of the multi-religious nature of the state in which adherents should be treated equally without discrimination. On shari’ah, majority insisted on the 1979 constitutional provision and advised government to look into the case of southern Muslims demanding for shari’ah in their state. Muslims argued that the 1979 Constitution should stand with some additions that the channel of appeal should be opened up to Supreme Court level, there should be state Shari’ah Courts of Appeal and a Supreme Court of Appeal (Bako, 1995).

The controversy almost paralyzed the Assembly proceedings until the Federal Government removed shari’ah from the jurisdiction of the Assembly. Similarly, the 1995 and 1999 constitution review processes were not spared by Shari’ah debate. In 1999, the Federal Military Government had to assure the restive Christian community that nothing different from 1979 provision on shari’ah was provided. While many thought the controversy has been put to rest by this clarification, the issue re-emerged in a more different way after the military succeeded in handing over to a civilian government in 1999.

Different from the earlier controversies, the new trend is about deepening Shari’ah beyond personal laws to cover both civil and criminal laws at the state level. Zamfara state was the first to introduce the extended shari’ah in 1999 and later spread to eleven other states. Several reasons have been attributed to the new wave of shari’ah in
northern Nigeria. Some argued that *shari’ah* was a reaction to perceived or real loss of power by northern Muslim elite and the manipulation of religion to either hold on to power or to destabilize the new civilian government (Sanusi 2001, Fayemi 2002):

...the attempt to construct a new Muslim identity (through *Shari’ah*) is at least in part a result of the loss of control of the state machinery and the Armed Forces by the Northern Muslim elite leading to sense of insecurity which in turn leads to an almost reflexive adoption of ‘tribe’ mentality (Sanusi, 2003, 4)

Some see it as part of the essentialist nature of Islam and Muslims to take control and subjugate non-Muslims to second-class citizens; to this extent, the northern governors and politicians were simply fulfilling their religious mandate coming from Islam (Okike, 2000, Turaki 2003 Tayob 2004). Yet, others see it as a response of Islamic fundamentalism to the growing Christian fundamentalism under a ‘born again’ Christian President (Fayemi 2002, Mu’azzam Forthcoming). While several of these reasons may be relevant to the discourse, the ‘popular’ nature of the demands has not been captured by some of these explanations. The explanation may have to be sourced from the growing economic crisis and its implication for poverty, unemployment, collapse in social services and facilities. As argued by Fayemi ‘the problem raised by *shari’ah* in Nigeria... goes beyond the scope of religion; it is about disillusionment of those who have been hard done by circumstances’ (Fayemi 2002, 151).

The democratization process since 1999 provided an air of opportunity for advocates and *Shari’ah* politicians to further push their agenda. There is always a strong connection between political liberalization associated with the new democratic process and *Shari’ah*. *Shari’ah*, as indicated earlier is strongly tied to democratic transitions. Apart from the Independence Constitution making process in 1950s, no other constitution making effort came without any form of acrimony associated with *Shari’ah*. The 1999 transition to civil rule is therefore not an exception. Democratic transition provides a more liberal political atmosphere for plurality of views and demands, giving room for hitherto suppressed issues to resurface, in some cases very forcefully.

**Shari’ah and Citizenship**

The whole controversy about *Shari’ah* raises fundamental issues dealing with citizenship rights and the treatment of the others, democracy, federalism, secularism and tolerance among others. All these have implication on the national question and the rights of national and religious groups to self-determination
within the Federation guided by its Constitution (Muazzam 2000). It is in this context that the Shari’ah attracted both national and international interest.

In response to the declaration of Shariah in Zamfara state in 1999, the Christian Association of Nigerian (CAN) argued that the shari’ah was ‘an ill motivated ploy to Islamize Zamfara state notwithstanding the fact that the state is a multi-religious society (Newswatch, 15/11/99) and that shari’ah contravene section 10 of the 1999 Constitution which forbid any religion as state religion. The Association called on the federal government to stop what it’s called ‘religious zealotry’ in order to ‘avoid the kind of carnage and terror with which countries like Lebanon, Sudan and Northern Ireland have been afflicted for years’ (Newswatch 15/11/99). Archbishop of Lagos and former President of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) warned that the imposition of Shari’ah would breed religious intolerance and spark off violent reactions which may threaten the nation’s stability. In Cross Rivers State, the House of Assembly passed a resolution that it was going to introduce Canon Law (Christian law) if shari’ah is allowed in Zamfara state.

In reaction to the growing criticisms, some Muslim groups and State Governments cited various sections of the Constitution to justify their actions and demands. They argued that section 38 of 1999 Constitution provided for freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief and section 277 (1) of the same Constitution provided for the establishment of Shari’ah Court of Appeal for the states. The same Constitution, they argued, in section 6 (5) gave power to the state legislative houses to enact laws for peace, security and good governance. Some shari’ah implementing state governments also tried to allay the fears of non-Muslim that the shari’ah will infringe on their rights to religion and possible subjection to Islamic law. They argued that the law is only for Muslims and will not affect non-Muslims. The Council of Ulamas, an Islamic organisation issued a press statement calling the situation in Zamfara and other states as a welcome development and that it is in the spirit of federalism and freedom of thought, conscience and religion as provided in the 1999 Constitution (Weekly Trust, 4/11/999). Zamfara State Governor, Ahmed Sani Yerima, in an open letter to CAN urged the organisation to stay clear from what the people of Zamfara have chosen for themselves, since shari’ah is not for Christians. He also assured them that no amount of threat, intimidation or harassment can change his position as long as he ‘remains the Governor of Zamfara State’ (Sani, 1999) and declared that the state has not been Islamized in any way:

If we were to Islamize the state, Magistrate and High Courts would have ceased to exist in Zamfara state. Secondly, let it be understood once more that Shari’ah is only applicable to Muslims. We have Constitutional responsibilities to all people living in the state ...
Zamfara state has decided to exercise their rights as given to them by Allah.

In ethnically and religiously divided states with long history of conflict, like Kaduna and Bauchi, violence of ethno-religious character erupted, resulting in wanton destruction of lives and property with implication for further entrenchment of divisions in communities around religious lines. In predominantly Muslim states laws, the laws were passed without required consultation and contribution by non-Muslim. They perception in most of these states is that any body who is resident in the state and is not an indigene has no rights to oppose Shari’ah or even contribute to the debate. This further contributed in deepening the already existing settler-indigene problem. It is not uncommon to hear arguments like ‘this is our state, we want Shari’ah, and those who are not comfortable with Shari’ah are free to leave’.

The Shari’ah and the attendant controversy further raises question of collective versus individual rights. While the Muslim shari’ah activists insist on their individual and collective rights to religion, others are looking at how such rights may infringe on the individual and collective rights of others. Non Muslims are afraid that the laws would be used to discriminate against them and be made second class citizens (Ibrahim 2002). In most of the Shari’ah implementing states, authorities felt compelled not to extend the new Shari’ah penal code to non-Muslims. This has two implications, first, since the code does not apply to non-Muslims, they would have no legal standing to challenge the constitutionality of the code in courts (Mahmoud 2002), with this, two parallel penal codes operates in these states: The new shari’ah penal code and the old penal code of Northern Nigeria. Second, this legal dualism has created differential citizenship. Although non-Muslims are not prosecuted in Shari’ah courts, they still have to live in those states whose public life, social ethos and culture are strongly affected by the new legal regime, including among others prohibition on sale of alcohol, gambling, cinema, night clubs and riding on commercial motorcycle (Mahmoud 2002). According to Mahmoud (2002) this dual legal system applied within the same territory based on faith, is problematic in many respects.

It can be seen by many as counter to the notion of equal protection before the law. Citizens become subject to different laws and could be punished differently for similar offences committed within the same territory (Mahmoud 2002: 14).

Furthermore, while capital punishment such as death by stoning, public flogging and amputations may be meted against both male and female offenders, it is argued that women are more likely to be criminalized in circumstances involving sexual relations (Pereira 2003). The cases of Safiya Hussaini of Tungar Tudu in Gwadabawa Local Government of Sokoto state and Amina Lawal of Katsina State provide lucid illustration of the situation. They were all differently charged for adultery and convicted by the lower court to death by stoning; the judgment was however upturned and acquitted by the Appeal court. What is curious about some of these judgments is how men charged
with these women are often discharged after flimsy denial of the allegation.

The new legal regime further deepens women’s domestication and deeply constrained their political participation. Attempts are made to exclude women from public activities, except those that are exclusively women. While there is no legal prohibition to women’s political participation in any of the states, the continued emphasis on *Shari’ah* has given political weapon to some politicians who use Islam to discourage women from participation. In Zamfara, like other states, women employment into the public service was constrained. For instance, the chairman of Talata Mafara Local Government, Alhaji Lawal Jibrin Jegebe was reported to have given single women in the employ of the local government a three month ultimatum to get married or be relieved of their jobs (*The Guardian*, 18 November, 1999). This is however not the first time such controversial pronouncements will be made by public officers. In Katsina State, during the Third Republic, the state House of Assembly passed a resolution to terminate the appointments of single women (WIN 2004). This has further encouraged social exclusion of women. In Zamfara and Kano, it has become an offence for a male *okada* (commercial motorcycle) to carry a female passenger on their motorcycles and there are separate taxis for men and women even though they are not adequate.

Since the transition to democratic governance in Nigeria, the performance of women in the Muslim states has been unimpressive. This unimpressive outing in both the 1999 and 2003 general elections could be associated with cultural and religious prejudices against women. *Shari’ah* has reinforced these prejudices; Muslim women politicians are quickly reminded of their religious obligations. Men control the religious space, they are the major decision makers, they participate in public activities which are often used for political ends, and it is therefore difficult for women to break in. As argued by Pereira (2003, 16) ‘the experience of women’s citizenship is that it is treated as being secondary or devalued status relative to men’s citizenship’.

While many of these states have remained multi-religious, Islam has remained the most dominant, and all state activities are directed at Muslims and Islam. The argument is that majority of the people in the state are Muslims and it is their wish to have *shari’ah*. The implementation of *shari’ah* has increased the cases of systematic denial of land to certain religious groups to build places of worship. In states like Kano, Zamfara and Sokoto there are reported cases of cancellation of initial land allocations and demolition of religious building on the ground that they were illegally built in originally residential plots. These religious groups complain of discrimination in the use of state media, public schools and other public facilities for religious purposes.
Conclusion

From the forgoing, it is clear that Shari’ah implementation in northern Nigeria has appeared to be one of the most difficult challenges for the Nigerian state. Since 1970s it has become an important religious issue that the nation has grappled with. The extension of Shari’ah law from personal law to criminal law is a departure from the original debate which was more about the constitutional recognition of Shari’ah and its implication for the ‘secularity’ of the Nigerian state. The issue has now moved to the constitutionality of the actions of the concerned state governments and the implication of the laws on the secularity of the Nigerian state and the rights of citizens. Although the politics of Shari’ah in these northern Nigerian states can be traced to the pre-colonial history of the area, recent contentions and demands could be associated with the increasing economic crisis and gradual withdrawal of the state from the public realm. Since 1999, 12 states, all from northern Nigeria have adopted Shari’ah. Shari’ah implementation in some of these states raises fundamental challenges on citizenship especially as its concerns rights of religious minorities, women and inter religious tolerance.
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by Faculty of Law university of Jos, Nigeria in Conjunction with Universitat Bayreuth (Germany) Held in University of Jos.


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THE STABILISING ROLE OF MUSLIM BROTHERHOODS IN SENEGAL: THE CASE OF MOURIDISM

By Alpha Diedhiou

Abstract

It is common currency to assume that affiliation to religious groups is a source of destabilisation in many parts of the world today. This paper offers an insight into the workings of a religious brotherhood that strengthens socio-economic, as well as political stability in Senegal. The Mourid brotherhood, through the values that underpin its doctrine, constitutes a positive developmental agent sits easily within the framework of a modern state. It is a case that must be captured to inform current attempts at promoting effective states and poverty alleviation.

Introduction

The last decade or so has been marked by a renewed interest, both in academic and policy circles, in Islam and politics. Since the event of 11th September 2001, the trend has increased in both scope and intensity. Increasingly, Islam is being viewed as destabilising factor in various polities around the world, especially in Third World countries. In this regard, there has been an increased interest in finding ways to promote ‘effective states’ in these parts of the world. In the case of Africa, the need to build effective states emanates from a belief that the state is weak, failed and collapsed, while other social forces can take over. When this happens in instances where religious movements are strong, this can lead to greater national insecurity, and even regional and international insecurity. This is a strong narrative today among both academics and policy-makers. But the truth is that there are cases where state failure is mitigated by the positive role played by certain religious groups. They take over and perform functions that fall within the responsibility of states. This paper proposes to explore such cases where religious groups play a stabilising role at various levels. In Senegal, Muslim brotherhoods have and still play an important role in the socio-political as well as economic stability of the country. By illustration, the paper places special emphasis on the Mourid Brotherhood, even though other Muslim brotherhoods do play a similar role in the country. The paper explores this issue from a purely developmental perspective, hence it moves slightly away from the current focus on security matters, albeit it admits that there is a link between development and security.

Weak States, Failed States

1 Alpha Diedhiou is a Doctorate candidate and Visiting lecturer at the University of West of England, Bristol. E-mail: Mamadou2.Diedhiou@uwe.ac.uk
It is difficult to talk about the role of social forces in socio-economic and political processes without looking at their relationship with the state. Beyond Neopatrimonialism, the state in Africa is also viewed as weak and failed. It is weak in relation to other social forces, and it has failed because it has not delivered the public good. There is indeed a close correlation between the two in policy narratives. Because of its weakness vis-à-vis other social forces, the state in Africa has been unable to implement economic policy in an effective manner. Equally, its weakness has also meant that it has been incapable of extracting revenue from its internal constituency. The subsequent lack of revenue has meant that it has to rely on external finance for development. The lack of adequate resources for development also resulted in a blatant failure to deliver the most basic social services to citizens. Despite the fact that one cannot completely refute this narrative, it is important to recognise that it also simplifies the problem confronting African states. In dealing with the state in Africa, ahistorical accounts do not work towards thorough understanding of the issue at stake.

J. S. Migdal (1988) explains that weak states are those that have failed to control strong social forces. They have failed to dislocate strong social centres for greater control. Where this is the case, the state has to rely on these strong centres for social control. From a purely legal point of view, social control is important because it allows the state to be the only guarantor of law and order within a delimited territorial entity. Social control is also important because it allows the state to stand as the only agent with the right to use legitimate force. The pursued objective is the respect of state institutions and laws that are necessary if the state is to achieve its goals. Social cohesion and economic development are two of the main objectives of any state. In cases where the state is incapable of controlling other social forces, effective policy implementation becomes problematic, as any resistance from these strong social centres tends to thwart the project. Different centres would pull in different directions, with the end result of destabilising the whole polity. Social cohesion becomes a remote possibility and development a mere dream.

However, Migdal points out that this is not only characteristic of post-colonial states. The origins of weak states are historically located in the colonial state itself. Using the case of British colonial rule in Sierra Leone, Migdal shows that the British resorted to decentralised social control through the empowerment of local strongpersons. Confronted with the impossible task of centralising social control, the British deliberately chose to collaborate and share power with strong social groups. After independence, though, new African leaders also failed to reorganise and re-shape state-society relationships in a way that allows for greater control. This system of power sharing was even more prevalent in Francophone Africa, where the colonial economy largely depended on social mobilisation of labour through regional strongpersons.

Maass and Mepham (2003:5) define public goods as ‘those intangible and hard to quantify claims that citizens once made on sovereigns and now make on states. They encompass expectations and obligations, and together give content to that social contract between ‘the ruler’ and ‘the ruled’. They go on to characterise failed states as ‘those in which the capacity to deliver these public goods has all but
disappeared’ (Ibid). In Maass and Mepham’s conceptualisation, there is a difference between effective states, failed states, and failing states. Effective states are ‘those that control their territories, that have open, accountable and inclusive political institutions, thriving economies, low levels of corruption, an impartial rule of law, and commitment to tackle poverty and discrimination’ (Ibid). Failing states are those that fall between effective and failed states. In this formulation, failed states are what is most commonly known in the literature as ‘collapsed’ or ‘disintegrated’ states. State theory in political science does not make reference to ‘failing states’ because state collapse does not occur overnight. It is the culmination of a process of deterioration, conflict, decline, and erosion of state functions (Doornbos, 2002). Yet in Zartman (1995), the collapsed state syndrome is characterised by the disintegration of state institutions. It is a situation where there is no dominant centre of authority, and different factions fight for the control of whatever is left of the country’s resources under a climate of total chaos. For the purpose of this study, state failure will be defined merely as failure by the state to provide the public good, and state collapse or disintegration as a possible consequence of state failure. The underlying argument in this paper is that weak states can develop into failure without being disintegrated, albeit the state inability to totally control social forces (NOT CLEAR). There are various factors that come into play to prevent a state failure from degenerating into total collapse. The ensuing development builds on the Muslim brotherhoods in Senegal to illustrate this argument.

**When Religion keeps Weak and Failed States from Collapse.**

The process of state collapse is actually a slow one in most cases. Problems leading to state collapse are more than often ignored until they reach a point of no return. State failure, characterised by weak institutions and a lack of effective service delivery, very often leads to state collapse in situations of acute social inequalities and exclusionary institutions. The latest case in point, Cote d’Ivoire, helps illustrate this point. Exclusionary social and political institutions constitute one of the main causes of collapse here.

The weakness of most African states principally emanate from the historical experience of these states. Both French and British colonial states laid the basis of what is today a pervasive system of power sharing between post-colonial states and their respective strong social centres. The implications for this are disastrous in terms of policy implementation. Weak states often lack the capability to effectively implement national policy. As a result, these states are left in a situation of permanent search for survival. The search for legitimacy often hampers the state’s ability to mobilise resources for development. In most cases, resources are utilised to feed patronage networks. As long as there are enough resources to maintain these patronage networks the state will manage to survive under a permanent developmental crisis. However, when resources become scarce the state becomes vulnerable because it is no longer capable of maintaining this clientelistic relationship. In this respect, declining Official Development Assistance (ODA) tends to leave weak states fragile and prone to collapse. Interestingly enough, state failure in the provision of public goods often weakens the state even more. When the state fails to perform its most basic function of delivering the public good,
citizens often turn to strong social centres as an alternative. This works to discrediting an already weak and failed state. Social centres become even more important, and hence, the redundant nature of the state.

What keeps the state safe from collapse in these instances is mainly to do with the political aspirations of social centres. If the latter aspires to take over the institutions of the state, then collapse becomes imminent. This is so because different social centres would compete for power. Competition for power can take various forms until it reaches its most undesired expression, armed conflict.

In other extreme cases, social centres loose control of their various constituencies. Small rebellious groups, against both the state and social centres, proliferate in a situation of total anarchy. What keeps weak and failed states away from collapse is a minimum provision or attempt at providing public goods.

In the case of Senegal, religious brotherhoods play a stabilising role in attempting to provide what the state has failed to deliver. Religious brotherhoods provide a range of services, ranging from economic security to social safety. The Senegalese society is 80 to 85% Muslim; the rest is divided between Christians and other traditional religions. The majority Muslim community is divided into various brotherhoods: Mourids, Tijans, Layeens, and Niassens. These brotherhoods not only offer spiritual guidance to their adherents, but they also provide social security through solidarity networks. More comforting to this date, though, is the fact that they all have some sort of political influence in the country. This reduces or completely eliminates any risk of ‘social coup’ because they do not aspire to take over the state. The subsequent analysis will show how the Mourids, for instance, promote socio-economic and political stability in country. It is important to point out here that any of these brotherhoods could have been chosen as a case in point. Mourids have been chosen for the scope of study.

Mouridism and Development in Senegal

Mouridism was first introduced in Senegal in the 19th century by Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba. The latter, it is reported, was a sufì (micawebsite.org, 01/06/04). Yet his sufism was a moderate one, that is a moderate form of a doctrine which advocated withdrawal from the world and ‘focus on the world beyond contemplative life and irrationality’ (Ibid). Mouridism is actually built on the values of not only insulation from ordinary life, submission to God, love of the Sheikh, but it also proposes great solidarity, hard work, participation in life, and the relentless pursuit of knowledge. These values of help underscore the work ethos, as well as the Mourids approach to life in general.

There is indeed some analogy between the impact of these values on Mourids’ contribution to socio-economic and political stability in Senegal and the impact of Protestant ethics on the development of capitalist societies in the West. Solidarity, hard work, and the acquisition of knowledge constitute the foundations of the Mouride ethos. Solidarity among Mourid disciples is a perfect manifestation of
social capital in motion. This is expressed through the Dahiras\(^2\) that meet on a weekly or monthly basis depending on the other life commitments of their constitutive members. Dahiras are more than just prayer circles; they are fora for discussion where members can exchange information about a whole range of matters, including information about employment opportunities. During these meetings, economic, social or political issues are raised to salience for members to ponder over. Strategic decisions are also made here, but in a democratic way. The organisational structure of Dahiras is mainly a flat one, with no such rigid hierarchy despite the existence of co-ordinators. There is also a great effort at co-ordinating the work of various Dahiras, both at national and international levels.

The coordination work very often has a tremendous economic impact. This is so because some of the Dahiras, have international scope. Through the internationalisation of Dahiras expatriate remittances are used to specific socio-economic ends at home. Besides, if one takes into account the fact that expatriate remittances are higher than foreign direct investment in Senegal, the socio-economic role of Mourides transnationals becomes inconspicuous and imposing. The organisational sophistication of the Dahira network allows members to not only an important socio-economic role in the country, but it also opens new windows of opportunity in the sense of poverty alleviation. This is achieved through the poverty-reducing effect of remittances, as well as the integration of Mouride Merchants in the world economy. They are found in Paris, Rome, Madrid, and mostly New York. In the latter city, the contribution of Mourides in the regeneration of some districts of Harlem is well captured by Linda Beck. She praises the contribution of Mouride merchants, grocery store clerks, taxi drivers and street workers in the positive transformation of Harlem\(^3\). Yet, these Mourides do not only contribute to the revitalisation of degenerated areas outside their home-country, they also contribute a great deal in the technological integration of Senegal. Dakar, the capital-city, is today littered with small communication centres, the majority of which are funded by these Mouride expatriates. This phenomenon, of course, enters the spirit of entrepreneurship that is being encouraged by the World Bank/IMF group in developing countries. Curiously enough, this trend seems to escape the vigilance of those in search of alternatives to development financing. Recent efforts by the World Bank to explore this channel are more than welcome. But serious research is needed here in order to capitalise on a trend that is as old as economic immigration.

Hard work in the Mouride doctrine is tantamount to any type of worship. Epitomised in the Tarbiyya – collective work and manual labour – hard work constitutes one of the principal values upon which Mourides based their approach to life. In so doing, daara tarbiyya -working schools- are organised at least once a year for disciples. Work, for the Mourides, is 'the tool to heal the soul of disciples of sicknesses such as pride, fear, and attraction to worldly pleasure, and to protect disciples from idleness' (micasite, org/mouridism.htm, 01/06/04).

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\(^2\) Dahiras are prayer circles that also serve as a means of socialisation between Mourid brothers. During these prayer circles, members also commit a financial contribution into a collective saving pot. The funds collected are used to support members in difficult situation; they can also be used to finance practical projects such as building schools, hospitals, or mosques.

\(^3\) For more detail on this issue, refer to http://www.micasite.org/mouridism.htm
If libraries are being written today about the importance of education in the development process, the founder of Mouridism in Senegal—Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba—recommended that Mouride disciples should value both positive and mystical science. For Bamba⁴, it was not just enough to acquire knowledge; but instead the knowledge acquired must be used for practical purposes. It is actually reported that Bamba 'compared those who learn without conforming their actions to their science to donkeys loaded with books' (Ibid).

From a purely developmental perspective, the virtues of solidarity, hard work, and the acquisition of knowledge and its practical usage would raise no controversy from all sides of the political spectrum as to their instrumental function in the process. Besides, the mobilisation abilities of the Mourid brotherhood played a fundamental role in the development process of the country.

From infrastructure building to education, Mourids bring a practical input to the country's efforts towards development. Cases in point here include the construction of the Dioubel-Touba railway stretch in the 1930s, and collaboration with the Al Azhar institute to fight ignorance.

The strength of the Mourid brotherhood in promoting development mostly lies in the above-mentioned values of solidarity, hard work, and the acquisition of knowledge. However, it is important to point out here that this is not an attempt to demonstrate that religious affiliation can promote socio-economic development. Despite the proliferation of statistical investigations into the matter⁵, the argument in this paper is mainly based on empirical observation.

**Mouridism and governance in Senegal**

Despite their incisive role in socio-economic development in Senegal, Mourids also contribute to political stability. The argument that neo-patrimonialism is characteristic of many sub-Saharan African countries needs to be re-considered in many cases today, or at least in a country like Senegal. The complex relationship between state leaders and customary leaders makes it difficult to place Senegal within neo-patrimonial framework. If anything, the democratic experiment has turned the latter framework on its heads. State leaders have moved from being patrons to becoming clients, whose survival in office depends on close collaboration with customary leaders. In many instances, state leaders made recourse to the mobilisation capacity of various Muslims brotherhoods for electoral support. This, in turn, has given customary leaders more bargaining power in the political affairs of the country. While many might view this state of affairs as detrimental to state capacity to enact policy, making of the state a soft one, the reality is that shrewd politicians have managed to capitalise on it. In some sense, this state of affairs is a perfect illustration of a state that is capable of utilising socio-cultural forces for greater stability. It can also be argued that Senagalese

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⁴ Bamba is the most common way the founder of Mouridism in Senegal is referred to.

authorities have found a formula that helps them cope with the difficulties of nation, as well as state building that are the legacy of historical circumstances. It is certain that this is the perpetuation of ‘decentralised despotism’, but in Senegal, this has become institutionalised and accepted by the majority. Despite the fact that political autonomy is traded for greater national stability, it is regarded as acceptable, for it is in stability that a nation can aspire to development. The Senegalese state does not only entertain this type of relationship with Mourids, but it does so with all other brotherhoods.

There are risks associated with such a state of affairs. The first one pertains to policy formulation and implementation. Policy implementation becomes problematic when such strong social forces oppose a given set of policies. In many cases, however, Senegalese authorities have managed to explain the rationale for some policy reforms. In other words, policy consensus has been reached just by consulting with customary authorities.

The second cluster of risks comes from the political aspirations of these social forces. In cases where the social forces aspire to political power, empowering them becomes a serious source of crisis. Yet, as mentioned earlier, these Muslim brotherhoods do not aspire to replace the state. Instead, they are more concerned the provision of public goods to their adherents. To date, Muslim brotherhoods constitute the most effective social protection mechanism that exists in the country.

The third type of problem is, by far, the most sensitive one because it puts the notion of citizenship at stake. If people identify more with their religious brothers than with the larger community, it becomes clear that greater sensitivity is required in the management of the situation. However, what has kept most dormant crises at bay so far is the social inter-penetration of the religious brotherhoods. It is not rare to see people from the same family adhere to different religious brotherhoods. By doing so, risks of inter-brotherhood disputes are reduced to the minimum. The state also strives to treat various brotherhoods in the same way. Furthermore, it can be argued that the self-reliance attitude and the value of hard work stand as central virtues in the doctrines of most brotherhoods, especially Mouridism, sit well with the current Third Way approach to the issue of citizenship. Balancing out citizens’ rights and responsibility means that those who are capable of self-initiative are highly regarded and supported in their endeavours by both the state and the international donor community. Yet, there is a danger here that the state and the international community start looking upon these Muslim brotherhoods as alternative service providers, with the state failing to duly assume its responsibilities.

In terms of local governance, the relationships between the Senegalese state and the Mourid brotherhood are not the most harmonious ones. Efforts at decentralisation are hampered by the lack of fiscal decentralisation. The latter has made residents of Touba\textsuperscript{6} even more suspicious of the state. In 1997, merchants of Touba revolted against new taxes introduced by the local council to finance new development initiatives in the borough. But the sources of resistance to the

\textsuperscript{6} Touba is the headquarters of the Mourid brotherhood in Senegal.
introduction of these new taxes are no other than the merchants’ suspicion that the money collected may not be used for the development of Touba. The lack of fiscal decentralisation to accompany administrative decentralisation, common in most decentralisation initiative in Africa, often means that the money collected goes all the way to central government before being re-allocated and re-injected in local projects. But this also raises questions of transparency and efficiency because people question the economic rationale for taking money collected locally to central government before being re-allocated. What the 1997 revolt unveils is the new form of accountability that ordinary people are calling for. Most relevant to new calls for good governance, the 1997 revolt shows that customary centres of power can play an important role in the creation of checks and balances to state power, as well as the introduction of fiscal decentralisation.

**Beyond Neo-patrimonialism**

The type of relationship that the Mourid brotherhood and the Senegalese entertain provides a new framework of analysis of the state in Africa. In neo-patrimonial politics, state institutions are all under the control of the ruler. The latter is regarded as a monarch, with the rest of the citizenry standing as his/her subjects. Today, this analytical framework seems like an anachronism in Senegal, to say the least. The situation in Senegal seems like a subversion of what has long been viewed as the main characteristic of the state in Africa. The ruling classes are no more than the legal representative of a deeply embedded customary authority. They enjoy a legal sovereignty that is granted to them by the international community of states. Yet empirically, they make up part of a large community that is under the direction of a traditional authority that helps them keep a semblance of statehood and nationhood. Contrary to what many African analysts hold, they are not the principals. Rather, they are the agents and customary leaders are the principals. The provision of favours goes from customary authority to the modern-bureaucratic authority.

Another way of conceptualising this is to consider both types of authorities as equal partners in the governance of the country. While the state provides financial and infrastructural goods to customary authority, the latter gives in return the enabling environment for possible modern-bureaucratic governance. It is a complex set of arrangements that have allowed the persistence of both traditional and modern governance in Senegal. By providing financial and infrastructural goods to traditional authorities, the state allows them to keep their disciples in line. Conversely, customary authorities also contribute to the regulation of social forces, thanks to the relative influence they have on their respective disciples. Political differences are usually resolved in the lounges of customary leaders, rather than in the offices of various contenders to office. There has so far been no situation whereby customary authorities have been unable to rescue seemingly unsolvable social crises. This has been the case in the aftermaths of both the 1988 and 1993 general elections.

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Furthermore, it seems inappropriate to characterise this state of affairs as ‘power sharing’. Instead, it is a system of co-governance that has emerged from a clever management of situation that is no other than the legacy of colonial rule. Any attempt at dislocating these centres of traditional authority would probably result in the collapse an unformed state. The analytical framework that springs from the Senegalese case is one that shows collaboration between two entities that are apparently divergent. It is a clear division of functions between two centres of authority, with clearly demarcated areas of influence. While the state sees to the legal persistence of the modern institutions, customary authorities are concerned with social cohesion in a multi-religious and multi-cultural country.

The question that many political analysts may well ask is whether this is sustainable. The answer is in the affirmative here, for any other route to managing the situation might well be more dysfunctional than the system in place. The historical circumstances that have led to this type of arrangements are such that Senegalese leaders need to exercise a great deal of political engineering. To the question of whether the Senegalese governance experiment might one day lead to the development of a Weberian type of state lives a negative answer. The state is the product of the historical development of its society; and the historical trajectory taken by the Senegalese society since colonisation does not seem to suggest any move towards Weber’s ideal type of state. What Senegal would turn into, as a state, is a more sophisticated type of co-governance mode that enables various centres of authority to mutually reinforce each other in the maintenance of the peace and stability.

Policy implications

Should the Mourid brotherhood be regarded as a vibrant section of civil society in Senegal? Even though the Mourid brotherhood fulfils other characteristics of civil society, the space it occupies in Senegal is not as clear-cut as to place it in the CSO (civil society organisation) category. It is true that the brotherhood enjoys a great deal of autonomy, and possesses excellent organisational capacities. However, it is not clear whether the brotherhood meets the criterion of 'entity between state and family'. Through the Dahiras, the brotherhood gets close to fulfilling the role of civil society of organisation. There is no doubt that both urban and rural Dahiras function in ways that are close to the workings of CSOs. The brotherhood as a whole, however, transcends the realm of civil society. It is both a political and social institution that works within the confines of a modern state. Some people actually regard Muslim brotherhoods in Senegal as states within a state.

Institution building efforts in Senegal need therefore take account of the existence of these deeply embedded institutions. The superimposition of modern institutions on already existing traditional ones cannot succeed without a careful study. A more viable approach to institution building in Senegal would require drawing on these traditional institutions to forge a stronger and more effective state. The ways this could be achieved might seem very difficult, but there is actually a basis upon which such an experiment can be founded.
As regards poverty reduction efforts, the Mourid brotherhood could be seen as a poverty reducing agent. This is reflected in the brotherhood’s solidarity networks, especially through the *dahiras*, that deploy a variety of instruments to tackle social exclusion, as well as deprivation. As mentioned earlier, the brotherhood also contributes to infrastructure building and the promotion of education. Furthermore, because most of the projects are financed by expatriate remittances, it also begs the question of whether Mourid immigrants in developed countries (USA, Italy, Spain, and France) can be regarded as providers of alternative finance for development. If this is so, there is a need to find ways of regularising the status of genuine economic immigrants. Mourid trans-nationals not only contribute to the socio-economic development of their country of origin, but they also play an important economic role in recipient countries. They often take jobs that locals would not do, while constituting a reliable source of development financing for their country. This is, by no means, a case for illegal immigration. Rather, by recognising economic immigrants, recipient countries can reduce the negative economic impacts of illegal work. Mainstreaming economic immigration can allow for taxation of economic immigrants as well as monitoring of flows of immigrants in this category.

Moreover, there is a need to recognise the impact of immigration on democracy promotion. Living in more established democracies often provides immigrants with a clear idea of the workings of democracy. These are groups of people who can play an important role in demanding transparent and more accountable procedures at home. Using their newly acquired financial status, immigrants can exert an influential role in development of a vibrant and informed civil society. In the Mourid brotherhood, *Dahiras* often use their international connections for both financial support and organisational capacity. Transnational members of *Dahiras* often participate in the monitoring of funds they provide, as well as state governance in their home localities. The same is valid for the *France-nabes* who play an equally determinant role in the socio-economic development of their region.

One other implication is the need to streamline these regional initiatives in the wider programmes of decentralisation and local governance. There are today local initiatives by these economic immigrants to establish investment banks. In countries where rural people lack access to credit, these initiatives seem to be timely, and they need to be supported by both government and the donor community. The initiative can be supported in terms of tax exemption, at least at their early stage of development. As for the donor community, micro-credit initiatives can be extended through this channel to reach out to those in rural areas. In a nutshell, immigrant remittances can be deployed in more constructive ways to complement official development finance initiatives at a time of decreasing official development assistance.

**Conclusion**

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8 France-nabes are Senegalese economic immigrants in France who originate from the Northern counties of Matam and Podor in Senegal.
The case covered so far shows that unlike what many think today affiliation to religious groups can play a stabilising role if channelled toward the right cause. The Mourid brotherhood offers an example of instances where religion contributes to socio-economic and political stability. As illustrated in the paper, there is scope for drawing modern state institutions closer to their traditional counterparts in the promotion of good governance. If anything, the fusion of modern institutions with traditional ones can only be beneficial to both state and nation building. Regarding the co-habitation of modern and traditional institutions as problematic is a source of misunderstanding that often leads to ill-conceived programmes of state construction. Instead, building effective state in some parts of the world might well require some experimenting outside conventional frameworks. The case of Mouridism offers an interesting research agenda for those who are concerned with the political viability of reforms in developing countries. It is also a case that turns neo-patrimonialism on its head, for the state and customary authorities tend to collaborate in the maintenance of peace and stability.

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HANGING ON A SHOESTRING:  
CAMEROON’S DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS

Nantang Jua

«Suspendu à un Fil: Le Processus Démocratique au Cameroun»

Résumé

Le processus démocratique au Cameroun, même plus d’une décennie après son initialisation, est à la croisée des chemins avec l’imminence de l’élection présidentielle. C’est une démocratie «unpacted». Depuis la rédaction de la Constitution de 1996 par le gouvernement, il n’est pas surprenant que lois ne soient pas perçues comme des ressources morales qui génèrent et maintiennent des solutions collectives à des problèmes politiquement controversés. La réforme politique a cherché à privilégier la volonté de pouvoir plutôt que la volonté de participation. Non convaincu par les mérites de la démocratie au plan normatif, le régime en place a usé de la stratégie de la rhétorique pour dissimuler ses intentions réelles. Bien que s’engageant à établir la séparation des pouvoirs, les relations entre les institutions dans cet Etat héroïque demeurent fondées sur le principe de la coordination impérative. Ceci explique l’énormité des pouvoirs de l’Exécutif, de même que les efforts conscients d’empêcher la presse de jouer sa fonction de surveillance. Les élections ne sont ni libres ni justes; l’emphase est placé sur l’électoralisme. Les ordonnances administratives usent du binôme allogenie/autochtonie pour affranchir ou dés-affranchir les votants. Ceci a suscité une réponse ambivalente dans la population. Pour les bénéficiaires [du système], il engendre un changement dans la culture politique. Les perdants optent pour la sortie. A cause de cette situation le Cameroun est une faible, plutôt qu’une forte démocratie. Quand bien même seule cette dernière permettrait une consolidation démocratique, il est argumenté que ceci a vicié, mais pas obvié, le processus de démocratisation du Cameroun. Le sauvetage démocratique est possible si l’Etat opte pour une domination dispersée. Par conséquent, les espaces dans lesquels le peuple engage l’Etat et refuse l’accaparement par les élites pourront, et sont en train, d’êmerger. Chaque victoire défie le mode existant de domination tout en renforçant la volonté de participation. Encourager la citoyenneté sociale permet également de percevoir la démocratie comme moyen de développement humain dans la sphère publique.

Abstract

More than a decade after, Cameroon’s democratisation process is at a crossroads with the imminence of Presidential elections. It is an unpacted democracy. Since the 1996 Constitution was scripted by the government, it is not surprising that its provisions are not perceived as moral resources that generate and sustain collective solutions to politically contentious issues. Political reform has sought to privilege the will to power rather than the will to participation. Normatively unconvinced

1 Senior Researcher at Cameroon’s Ministry of Scientific Research, and currently a Research Fellow at University of Maryland, Silver Spring, MD 20901, email: bbenjua@yahoo.com.
about the merits of democracy, the incumbent regime has used the rhetorical strategy to conceal its real intentions. While committing to a separation of powers, relations between democratic institutions state are still predicated on the principle of imperative coordination. This explains the enormity of the powers of the Executive as well as conscious efforts to pre-empt the press from performing its watchdog function. Elections are neither free nor fair; indeed, the emphasis is on electoralism. Administrative fiat use the allogény/autochtory binary to enfranchise or disenfranchise voters. This has elicited an ambivalent response in the population. Among its beneficiaries, it is prompting a change in the culture of politics. Losers are choosing the exit option. Due to the foregoing, Cameroon is a weak rather than strong ‘partial democracy’. Though only the latter enables democratic consolidation, it is argued that this has vitiated but not obviated Cameroon’s democratisation process. Democratic rescue is possible if the state opts for dispersed domination. Consequently, spaces in which people engage the state and deny elite capture will and are emerging. Each victory challenges the extant mode of domination while furthering the will to participation. Fostering social citizenship also enables democracy to be seen as human development in the public sphere.

Bad governance arguably accounted for the economic meltdown, and in extreme cases state collapse, which were a prominent feature Africa’s political landscape in the 1980s. The African postcolonial state was broken and therefore had to be fixed. Claims that the one party state would enable development had not been realised. By contrast, the one-party arrangement fostered the birth of a patrimonial state, rather than a Weberian rational one. This state form was a cause of the African crisis and its victims were the African masses who bore the brunt of the free fall in human development indicators for the period. However, there was a flipside to the crisis, as in Hegelian dialectic, crisis constitutes a moment of birth and transition to a new period.2

With a view to redressing economic performance in Africa, the Bretton Woods institutions signed structural adjustment programs (SAPs) with the various governments. SAP quickly became a ‘damaged brand name’ (Naim, 2003) because it emphasised not only market liberalism but also political liberalism and in some instances secularisation. Both variants are now a metaphor for good governance or democracy. Both concepts are synonymous because of their emphasis on transparency and accountability. Normatively, its institutionalisation should induce a change in the political opportunity structure in Africa by revalorising and empowering those previously marginalised.

In this paper, we are interested in how the transition to democracy has been perceived, experienced and dealt with by both the dominant and the subordinate classes in Cameroon. Failing a negotiated resolution of the political impasse that has dogged the country since 1992, there is anxiety that the forthcoming 2004 Presidential elections might eventuate in violence. Newspapers already dub it l’élection de tous les dangers. State failure is therefore not just an imaginary; it as the Collectif des Organisations Démocratiques et Patriotiques des Camerounais de

la Diaspora (CODE) intimate probable. The State Failure Task Force (SFTF) constituted in 1994 in the United States posits that a country’s political institutions are the single most-important factor in shaping the relative risks of state failure (Gladstone *et al.*, 2003:20). While democratic and autocratic regimes are more stable, it cautions that policies seeking to bring stability to world affairs by spreading democracy ‘must look beyond simply identifying the spread of democracy with greater stability’. ‘Loosening up’ an autocratic regime, or installing the wrong mix of democratic institutions is a likely recipe for political turmoil (Gladstone, 2003:6). It is this transitioning that Cameroon seeks to negotiate.

For successful transitions, the SFTF recommends strong partial democracies which place high levels of constraints on the chief executive or hold regular and institutionalised political competition or both as ideal for creating democracies resistant to various kinds of severe political violence. (Gladstone, 2003:29). According to the Electoral Democracy Index (EDI), institutionalised political competition combines four variables: the right to vote, fair elections, free elections, and elections as a means of access to public office (see UNDP, 2004). These conditions, and not elections as such, and certainly not the mythical or utopian notion of democracy should guide policy-makers seeking greater stability in the world. Where these conditions obtain, even amidst seemingly inhospitable conditions for stability or democracy, as in sub-Saharan Africa (my emphasis), the relative odds of ethnic wars, revolutions and genocides have been dramatically lower (Gladstone, 2003:32). In short, a strong partial democracy should enable people reappropriate the state, converting it into a *res publica*. Weak partial democracies that have periodic elections but lack executive parity as well as open and institutionalised competition disable this process. To a large extent, I would argue, this has occurred in Cameroon. Rather than ‘loosen up’, it mutated from a hegemonic state ruled by a hegemonic party (Bayart, 1979) to a *heroic state* which manifests most traits of a *heroic nation* where ‘the essence of heroic power is to legitimise only the will of the chief. Heroes, generally do not accept the presence of other heroes’ (Dahomay, 2001,12-13). This was largely facilitated by the regime’s preoccupation with electoralism, that is, outcome rather than process in the founding election which took place in October 1992. Other elections in 1996 and 2002 were characterised by a similar emphasis.

‘Loosening up,’ as the SFTF suggests, is unsettling. Further exacerbating this is the reversibility of the democratisation process as substantiated by instances in Africa where autocraty like a sphinx is reborn from its ashes. Any analysis of this process must take into cognisance certain caveats. First, there is a tendency to equate political liberalisation and democratisation. Although these processes may occur simultaneously and may actually be complementary, they are autonomous. Each has its own dynamic; the dismantling of the authoritarian state does not necessarily suggest the birth of democratic structures. Second, even if the old order is dead and the birth pangs of a new one are already being felt, a successful transition to democracy is still not tantamount to its consolidation. These two phases should not be conflated. Samuel Huntington has argued that not all

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countries in this ‘third wave’ of democratisation would remain at the shore. Some would recede with the wave. While the SFTF study is concerned with partial strong democracies that stay on the shore, sceptics have doubted the chances of democracy travelling to Africa or its successful conversion to this new political ideology\(^4\). As such, they would find any study on democratisation on this continent where this doctrine does not supposedly have any cultural resonance normatively suspect. Avoiding this patronising approach, Stephen Ellis cautions that in the absence of empirical research, one cannot discern what democracy means to the African public\(^5\). According to a recent survey, 87\% of a sample of polled Cameroonians knew the meaning of democracy. Knowing what democracy means may not be enough; Hegel, Giovanni Sartori and other high priests who serve as its gatekeepers may emphasise the importance of literacy and in some cases a surplus of knowledge\(^7\).

Knowing what democracy means does not pre-empt the possibility of democratic fatigue among the people. Disenchantment with this form of governance, as demonstrated by evidence from Latin America after twenty-five years of democratic growth, sets in failing a notable improvement in the quality of life. A recent UNDP poll found out that 54.7\% of all Latin Americans preferred ‘authoritarianism’ to a democratic government insofar as it would enhance their economic status. Their exasperation with the latter can be explained by the failure of the first generation of Latin Americans to come of age under this mode of governance to witness any growth in their per capita.\(^8\) Widening the economic gap between classes and shrinking the middle class reinforces the asymmetric power relations and consequently distorts the equal exchange of ideas intrinsic to democracy. In this context, the chances for liberalising relations which enables an open mind required in the everyday practice of communication with a view to constituting the capital of confidence (Habermas, 2004:17) dwindles. Though an analogous situation prevails in Cameroon, there is evidence that people are empowering themselves at multiple sites.

\(^4\) For a case in point, see Giovanni Sartori, ‘How Far can Democracy Travel’ in Journal of Democracy, Vol.6, No.3, (July, 1995), p.92. This argument is informed by the traditional idea of development put forth by the modernization thesis. Modernization presupposes the eradication of ignorance and illiteracy. The democratic franchise cannot be extended to those that fail to meet these conditions. Edmund Burke in his Reflections on the French Revolution even finds a biblical justification for this position in the Ecclesiastes: ‘The wisdom of the learned man cometh by the opportunity of leisure and he that hath little business shall become wise…. How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough and that glorieth in the goad; the driven oxen; that is occupied in their labors; and whose talk is of bullocks?’ (London, 1964, p.47). Two related propositions are derived from this argument. Wealth allows leisure, which facilitates education, which produces fitness for public life. The negative corollary is that poverty necessitates full-time labouring, hence the absence of learning and so a basic unfitness for political participation. But there is a new consensus that this argument is demodée. Even modernization does not consist of erasing the past but of incorporating aspects of it into aspects of the future.


\(^6\) According to this poll, 54.5\% of the sampled population(1000) equated it with the idea of liberty, 26.6 saw it as government by the people and 6\% saw it as the ensemble of cultures, practice and institutions allowing for an equitable, consensual and negotiated resolution of societal problems. Cited in Le Messager, No.814, 13 (September 1998), p.6.

\(^7\) See Edmund Burke, supra, footnote 4.

\(^8\) 20,000 people throughout Latin America were involved in the poll. See www.undp.org/dpa/perssrelease/releases/2004/april/0421prodal.html.
Remotely connected to the political in some instances, the beneficiaries of empowerment develop the confidence necessary for engagement in things overtly political. Elena Martinez’s posits that ‘if human development as the reports of UNDP have time and gain argued is ‘the expansion of options so that people can improve their lives’ then I would say that democracy is human development in the public sphere. It is the expansion of the collective options that impact on the quality of our lives’. Granting the normative discourses about growth and development intrinsic to democracy, people tend to make demands for social policies that guarantee access to health provision, education and income maintenance. Both the state and the private sector can provide these ‘goods’. ‘However, none of the foregoing is factored in when Africa’s new democracies are forced to choose between the state and market. … Choice within the neoliberal economic paradigm, is little more than the Keynesian complex compromise between a strong market and a strong state; that is, the whole complex notion of ‘embedded liberalism’ (Amuwo, 2004: 325).

This paper focuses mostly on the capacity of the Cameroonian government to provide these goods. Doubts about the state’s commitment to democracy as human development in the public sphere are prompted by its initial reluctance of the regime. Preoccupied by the will to power, it was hesitant to commit to this project which fostered the will to participation among the dominant class. Reform instituted in the wake of protests simply acknowledged a shift in the balance of forces. Ordinarily, reform should reflect a new morality that obtains in society and consequently provide the normative basis for consent in the political exchange between subordinate and dominant classes. In other words, the new morality is a mechanism for social governance that strives to unite society. Yet, the existence of common projects should not create the illusion of consistency because each actor may follow a distinct path. Thus, there is a need to focus on the dual dimensions of reforms with a view to ascertaining that they do not simply lead to a ‘cosmetic restructuring of the political terrain’. They should open up more spaces or micro-habitats for more struggles for democracy and democratisation. Though struggles carried out at this level are inhibited from gaining the salience of a macro-confrontational momentum, they are important when connected to an historically determinate environment and thereby restored to the world of meaningful interconnections.

Mapping a new political future

The uncontested functioning of the hegemonic project introduced early into the postcolonial state gave the impression that Cameroon lacked the internal capacity to change. Besides contracting political space, this project engendered prebendalism (Bayart, 1979) and involution or the downward spiralling of ever worsening conditions (Jua, 1988, 1991). What it lacked in compassion, it failed to make up for in possibilities. Despite this, political quietude remained the norm as

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9 Ibid.
10 See Bratton and van de Walle, op cit. p.37.
disciplined and normalised subjects ‘lived the lie’, consigning their consciences to the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM). Existential opposition could be found only in the interstices of society. Its growth was stifled by the police rule of law. Change was ushered in only by the synergy produced by a combination of factors (Bratton and van de Walle, 1998). Denying the state discursive monopoly signalled a challenge to its aspiration to normative homogeneity. Clear proof of this was the launching of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) in May 1990 in Bamenda which, amid heavy state security presence, called for the introduction of liberal democracy. Its defiance stripped the state of its claims to invincibility. In this changed context, the affective community of those calling for democratisation grew; while there was an inverse correlation between its growth and state delegitimation or legitimacy deficit. Consequently, this state could no longer present Cameroonians with the moral grounds for cooperation and obedience (Beetham, 1992:26).

Against this backdrop, protests putting a premium on the immediacy of democracy increased. But the CPDM-quà-regime balked. Its rallying cry was ‘no to precipitated democracy’. Arguably, the regime’s belief in its ontological superiority caused it to seek to dictate social the agenda. And its reluctance to make the mental adjustment necessary for change barred it from inscribing regime change on this agenda. Instead of a clear position shift, it resorted to a rhetorical strategy in the face of persistent demands. Evidence of this was President Paul Biya’s laconic response to Operation Villes Mortes (Dead Towns Operations) used to blackmail the regime into changing: ‘yes, I have understood’. Reminiscent of Charles de Gaulle’s response to the thousands of Union pour la Défense de la République protesting against the granting of independence to Algeria in 1958 (Ngoh, 2004:434), it could only give rise to a polysemous reading and sustain the impasse.

To the present generation of Cameroonian politicians, liberal democracy is counter-intuitive and perforce counter-productive. Thus, pessimists were not comforted by the passage of the 1990 Liberty Laws that allowed, inter alia, the formation of political parties. Operation Villes Mortes (Dead Towns Operations) used to blackmail the regime into changing: ‘yes, I have understood’. Reminiscent of Charles de Gaulle’s response to the thousands of Union pour la Défense de la République protesting against the granting of independence to Algeria in 1958 (Ngoh, 2004:434), it could only give rise to a polysemous reading and sustain the impasse.

To the present generation of Cameroonian politicians, liberal democracy is counter-intuitive and perforce counter-productive. Thus, pessimists were not comforted by the passage of the 1990 Liberty Laws that allowed, inter alia, the formation of political parties. In their view, barons of the regime having failed to undergo an ideological adjustment were more interested in appeasement than democracy which promotes human development in the public sphere. Already, at the CPDM 1995 Bamenda Congress, mavericks in the party noting this reluctance argued that for the ‘New Deal’ policy of rigor and moralisation to be successful, only new wine must be put in new wineskins. A Progressive wing of this party was born in the early 1990s because the mainstream practiced rigueur en corruption (rigor in corruption) rather than rigor and moralisation per se. This brought into broad relief the fact that the existence of a common project should not create the illusion of consistency, as various actors may opt for different trajectories. Scepticism as a result thereof was not conducive to the constitution of a transparent consciousness. And absent this, Cameroonians doubted the political willingness of the regime to reform.
In retrospect, these doubts were justified. Despite its declared commitment to reform, the mainstream of the CPDM continues to manifest des reflexes de partie unique. The prevalence of autocratic tendencies within this party explains its recent factionalisation along the conservative-modernist spectrum. Recently, Milla Assoute and other modernists erupted into public space with the publication of a White Paper which decried endemic corruption in the party and the lack of a democratic culture. Pointedly, most of these modernists who belong to a younger generation educated in post-1956 France doubted why Biya who is Chairman of the CPDM should be seen as its natural candidate for the 2004 Presidential elections. Their critique was unsettling to the extent that some of the older barons bought into their argument. But the party was comforted by the differences in the on-stage and off-stage script of its members. The ensuing volte face in position-taking weakened the modernists. Further exacerbating this is the negative effect that the mainstream conservative wing has on it, offering prebends to its members as baits. Because of these trends, in the popular consciousness of Cameroonians, the CPDM can neither foster nor nurture democracy in Cameroon.

Contributing to this lack of capacity is the party’s penchant to instrumentalise leadership positions. The one party state had enabled this post-colony to be converted into a resource in itself, while patrimonialism enabled barons to acquire phenomenal wealth. Democracy which emphasises transparency and accountability can thrive only following a change in the culture of politics. This new culture does not dissipate the pursuit of self-interest. Rather, according to de Tocqueville, it emphasises ‘self-interest properly understood’, that is, self-interest defined in the context of broader public needs, self-interest that is ‘enlightened’ rather than ‘myopic’, self-interest that is alive to the need of others. It puts a premium on transparency and accountability. Discounting of these principles is proof that self-interest of the CPDM leadership is still myopic.

Acknowledging the continued institutionalisation of corruption, a Western embassy in Yaounde posited that it may have the political utility of enabling members of the ruling class to mass fortunes would be used in future political competitions. Its subtext was that corruption could purposeful and not a just a Sisyphean tendency. With the value of hindsight, this Embassy had it all wrong. Corruption, in Cameroonian public space, is a culture. \textit{Le Confidentiel africain} recently highlighted this it described Biya’s mode of governance thus: ‘the most invisible President in Africa, who does not govern at all rather than badly, hanging above a society where it is permissible for everyone to take his share and leave the president alone. From the junior civil servant to the judge in remote areas, everyone is preoccupied with rent-seeking’. Essentially, Cameroon is a warehouse accessible to all political entrepreneurs. Presiding over this warehouse is a cabal which, according to Voltaire is ‘divided by interests but united by crime’. Partly because of this, Cameroon ranked first back to back on Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI) in the late 1990s and has since then retained its dubious distinction as one of the world’s most corrupt countries.

Insofar as this engenders a ‘maximax problematique’ where the state overloaded with demands has only minimal funds for investments, it has negative

repercussions for the development of social citizenship. Evidence of this is the country’s 134th position out of 174 countries included in UNDP’s Human Development Index in 2000. More obnoxious is the skewed distribution of income. According to the report, 10% of the poorest segment of the population had a GDP per capita income of about US$100 as compared to $1500 for the upper 10%.

Despite paying lip compliment to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), the regime lacks the political will to promote justice as fairness (Rawls). Yet, this minimalist position, that is, efforts to fight poverty and inequality are imperative for democracy to go ‘beyond the ballot box’ (UNDP, 2004). Failing this, and in what is clearly a profound paradox, democracy may actually engender democratic fatigue. In other states, as warranted by specific historical conditions, these minimalist conditions may have to be complemented by policies meant to, for instance, promote a forgetting of the past with a view to levelling the playing field (Jua, 2004:355).

It is against this backdrop that advocates of regime change argued that the 1990 Liberty Laws, though necessary, were not sufficient to kick-start democratisation. A constitutional review, a view that they foisted on the regime, was a prerequisite. Elsewhere in Francophone Africa, with the adoption of a holistic approach where sovereign national conferences (SNCs) adopted constitutions as well as the organising principles, this problem of sequencing had been avoided. Constitutions embody the morality of any society and therefore are common frameworks of beliefs for organising everyday life. They therefore set out the conditions for the existence of all other laws which should be barometers of all moral and social thinking (Friedman, 1964:143).

To ascertain this morality, Biya convoked what is referred in Cameroonian speak as the large/grand debate in 1996. But people doubted his commitment to the inclusiveness principle for he had claimed at the 1992 CPDM Congress in his defiant Qui sont-ils? (who are they) speech that only his party could bring democracy to Cameroon. And given that people are differentially endowed, only those at the top at this party, an exclusive social location, could participate in the process. But proceeding along this path would have denied people ownership of this document. To imbue it with a semblance of public ownership, he invited members of civil society.

But Biya’s insistence in naming the delegates brought into broad relief the fact that he still subscribed to the organising principles of the hegemonic state. ‘Disciplined’ and ‘normalized’ subjects had no voice. Alternatively, Biya was using another register where the leader as head of an African family controls all members. As jural and social minors, their agentic capacities are not fully developed. The similarities of this paternalistic ethos with the monarchist one is remarkable. In the latter, liberty is best guaranteed by a benevolent monarch. With a view to fostering an impression of popular participation, the Minister of Communication, Kontchou Kouomegni, urged all Cameroonians to send in their views by telephones, faxes and email. That this was only a rhetorical strategy can be discerned from the fact that the country in 2000 had only 134,000 fixed telephone lines with 70,558 being operational (Mezom, 2000). Use of this mode of communication at this defining moment in the transition could only promote

differential access to the state. Not even the freehand given to political parties to name their delegates could change this. Thus, whereas collective life (popular sovereignty) requires inclusiveness, discursive diversity was de-emphasised, denying the government a ‘moral resource’ that ‘generates and sustains collective solutions to politically contentious issues (Knight and Johnson, 1994:278).

Though referenda are the privileged mode for adopting constitutions, the document was sent to Parliament. The presence of Opposition parties such the Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP) in this institution did not stop the CPDM from trying to make history and do so in circumstances of its own choosing. This preoccupation caused it, for example, to suspend voting on this document in the Constitutional sub-Committee which had a quorum. Done at the behest of the Prime Minister, it afforded the CPDM the opportunity to use the iron law of oligarchy to bring its nonconforming members into line. And with a view to manufacturing a consensus, it also resorted to symbolic violence to silence opposition from the UNDP MPs. Its goal failed only when the people discovered that the draft published in Cameroon Tribune, the official government paper, was an amended version of the 1972 Constitution, rather than one adopted in Parliament.

This realisation opened a window, however slight, into the government’s intentions. Conscious of the ‘profitable dialectic between information and control’ (Said, 1979:36), Biya had urged Cameroonians to read only the Cameroon Tribune in search of the truth. When it was caught peddling misinformation, this caused people to question its credibility. Henceforth, admission of its victory would not stop a questioning of its truth. The government used plausible deniability to reverse this. The President of the National Assembly published a laconic rejoinder in the paper that the paper’s version of the constitution contained a lot of errors and omissions from the one effectively adopted by the Assembly and caused Kouomegni, the official who supposedly induced it into error to be queried by the Presidency and the Security forces.17

Ascertaining moral correctness even after the promulgation of the 1996 Constitution is problematic because the 1972 Constitution remains in force and the new one is being applied only incrementally. So far, this has been obfuscated incrementalism. Ambiguity has enabled a continuous reign of the arbitrary. Paradigmatic of this is the failure of the members of the ruling class to declare their assets when they enter and leave office as stipulated in its Article 66. Lack of enabling legislation, that explains the non-application of some other articles, is not a justification in this case. And it begins to validate Foucault’s observation that sovereignty remains a centralised power to command that is more or less impervious to the democratic discourses within which it is located (Huntand Wickham, 1994:61). Seen through another prism, Cameroon is still an absolutist state where those who make the laws are above them. Rather than investing its 1996 constitution with undue intentionality and centrality; it should be seen as a

17 The Herald, No. 266, 11 December (1996), p.1. For example, he claimed, contrary to available (ocular) evidence that no student died in the University of Yaounde as a result of clashes with the forces of state violence in the early 1990s had earned him the sobriquet ‘zero mort’. Similarly, he was indicted for giving Cameroon Tribune partial results of the legislative results which had been fabricated by the regime. He erupted into public space again to inform Cameroonians that the money they had contributed to support their national team in 1995 was lost in a briefcase between Cameroon and the United States.
clear example of linguistic inflation. ‘Despotism when overthrown gives rise to new forms of despotism’ (Elster, 1993:215). And only a reversal of this trend would enable Cameroon to qualify as a partial strong democracy.

Reading Cameroon’s Democracy into the SFTF framework

For Cameroon’s democracy to become a strong partial democracy, Presidential powers have to be curbed and the separation of powers between institutions which ‘embody accepted principles and their rules reflect established beliefs, about the rightful source of political authority’ (Beetham, 1991:127) guaranteed. Furthermore, with a view to assuring popular control of these institutions, it needed to institutionalise effective political competition as defined in the EDI. The constative aspects and performative dimensions of constitutions provide are entry points to assessing democracy compliant systems.

Institutional capacity building and the separation of powers

Totalising powers wielded by the President had caused this institution to be depicted as imperial (Etonga, 1980). It was even construed as having imaginary powers over the means of production (Jua, 2003). The 1996 Constitution could provoke a rupture from this past only to the extent that it guaranteed a jurisdictional distribution of political powers. Per this Constitution, the President who ensures its respect and has the prerogative to define national policy is elected for a seven-year period, renewable once. Article 8 empowers him to set up and organise the administrative services of the state as well as refer matters to the Constitutional Council. Departing from the emphasis of the EDI that elections should be the means of access to public office, it give President the powers to appoint the Prime Minister who is Head of Government and the Ministers on recommendation of the latter. That these officials do not need Parliamentary confirmation denies this institution leverage over the President and those implementing the policy of the nation as defined by him. It is common to hear Ministers accredit their positions to the confidence that the President has in them. Consequently, they are accountable only to him.

Arguably, Article 14 which grants the National Assembly (Parliament) and the Senate legislative powers is a corrective measure. It grants the legislative branch which can propose bills for adoption powers of oversight over government action. Article 15 defining the constituency of each member of Parliament (MP) as the entire nation buys into the Burkean logic ‘Parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole, where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good resulting from the general reason of the whole’. To guarantee this, MPs are elected by direct universal and secret suffrage. For the Senate, however, Article 20 stipulates that ‘each region shall be represented in the Senate by ten senators of whom seven shall be elected by indirect universal suffrage on a regional basis and three appointed by the President.

Indicative of a rupture from past practice, its Article 37 recognised the Judiciary as a power. This power is exercised in the name of the people by the Supreme Court (comprising the judicial, administrative and audit benches), Courts of Appeal and Tribunals which shall be independent of the executive and
legislative powers. Consequently, magistrates of the bench, in the discharge of their duties, shall be guided only by law and their conscience. Enigmatically, per Article 38(3) the President shall guarantee the independence of the judiciary as well as appoint members of the bench and of the legal department. Admittedly, he is assisted in this task by the Higher Judicial Council ‘which shall give him its opinion on all nominations for the bench and on disciplinary action against judicial and legal officers’. Article 46 provides for a Constitutional Council which shall have jurisdiction in matters pertaining to the Constitution, rule on the constitutionality of laws and regulate the functioning of the institutions. This jurisdictional division of powers should preempt policy makers from emulating Bismarck who claimed that those who like laws and sausages should not look at how they are made. Yet principle and practice do not necessarily coincide, especially in heroic states.

**Separation of Powers or a relationship of Imperative Coordination**

The doctrine of the separation of powers, though a gauge of the politically feasible or ethically justifiable, becomes irrelevant in the absence of constitutionalism. Cognisant of this, Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that men should be before laws what they become through them (in Douzinas and Warrington, 1991:147). Institutional restraints compliment rather than substitute for self-restraint, a trait that is seemingly in short supply among Cameroon’s ruling class. Against this backdrop, it has been argued normatively that founding elections are crucial for democratic consolidation in Africa (Villalon, 1993:165). Seemingly to give effect to this, Cameroonians were overwhelmingly voted change in the 1992 Presidential elections. But Biya’s regime, conscious of the fact that those who make important miscalculations in these elections are eliminated from office (Prezworski and Lynn Karl 1990:6) rigged these elections. Cameroon’s democracy thereafter became ‘not a matter of breaking through the barrier to further development of a political and economic system on its way up, but the last gasp attempt to hold together one on its way down’ (Clapham, 1993:534). Since this required reinforcing the powers of the President, the doctrine of the separation of powers has been turned on its head. The relationship between the Executive and Parliament is one of imperative coordination as can be discerned in a recent claim by Adamou Ndam Njoya, the President of the Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU).18 And this is because the CPDM, Biya’s party, has an overwhelming majority of seats in Parliament. Though opacity is a trademark of this party, it has been claimed that all decisions emanate from Biya who holds all the carrots and sticks. Thus, a former Vice President of the Assembly noted: ‘I don’t know how I was made Vice President. It was a surprise to me. There is not way, I think, anybody can try to influence such decisions without burning his fingers.’19 ‘We, the people’ are further disempowered when an MP insists in defining his role as the representative of the President in his constituency! Against this backdrop, one can begin to understand the disconnect between some MPs who live in urban areas and their constituents. Paradigmatic of this is the lack of constituency ‘surgeries’ that enable MPs to see their constituents at specific

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18 see critique by Adamou Ndam Njoya, President of the Union for Democratic Change (UDC) and Member of Parliament for Noun in La Nouvelle Expression, No. 1252, 21 April (2004).
times. Fear has vitiated, if not obviated, the spirit of independence among the MPs. Thomas Jefferson noted: ‘If I can go to heaven but with a political party, I would not go there at all’ (Hostadter, 1969:123). Jefferson’s skepticism about political parties is not shared in Cameroon which does not allow for independent MPs.

Arguably, the presence of fear pre-empts MPs from using the organisational resources, though few, at their disposal to control Executive action, powers discerned on them per Article 14(2) of the Constitution. To enable this legislative oversight, Article 10 of the Parliament’s internal regulations allows MPs to pose either oral or written questions to Ministers. Though question and sessions have been institutionalised after several hiccups, CPDM MPs are constantly reminded not to use these sessions to embarrass the Government. Similarly, the Ministers see it as an unnecessary ritual and seek to deride MPs during these sessions. Failure of the House leadership to stop this caused leaders of the Opposition to put it in the public domain20. Disregard for MPs among the Ministers can be explained by the fact that even bills rejected by Parliament can still be signed into law. A case in point is the bill liberalising the health sector.21 Indicative of a failure to accept the moral authority of Parliament, it also shows the Executive’s propensity to ignore the ‘due process of law’ in the implementing its policy. Laws therefore take on the semblance of a coups de force rather than emanate from a political exchange.

To maximise the chances for political exchange, dissent should not be confounded with conflict. Yet this is the prevailing attitude among Cameroonian political parties. MPs who disagree with their parties risk exclusion from the party and ultimately the loss of their seat. MPs are conscious of Article 15(3) of the Constitution which renders ‘any imposed mandate null and void’ (mandate imperative). This reinforces the iron law of oligarchy as expulsion from a party leads to a loss of Parliamentary seat. MPs would go to any extent to avoid negative narcissism (Rosenfeld, 1971:169) that is, political destruction directed to the self or be labelled, in Cameroonian speak, as les enemies dans la maison (enemies in the house). Against this backdrop, Parliamentary compromises become difficult. Its deleterious effect in the United States— helping to turn the United States from a strong to a weak democracy- has been shown in the railings of the ineffective Congress in the years leading up to the Civil War (Gladstone et al:2003:29). Furthermore, it also explains the inability of MPs to vote into law or even discuss any private member bill since 1992. Though Article 14(4) of the Constitution stipulates that private member bills not considered during two ordinary sessions are automatically considered at the very next ordinary session, the CPDM majority has pre-empted this by resorting to subterfuge. By and large, present trends in Cameroon suggest ‘the decline of opposition’ as opposed to ‘the decline of the opposition’. This as Sidney Tarrow noted in the case of Italy signals a decline in the level of dialogue between the government and the opposition, the summit and the base, that is the hallmark of Parliamentary democracy. Absent Parliamentary opposition, only the Judiciary can begin to redeem Cameroon’s democratic project. This required that it foster the judicial discipline of the Executive as well as the rule of law. Enforcing the rule of law requires an ethos


21 For a critical appraisal of this measure, see Albert Dzongang in Le Messager, No.848, 2 December (1998), p3.
of impartiality and a condition of its possibility is a Judiciary ‘which is capable of withstanding the pressures and blandishments of the powerful’ (Beetham, 1992:123-124). To nurture judicial correctness, the Constitution provides that judges should apply the law in accordance with their conscience. Structural conditions, however, have made this impossible. Notable among them is the overwhelming space occupied by the Higher Judicial Council that promotes, transfers and sanctions judges. This Council which meets only when the President can squeeze its meetings into his schedule mostly endorses proposals prepared by the Executive. Appointments are seen as rewards and the fact that the Council has previously sanctioned magistrates for applying the law does not comfort magistrates.

Notable is the sanction meted out on the magistrates of the Bamenda High Court granting bail to Justice Nyo Wakai et al. detained 1992 under the under the State of Emergency Law (suit No. HCB/19 CRM/92). The magistrates in ordering their release, noted that they had been held beyond the period prescribed in the law and that detention, in some cases, resulted from administrative voies de faits, that is, illegal administrative acts. This decision, though founded in law, was not politically correct. Enforcing it would have meant releasing some officials of the SDF which had claimed in the 1992 Presidential elections and declared its intent to form the legitimate government in Bamenda. The Attorney General therefore refused to implement it. Cameroonian legal practitioners have noted the reticence of Attorneys General to apply court decisions that do not favor the state. This is in violation of Section 24(A) of Ordinance 72/4 of August 1972 (amended by Ordinance 72/21 of October 1972) calling on them to intervene in cases in ‘the interests of the law’ (Cameroon Law Reports, 1998:13). With the passage of time, a judicial culture that confounds ‘the interests of the law’ with the ‘the interests of the state qua regime’ has emerged.

Attempts by the Court or some of its officials to enforce some of these decisions have been stopped on the tracks by police or the military officers placed under the authority of the Executive. They use physical well as psychological violence on bailiffs executing court decisions. Recently, a bailiff executing a decision of the Douala Court of Appeal expelling a tenant from a house, was beaten by a Army captain working with the Douala branch of the Direction Générale des Renseignements Extérieurs (DGRE), a security intelligence gathering outfit. Consequent to this, one of the presiding judges revisited the decision and asked that the tenant, who is the daughter of a General be reinstated in the house.22 Law in a case where connections rather than rules count is not blind. And the tendency to privilege connections rather than rules does not augur well for the state. Lord Atkins noted that justice is the last line of defense in a state which if ‘overrun by the ever advancing avalanche of moral decay or of pressure’ signal the warning shots ‘being fired for the inauguration of the reign of terror’.

Presently, the Executive as in all heroic states us the locus of power. The Legislative and Judiciary have only ancillary powers. Failing a change in the present configuration of power, the creation of other structures such as the Senate, Constitutional Council and Regions provided for in the 1996 Constitution would probably only enhance the enormity of the President’s powers. The Constitution empowers him to name a third of the members of the Senate and the bulk of those

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22 See Mutations, 29 March (2004).
of the Constitutional Council which shall rule on the constitutionality of all laws. Similarly, at the regional level, per Article 58, he appoints a delegate who ‘shall be responsible for national interests, administrative control, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations as well as maintaining law and order’. In effect, the delegate shall have powers over the elected regional representatives. Historical evidence from early postcolonial Cameroon, as underscored in the conflict between the Federal Inspector and the elected government of West Cameroon (Konings and Nyamnjong, 2003:53-54), brings to the fore the nuisance effect of this ‘bicephalism’. It was rehashed in 1996 after the Municipal elections with the appointment of Government Delegates to urban municipalities such as Douala, Limbe and Bamenda. Appointment of candidates who had lost the election gave the impression that the President sought to negate the commonweal of the people and resonates with a use of subliminal force. Though Machiavelli points out the need of both law and force to guarantee stability (1994: 57), historical evidence suggests that Biya regime would opt for a disproportionate use of force, thus upsetting the balance between these two ordering principles. This as I have argues elsewhere is attributable to the fact ‘throughout Cameroon’s history power has been the text, fear of the ‘other’ the controlling subtext, with the ultimate fear being the loss of power’ (Jua, 2001:41).

The watchdog functions of the Press

The centrality of the fear of loosing power in the regime’s policy agenda explains its desire to feminise other institutions such as the Legislative and Judiciary that serve as countervailing forces. Only public shaming can rein it in. But this requires ‘effective participation’ that depends on appropriate structures and processes as well as access and information (Hill, 1994:7). In a democracy, this role devolves on the press. Commenting on its role, Jeremy Bentham notes: ‘such is the nature of man when clothed with power … that … whatever mischief has not been done by him today, he is sure to be mediating today, and unless restrained by fear of what the public may think or do, it may actually be done by him tomorrow’ (1820-21:15). Arguably, this explains the regime’s reluctance to liberalise the media even after the passage of Law 90-92 of December 1990 to this effect. Under duress, it permitted the creation of alternative newspapers such as le Messager, La Nouvelle Expression, and The Post which have problematised the regime’s accounts of events. Promotion and nurturance of another consciousness causes people to accounts in the government paper. Cameroon Tribune as a truth and not the truth which is ascertained by an intersubjective consensus. Because of this, people turn increasingly to the alternative press. Its sales have increased while those of Cameroon Tribune have plummeted. To counter this trend that the regime sees as contributing to the growth of an oppositional consciousness, it frequently jails journalists of the private press, ostensibly for libel. Or to avoid the gaze of the international community, the courts are now fining them ‘exorbitant sums’. Not even papers such as Popoli that publishes only cartoons, which like jokes in the

Freudian (1905) scheme allow the expression of illicit emotion or desire in the form everyday utterances made safe have escaped the wrath of the government.

Preoccupation with containment also led the regime to hesitate liberalising the audio-visual space. It attributed this to the ‘immediacy of news (which) can have serious effects that are not easily controllable’ and a wish to see ‘a liberalisation worthy of our country in a domain where technological progress is rapid’ respectively. Evidently, it was conscious that Cameroonians privileged the audio-visual media as a source of information. According to a survey by the Center for Research and Study in Economic (CRETE), most Cameroonians in Yaounde and Garoua prefer televisions as their source of information while those Douala, Bafoussam and Bamenda favour the radio. These urban centers, notably, are heavily populated and in the consciousness of its residents, the policy is construed to further Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV), the official media dubbed ‘his master’s voice’, monopoly this space. For example, a recent study of the access time given to five political parties by les Nouveaux Droits de l’Homme shows that the CPDM occupied a disproportionate space occupied by the CPDM- 92.31% on television, 94.1% on radio and 99.53% in the written press.

Against this backdrop, this fringe of the population sees decisions suspending or barring ventures, such as the one in November 2003 closing Radio Veritas, opened by Christian Cardinal Tumi whom was speculated to be a candidate for the 2004 Presidential elections, as designed to pre-empt a levelling of the playing field. That a license for reopening this station and only broadcasting ‘religious programs for the social and cultural education of the Catholic community of Douala’ was granted only after Cardinal Tumi denied the rumour only further validates this line of thinking. Similar constraints are placed on the privately owned stations such as Adriane Television (ATI) and Canal 2 which are seen as presenting the ‘really real’. Under the rules of engagement, the Minister of Communications, who is the political correctness police, has to approve all their programs. And this conditionality is imposed only after the private investor must have gone through the eye of the needle. Exorbitant operational fees – US$15,600 for radio stations, US$73,000 for local television stations and $146,000 for national television stations – serve as a disincentive for most of them (US Embassy, 2002). On the whole, media laws and practice by the regime are liberticidal.

Denying audio-visual licenses, though an efficient way (managing at low costs) of control the spread of information can hardly be effective (managing it in the best way possible). This is because it is predicated on the uncritical acceptance of the doctrine of political sovereignty and territorial integrity. Not only is space bounded but the government is seen to have complete control over its eminent domain. Global forces are gnawing away these powers on a quotidian temporality basis. Thus, stations with a global reach such as the BBC, RFI and Voice of America not only compete with CRTV as the source of information but have become the preferred source of information of most Cameroonians.

Furthermore the advent of new modes of communication such as the e-mail and its democratisation has enabled the formation of an affective community of the oppressed that eschews national boundaries. Also important is deterritorialisation promoted by cable television. All of these have contributed to the CNN factor; margins are erased broadcasting from any geographical location is always from the centre.

**EDI: The Right to vote and free elections**

EDI emphasises the role of free and fair elections as a way of giving back ‘power to the people’ who under the hegemonic party had been reduced to irrelevance, or at best, ‘standing reserves’ used for instrumental value (Heidegger, 1977:18). Cameroon embarked on this path with the holding of its first multiparty elections in March 1992. The CPDM, referred to in popular parlance as *chop people them money*, won only 88 seats in the 180 member Parliament. The *Mouvement Démocratique pour la Défense de la République* (MDR) the *Union pour la Démocratie et du Développement* (UNDP) and *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) won six, 68 and 18 seats respectively. Only an alliance with the MDR enabled the CPDM to gain a working majority in Parliament. Though pacts are aimed at drastically curtailing conflict in a political system (Cohen and Arato, 1992:54), in a context of transition, it has been noted, they ‘attempt to control the agenda of policy concerns deliberately distort the principle of citizen equality (O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986:38). Control of Parliament enabled the CPDM to broach laws for the October 1992 Presidential elections, considered as the founding elections and all other elections that have taken place in Cameroon. It was conscious of the fact that the CDU had boycotted the March elections because of the regime’s failure to respect the minimum rules of engagement laid down at the 1992 Yaounde Tripartite Conference, described as a tragic epic by a newspaper. The SDF, arguably the most popular party, which had *ab initio* doubted the possibility of this Conference to chance Cameroon’s unpacted democracy also boycotted the elections.

These two parties indicated their intention to participate in the 2002 Presidential elections, despite it’s the unpacted nature of Cameroon’s democracy. Seemingly, heeding Prezworski’s warning that parties that make important miscalculations would be eliminated from office, the CDPM turned its focus to electoralism, that is concerned more with outcomes than procedure of elections. In its furtherance, it insisted that the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT) organise the elections. Because the Opposition parties wanted this to be confided to an independent electoral commission, this led to a ‘reciprocal stalemate fed by recalcitrance and polarisation with no visible exit’ (Palma, 1990:56). Despite the failure to resolve this stalemate which continues to dog elections even today, all the parties still participated in the elections. Creation of the National Election Observatory popularly known by its French acronym ONEL, a concession by the regime, has produced at best, a placebo effect, temporary improvement that may follow even medically useless treatment. And this inheres from ONEL’s limited mandate – to observe the whole election process and the fact that all of virtually all of its members belong to the CPDM or are sympathetic to it. This caused its stock of social capital to be depleted. In essence, MINAT retains full powers over organising elections.
Its foregrounds the ‘prefectoral mode of representation’, reminiscent of the practice under the Third French Republic where administrators fabricated election results. The memory Algerian-type elections in the declining French Empire, (E boussi, 1997: 11) continues to inform the consciousness of its administrators. Not surprisingly therefore, Andze Tchoungui who was a Prefet on the eve of Cameroon’s independence in 1960 and the Minister of Territorial Administration in 1992 put a premium on l’obligation de resultants. In a pre-election meeting with Provincial governors, he told them that Biya had to win whatever the outcome of the voting. Because of this, the vote was rigged in favor of Biya to the detriment of Fru Ndi, the SDF Chairman and candidate of the Forces of Change who was the presumed winner. The National Democratic Institute noted that because of flaws like this, the system was ‘designed to fail’ (National Democratic Institute, Press Release, 27 April 2003). This flaw has not been redressed as administrators who are not schooled in the étatist tradition (cf. John-Nambo, 1994:134, Robert, 1992: 443) still organise all elections. This tradition cannot be nurtured in a heroic state and administrators are conscious that their careers as well as upward mobility depend on their ability to foster the regime’s vertical political concerns.

Paradigmatic of this is the zeal with which it sought to execute a 2004 Supreme Court decision annulling results of June 2002 elections in some constituencies. In its exuberance, the Minister faxed message No. 376 Minat/Dajc of 23 April 2004 to the Governor of Littoral Province informing him of the cancellation of the results in Nkongsamba Municipality and to forthwith inform the SDF which was administering this Council. Unreflexively, the Governor by his message No. 95 Mfx/Sg/Cc1 of 28 April 2004 informed the Prefet of Mungo. And with a view to executing this instruction, the Prefet informed the SDF per letter No. 057/Mp/C16/bc of 29 April 2004. Quick and prompt action in this case is anomalous in an Administration known for its legendary lethargy. It was common knowledge that the Court had rejected the CPDM’s appeal to cancel the results of this particular municipality. Though in the public domain, no administrator dared to question the instruction. A basic premise underlying MINAT’s instructions was the Court’s submission to MINATD qua CPDM in all issues in the realm of elections. This was already evident in the 1992 Presidential elections when the President of the Supreme Court after noting its flaws declared that his inability to do anything because his hands were tied.

Its inability to rule in questions of electoral disputes has spawned concepts in Cameroon’s political grammar, such as legal and legitimate results as well as stolen victory. Their effects can be far reaching as demonstrated by the 1992 stalemate when Fru Ndi declared himself and was seen by a fringe of the country as the legitimate President while Biya was described as the legal President. Admittedly, the Court is now resolving some of the disputes engendered by this, even if belatedly. It took seven years to intervene in the case of the first Municipal elections. This interval has been reduced as it took two years to resolve disputes from the 2002 elections. Its discretion vis-à-vis time lines arises from the fact unlike the law governing the Parliamentary elections which stipulates that all electoral disputes be settled within a sixty day period, no time limit is given for

... Fru Ndi declared himself and was seen by a fringe of the country as the legitimate President while Biya was described as the legal President.
resolving similar disputes in Municipal elections. This oversight, whether contrived or fortuitous, does not help to blunt the edge of the arbitrary.

Further exacerbating prejudice caused by the lack of fairness is the fact that elections are not free. Disenfranchisement has been promoted through the introduction of differential entry costs to participation. Terms like *allogène, autochtone* and *electoral village* are now mainstreamed in Cameroon’s culture of politics, that is, practice that is culturally legitimated and validated by local knowledge (Robinson, 1994:39). In effect, *autochtones* claim the right to decide on the political destiny of their *electoral village* and *allogènes* or *kam-no-gos* that comprise ‘an overzealous immigrant population’ should not decide the destiny of their host communities (Jua, 2004:309). Government functionaries played an invaluable role in nurturing this cognition as well as giving it effect. In the South-West Province, for example, a gubernatorial order issued requiring every *allogène* to produce a resident permit before being registered. To obtain a permit, *allogènes* needed to show proof of continuous residence in the Province for at least six months. Revealingly, the prerogative of issuing these permits was given to CPDM officials. In Kumba, it devolved on Chief Mukete, a member of its Political Bureau. Rather than recuse himself, the Chief and his forces violated and exercised violence on *allogènes* who went to his palace in search of permits. And administrators who failed to enforce this order because it lacked the comfort of morality were reminded that they were jeopardising their careers. Evidential of this is a letter from the National President of the CPDM Youth wing to the Senior Divisional Officer for Kumba. Berating him for disrespecting this order he warns: ‘You claim to work for your personal interests, even if the CPDM, your employer (my emphasis) loses in Kumba’. Revealingly, state and party are confounded.

This doctrine of excluding voters suspected of harboring an oppositional consciousness was pushed to its logical conclusion in the June 2002. Electoral charters, that is, bus loads of *allogènes* were brought into constituencies where it was presumed the *autochtones* would vote for the Opposition. Disenfranchised in the areas where they were resident for fear of the influence they would have its political destiny, they were also disenfranchised in their *electoral villages* because they would not vote for the CPDM. In Dschang in the Western Province, for example, bus loads of Beti *allogènes* were brought and given the privilege of multiple votes while *autochtones* were denied the right to vote! Though the *allogène/autochtone* binary was foregrounded in throughout the electoral process, it is not sacrosanct. The name of any potential voter suspected to be infected by the Opposition virus is expunged form the electoral register. Notable is the case of Professor Ndiva Kofele Kale, the SDF candidate for Parliament for Buea Urban who could not even vote. His name was not on the register!

These electoral practices have contributed significant to demobilising people, albeit their will to participation. They no longer register to vote or vote. Analogically, elections have become like projects where if the implementers could

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14 According to Jeremie Engolo who was the leader of the ‘ambulant voters’, they were hired by the Minister of Towns, Claude Mbafo and Mme Mebara who transported them to Dschang. Here they could vote several times with a view to guaranteeing victory for the CPDM in this municipality. In return, they were to be paid handsomely as well as rewarded with government contracts (*The Post*, 19 July (2002), p.2. Those imported into the North-West Province (in Santa specifically) were lodged and fed as well as promised the sum of 15.000 francs for their transport fares to their homes (*The Post*, 1 July (2002), p.3).
foresee how tortuous the path to completion would be, the precautionary principle would prevent them from undertaking such projects. This principle of the hiding hand is functional to progress (Hirschman, 1967: 22) Since this hiding hand is visible in Cameroonian politics, people simply opt for exit; their votes would not influence electoral outcomes. A recent French Senate report noted that there is a yawning gap between the announced rate of 80 and 90% participation and the effective rate one. According to the report, this was attributable to the nostalgia for ancient practices.\(^\text{31}\) To further sustain this thesis, a report by the Cameroon Episcopal Council found out that only 30% of the potential voters were registered in 2002. And the number of those actually voting dwindled because most people did not know where to vote. Whereas the law prescribes that electoral lists should be published three days in advance, they were published only on voting day in 90% of the voting stations.\(^\text{32}\)

Other factors also explain the current demobilisation among the people. Notable is ONEL’s inability to even supervise and control the mixed commissions that revise electoral registers. Some of commissions do not even have an ONEL representative.\(^\text{33}\) Similarly, opposition parties have exhausted the political credit that the people gave them without bringing about any change and now resemble the CPDM in many aspects. An intra-party political exchange of ideas is discouraged and transparency (Transparency International, 2004) as well as accountability de-emphasised. Public funds given to some of the parties represented in the Assembly such as the SDF have not been well managed. And some of their leaders readily abandon the agenda for change as a result of bribes from foreign countries as in the case of Françafrique.\(^\text{34}\) All political parties are beginning to look like Tweedledum and Tweedledee. It is spurious to attribute the general demobilisation, as the CPDM has done, to the fact that opposition parties projets de société. Most African parties are electoral rather than thought machines. The importance of the projet de société has waned considerably as demonstrated by the election of Silvio Berlusconi’s Forzi Italia in Italy in 1993 despite the widespread perception that it lacked a projet de société or even a precise program (Buijttenhuis,1994:134) and Brazil where people think and participate in politics in more personalistic and immediate ways (Mettenheim, 1990:39-40). Generally, Cameroonians are suffering from a ‘rebound effect’, caused by the inverse correlation between the effort expended to bring about political liberalism and its payoff. Because of this, they have opted for free riding (Hirschmann, 1982:80) and maintain an attitude of critical silence.

**Negotiating the Impasse**

The argument that only alternation ushered by founding elections can help consolidate democracy needs to be interrogated. In Senegal where Abdoulaye Wade, the President of le rue publique has finally become the President of la République, cynicism seems to run deep as Senegalese bemoan ‘alternation without an alternative’. In other words, people are seduced by democracy not just because it enables participation but also an improvement in their life chances. The

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\(^{32}\) *Le Quotidien Mutations*, 03 May (2004), www.quotidienmutations.net.


\(^{34}\) See www.reseauvoltaire.net/article 7950.html.
normative discourses of growth and development are intrinsic to it. Its failure to bring about these ends in Latin America, as noted above largely explains the sprawl of democratic fatigue among the people. This is echoed in the Senegalese case. Though elections have not led to an alternation as yet in Cameroon, there are certain conditions that would hamper the emergence of an alternative, if not an enabling environment for development. To counter this, the IMF has urged for a reform of the judicial system. In Cameroon’s first Poverty Reduction Strategy Reduction Paper (PRSP), the IMF notes: ‘the results from consultative participations identified violence, corruption and lack of security as important elements of contributing factors to poverty’ (IMF, 2003: 11). And corruption, Kofi Annan notes ‘undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organised crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish (UN Wire, April 12, 2004).

This is brought into broad relief with the privatisation of the state which signals an absence of the notion of public good and general interest. Guaranteeing entitlements to the rich, it disempowers the poor. Subterfuge, such as the Cameroon’s refusal to budget oils revenues with a view to starving off the Dutch disease, is used in some instances. Enigmatically, these revenues disappeared into a black hole. Budget deficits spiralled. This impacted negatively on the development of social citizenship. Attempts by the state to get policy right, though a conditionality of their exposure to international financial institutions (IFIs), have not borne the anticipated dividends. Leakages still abound as demonstrated in the Forestry sector. Despite a Forestry law to assure rational exploitation, ‘ anarchic logging outside of the boundaries of the legally allowed license’ is commonplace. Purveyors of this crime benefit from the regime of immunities (Mbembe, 2001). They are Army officers, leaders of the CPDM, the members of Biya’s family and European forest exploiters who have exploitation licenses. To begin to curb this, IFIs have insisted on their democratic management through the introduction of management committees, a reform embraced by the people who are no longer inert (Braudrillard, 1983). As in other reform measures that seek to institute an enabling environment for development, elites have sought to capture these committees. Elite capture is grounded in altruism. Supposedly, the common man, through a Hegelian prism, is unable to make distinctions and therefore needs to be saved from himself. But increasingly this claim is challenged as instanced in the case of the Mengame Gorilla Sanctuary, created to promote conservation, eco-tourism and local development of the area. With a view to realising these goals, the government entered into a Partnership Agreement (PA) with Société Forestière Petra (Sofopetra) in 1997. It was renewed in September 2000. Sofopetra built roads, bridges as well as a saw mill which led to job creation. The quality of the people’s life improved as it also opened small consumer shops, built classrooms and opened community nurseries for palms. Having satisfied the engagements in its cahier des charges, it expected the Cameroon to respect its promise by granting it ‘most favoured company’ status when assigning logging rights in the surrounding forests. It not only failed to do this but also cancelled the PA with Sofopetra in 2001,

accusing it of ‘illegal logging, manipulation and contributing to forest degradation’. These indictments were supported by Green Peace.\textsuperscript{36}

But the people, who as it emerges from local discourses privilege immediacy and are more concerned with improving their quality of life (Oyono \textit{et al.}, 2003) failed to buy into this argument. Since Sofopetra contributed to its realisation, it was seen as the holy grail and attempts to expel it from this area conspiratorial. The conspiracy thesis was only validated by the attempts of the MP, Efoua Mbozo, to have the exploitation licenses for peripheral forests to be granted to Aveico Ltd. and Cofa, owned by the son of an Army General and Biya’s nephew respectively. The people weighed in at this juncture with popular protests which helped to convert decision making in this area into a new site of struggle. Other sites are emerging all over the country. To escape capture, people acting more as opportunity snatchers are continuously wresting voice which confers legitimacy (Lyotard, 993:140) on elites seen as reifying the state. Costs of protests at this level are politically acceptable when seen through the prism of dispersed domination. In this mode of governance in which parts of the state may be pulled in different directions, neither the state nor any social force manages to achieve countrywide domination (Migdal, 1994:9). Alternatively, it evidences a multiple authority polity where the dysfunctional state endeavors to preside over torn societies (Kamrava, 1993:705). Though fragments, they change the way power is lived, experience and dealt with. This has far reaching implications as it is essentially an insurrection against the extant mode of domination, which to paraphrase Michel Foucault has been ‘fixed throughout its history in meticulous procedures that imposed rights and obligations and established its marks of power and engraved memories on things and even with bodies’ (Shumway, 1992:11)

Arguably, the state cedes grounds readily in the economic realm because this does not directly threaten its political power. But each victory reveals its capacity deficit, that is, its means ‘to implement official goals in the face of actual or potential opposition of social powerful groups or in the face of recalcitrant socio-economic circumstances’ (Stocpol, 1985:9). This was brought into broad relief recently by the nation wide strike called by taxi drivers to protest extortionary practices by the police. Rather than address the substantive issue, the state used the ethic card and symbolic violence (bribes) in a quest to fragment their common experience. This was to no avail. Resistance by the poor in circumstances like this is remarkable for Hegel notes: ‘dissoluteness, misery and physical and ethical corruption disconnects people from formative associations, with a consequent sense of right and wrong, of honesty and the self-respect that makes a man insist on maintaining himself by his work and effort’ (1952:123-124). Increasingly, the inventiveness of African societies and their capacity for innovation when confronted by pauperisation (for details see Ela, 1998:3)– tending to foreground social networks and reciprocity in devising alternative survival strategies– is enabling them to deal with uncertainty (Berner and Trulsson, 2000). The informal economy contributes to the development of social citizenship.

\textbf{Conclusion}

\textsuperscript{36} See \texttt{www.greenpeace.org/media/publications/forests/cameroon.pdf.}
The endurance of the democratisation process for more than ten years begins to prove the chances of democratic possibilism on the continent. Despite this, few doubt the prescience of Larry Diamond’s observation that ‘if progress is made toward developing democratic government (in Africa), it is likely to be gradual, messy, fitful and slow, with many imperfections along the way’ (1989:24). Evidence from Cameroon shows that this progress is further inhibited in heroic states where the democratic projects are unpacted. Architects of this project are more concerned with the will to power than the will to participation. The regime has resorted to a lexical inflation to cover over this; Cameroon moved from practicing advanced to appeasement democracy. Essentially, this is rhetorical strategy that conceals the regime’s autocratic tendencies and its accumulated disregard for organisational principles such as the jurisdictional distribution of political, free and fair elections that are intrinsic to strong partial democracies. The emphasis on electoralism has even led to a change in the culture of politics. Its cumulative effect has been democratic fatigue. Because of this, Cameroon has the traits of a weak partial democracy and only an alternation in power would increase the chances for its reversal. Presently, the chances of a democratic rescue are increased by the practice of dispersed domination. Empowering people at other sites that are remotely connected to the political seems innocuous. But it overlooks the effect of empowerment on the nurturance of a critical consciousness and the fact that capital is easily transferred from one field to the other. Because of this development, the democratisation process as perceived and experienced in Cameroon as essentially work in progress though hanging on a shoestring.

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Briefings

SOCIAL SCIENCE IN AFRICA OR AFRICAN SOCIAL SCIENCE: AKE AND THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL ACTIVISM FOR AFRICAN SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

By Okechukwu Ibeanu

The process of development is tied to dialectic between the intellectuals and the masses.

– Antonio Gramsci

...if social science is to move in the direction in which it is involved with the critical problems of the whole society, then it has to be associated with a mass-oriented development, rather than the elite oriented development ... now being pursued in most Third World countries.

– Claude Ake

Introduction

How do you begin to unpack Claude Ake? Is it from the perspective of a social theoretician? Is it from the position of a committed social activist and patriot? Is it from the vantage point of his humanism? Or is it from the standpoint of a wordsmith and logodaedalus? However you choose to unpack Ake, the task is enormous, engaging and very fulfilling.

In a sense, I consider myself privileged among many of my peers because I did not only read numerous works by Ake, but had the singular opportunity of meeting and discussing with him a number of times. I am sure that anyone who had such an opportunity would have come out with the feeling that an hour with Ake is like a year of thorough university education. Consequently, I want to begin by sharing with you some of my personal experiences with Claude Ake in a space of four years preceding his untimely death in 1996. I feel that this is useful because through these personal experiences I learned more about Ake and his work than I did from nearly 20 works of his that I have read. These include his seminal books on theory of integration, theory of political development, political economy of Africa, democracy and development in Africa, and political economy of Nigeria, which he edited. They also include a number of journal articles including those on Rousseau and rights, the scientific status of political science, the state in Africa, and explanatory notes on political economy of Africa, among others.

1 Keynote address delivered at the Claude Ake Memorial Award Alumni Conference organized by the Africa-America Institute, New York, USA and the Centre for Advanced Social Science (CASS), Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
2 Okechukwu Ibeanu is a Professor of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Commission.
3 It is impractical to provide a full list. However, I am here making reference particularly to: *A Theory of Integration*, Homewood: Dorsey, 1967; *Social Science as Imperialism*, Ibadan: Ibadan University.
I first knew Ake when I was an undergraduate at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in the late 1970s. At that time, he served as the external examiner to my Department. I should add that Professor Adele Jinadu succeeded him as our external examiner. But it was within the four years preceding his death that I came to know him closely, principally through Professor Okwudiba Nnoli, his longstanding friend and associate, who was my professor at Nsukka. My first close encounter with Claude, as Nnoli fondly called him, was in 1991 at a conference we held at Nnoli’s country home in Oraifite, Anambra State to commemorate the completion of the house. Ake and Nnoli had embarked on building their homes at Omoku and Oraifite respectively following the constant threat of the military government of General Olusegun Obasanjo to eject lecturers from their official quarters each time they threatened or embarked on an industrial action. They had been deeply worried about the anti-intellectual proclivity of the junta at the time.

The theme of the conference was ‘The Academic in Government’ and I had the singular honour of giving the keynote paper, notwithstanding that I was just a neophyte graduate student. In spite of my sense of inadequacy, especially considering the crop of social scientists expected at the meeting, Professor Nnoli encouraged me to do the keynote, and I must confess that Nnoli’s repeated confidence in my ability became an immeasurable impetus to my academic career. I recollect that conference was attended by Claude Ake, Okwudiba Nnoli, the host, Sam Oyovbaire, former Federal Minister of Information, Tunde Adeniran, former Minister of Education and now Nigeria’s ambassador to Germany, Elo Amucheazi, then Director General of the National Orientation Agency, and my very dear friend and teacher, Professor Adele Jinadu, then a Commissioner of the National Electoral Commission.

I titled the paper ‘The Academic in Government: the Case of the Social Scientist’. In spite of the many limitations of the paper, it generated a very lively debate among these very senior members of the social science community in Nigeria. Framed around Antonio Gramsci’s concept of organic intellectuals, I had explored the dynamics of the involvement of social scientists in government at different levels, the factors that shape their performance, their relationships with their colleagues and their social responsibility. That essay was very timely in the context of the government of General Ibrahim Babangida. By my estimation, among all governments in Nigeria, civilian or military, Babangida’s government stands out as one in which the most number of social scientists served in high government positions. Whatever our assessment of the performance of that government may be, we cannot deny that the far-reaching ‘social and political engineering’ they embarked on remains unprecedented in Nigerian history.

In a characteristically lucid intervention, Claude Ake harped on the social responsibilities of the academic in government, reminding them that they were responsible directly for their own failures, and vicariously for the failures of the

government they served. At the same time, he questioned the common criticism levelled against academics in government by their colleagues in the university that centred on the appropriateness of serving a military government. He insisted that charity must begin at home considering the growing authoritarianism in the universities at the time. Ake was particularly unhappy with widespread victimization of younger lecturers and students by senior professors and vice chancellors, which stifled academic discourse and made universities vulnerable to intervention by the authoritarian military government. He called for a code of conduct for academics, both in government and in the universities, as a basis for fostering solidarity within academia.

After the meeting, Professor Ake called me aside and pointed out that the essay required strengthening at the theoretical level, though he agreed with the Gramscian notion of organic intellectuals, which for him captured the social role of intellectuals as elaborators of both the interests of the working people and those of the dominant classes. In this regard, he emphasized the ideological dimension of the class struggle and the historic role of intellectuals, including social scientists, in that struggle. He thought that this role is not just about theory production, but also about practical political activism. Therefore, there is no class neutral or practice neutral social science because it is by elaborating the contradictory interests of classes in struggle, both intellectually and practically, that social scientists reproduce themselves.

The second close encounter I had with Claude was the night I spent in his home at Rumuimbekwe Estate, Port Harcourt in 1994. I was in Port Harcourt to attend an interview for a fellowship at CASS. In his usual friendly and supportive manner Professor Ake offered me to spend the night preceding the interview at his house. Incidentally, Professor Okwudiba Nnoli was also staying with him at the time and it turned out to be for me an evening with some of the most brilliant minds I have ever encountered. Over boiled and roasted corn, I received a six to seven hour tour of social and political sciences and how they have developed in Africa. From AAPS (African Association of Political Science) through CODESRIA (Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa), I heard of struggles over epistemology, ideology, integrity and social relevance, which sometimes pitched them against some of their best personal friends. And at the heart of these struggles were two basic issues: the irrelevance of orthodox Western social science to the African condition and the need to found an authentic African social science that is capable at one and the same time of explaining the African condition and liberating the African masses.

Sitting there with Ake and Nnoli, both trained in some of the best North American universities, it struck me that what they were saying was that they had set out on the journey to establish an authentic African social science that transcends what they had studied at Stanford and Columbia. From our discussion, it dawned on me that within a space of ten years these two men and their colleagues challenged and practically brought down the massive ideological edifice of bourgeois social science in Africa. They did this with a combination of insightful studies of the African condition and a well-crafted praxis that combined high intellectual output and social activism. As I slept that night in Ake’s study surrounded by countless books on politics, economics and the arts, I began, for the first time, to see the silhouette of an African social science.
The full character of this social science did not become clear to me until a year later. It was at the valedictory conference we held at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in honour of Professor Nnoli, who was retiring voluntarily in April 1995. Ake chaired the meeting and with him were Professors Adele Jinadu, Sam Oyovbaire and Sam Egwu. In his comments, Ake lamented the dearth of deep thinking among African social scientists, the rising authoritarianism in the universities and the practice deficits in African social science. He was certain that these conditions were responsible for Nnoli’s early retirement from the university. Ake challenged African social scientists to transcend Western orthodoxy and create an African social science. Some of these points were re-echoed in Nnoli’s valedictory address, in which he reiterated the lasting need to move from political science in Africa to African political science.

The lessons from these encounters are threefold. The first lesson is that Western social science in Africa is and extension of imperialism and so should be profoundly interrogated and transcended. Secondly, African social scientists must focus on developing an authentic African Social Science. Some of the principal characteristics of this science are the following:

- Reject orthodoxy;
- Depict profundity and originality of thinking;
- Be practical and socially relevant; and
- Be humanistic.

Thirdly, the objective of this social science is the democratic development of Africa namely, the economic, social and political empowerment of the African masses, while its methodology must constantly unify theory and practical social and political action.

In the pages that follow, I will attempt to elaborate on these lessons and on that backdrop conduct an appreciation and critique of some aspects of Ake’s analysis of the African condition.

**On theory and practice**

Is there a distinction between man the thinker (homo sapiens) and man the tool bearer (homo faber)? Is there a distinction between thinking and doing? This is an old philosophical question. St. Thomas Aquinas and his scholastic followers affirm that ‘intellectus speculativus extensione fit practicus’ (theory by simple extension becomes practice), Leibniz and the Italian idealists insist that ‘quo magis speculative, magis practica’ (the more speculative, the more practical), while G.B. Vico proposes that ‘verum ipsum factum’ (true is what is done). Implicit in these notions is a separation of thinking (theory) from doing (practice) although they variously affirm a connection between the two. More importantly, it is not clear how these notions frame this connection beyond simply affirming it.

The separation of theory and practice has also given rise to the distinction between intellectual and non-intellectual. To properly problematise this distinction, we need to make a distinction between intellectuals as professional categories and

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intellectuals as social categories. The former refers to the ‘direction in which their specific professional activity is weighted, whether towards intellectual elaboration or towards muscular-nervous efforts’. The important point here is that it is about the weight and direction of professional engagement between intellectual-cerebral elaboration and muscular-nervous effort. In other words, the distinction between intellectuals and non-intellectuals is untenable because every human engagement has both intellectual (cerebral) and physical (muscular) dimensions, and ‘there is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: homo faber cannot be separated from homo sapiens’.

On the other hand, however, intellectuals as a social category refer to the interstice of social functions they perform. In other words, while everybody is intellectual by nature, not everybody is an intellectual by social function. We can distinguish two categories of intellectuals by social function. First are the traditional intellectuals. These include the clergy, the bureaucracy and other custodians of the cultural heritage of a society. Second are organic intellectuals. Every social force, principally social classes, constitutes its own ensemble of organic intellectuals, which elaborates an ideology corresponding to its interests. Consequently, in a capitalist society there are organic intellectuals of the working class and those of the bourgeoisie. According to Gramsci:

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture, of a new legal system.

Also, as a class comes into a position of social dominance, it assimilates some or all strata of traditional intellectuals into its organic intellectuals and they become elaborators of the dominant ideology. The dominant scientific community of an epoch belong to the organic intellectual category of the dominant class. Still, the organic intellectuals of the subordinate classes constantly challenge this dominance at the intellectual level. Thus, in a capitalist society the organic intellectuals of the working classes are always opposed to those of the bourgeoisie. However, while the organic intellectuals of the dominant class can concentrate on intellectual elaboration leaving practice to the technical functionaries of the dominant class, especially in state institutions, the organic intellectuals of working people must directly integrate practice into their work. Consequently, we could say that generally separation of theory and practice is characteristic of dominant ideologies, while their unity is characteristic of the ideology of a subordinate class. This is understandable as the separation is necessary for the depoliticisation of the subordinate classes by eliminating practice and social activism from their education.

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5 Ibid., p. 9.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid, p. 10.
Over time, a whole tradition of idealism, which is subsumed under positivist scientism, arose from this separation of theory and practice that characterises dominant ideologies. At the heart of positivism is the verification criterion of meaning. This means that for any proposition to be meaningful, ‘it must either be about the bare formal relations between ideas such as those enshrined in mathematics and analytic definitions . . . , or there must in principle be perceptual experience providing evidence of whether the claim is true or false.’ Every proposition that is not consistent with this criterion is dismissed as ideological nonsense. By extension, positivist science attributes to itself neutrality and objectivity in knowledge production. It posits that subjective evidence and ideological beliefs, which by their nature are unlikely to meet the rules of verification, are meaningless and unacceptable. Neutrality and objectivity are therefore correlates of universal, verifiable evidence.

The positivist scientific epistemology is the basis of orthodox Western social science, which is predominantly practiced in Africa. Its two tenets of verification criterion of meaning and objectivity-neutrality are in many ways flawed. First, let us look at verification. For one thing, the proposition itself is not verified and does not establish how it is to be verified. In other words, how do we verify the proposition that every proposition must be verifiable? For another thing, based on this criterion of meaning, there is no way of establishing that other propositions are valid or meaningful except in an arbitrary way. In addition, this criterion undermines many accepted scientific propositions that do not derive from direct observations, but are inferred as part of overarching scientific theories, for instance the state of the universe prior to all observations.

On objectivity and neutrality, the idea that ethical and ideological considerations must be eschewed for knowledge to be scientific is a myth. This is even more so in the social sciences. Insofar as the social sciences are ideological formations, they always mirror the character of social (principally class) relations and the architecture of power that these relations foster. Drawing from Marx’s analysis in the Grundrisse, Hugo Radice writes about Western (bourgeois) social science:

It implicitly treats fundamental aspects of the status quo as eternal and natural, and falsely claims neutrality and objectivity for its views in consequence . . . the social sciences as ideological formations are part of the development of society along with the economic and social formations to which they correspond, and [that] a truly scientific social science, equally product and agent of the transformation of society, must be critical, must seek to transcend these formations. Neutrality and objectivity as eternal criteria do not exist: the only real human knowledge or science is gained through praxis, the unity of theory and practice in social action, not by detached observation, and the theoretical component of praxis is inseparable in the final analysis from ‘political’ practical activity.

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9 Ibid.
This should not be interpreted as denying the existence of objective truth. Rather it is to recognize that the approximation of our knowledge to that truth is always socially and historically determined. In the final analysis, the test of any social knowledge lies in its correspondence to social progress. By social progress we mean improving the conditions under which human beings (all human beings) live. Consequently, social progress must be consistent with the interests of the vast majority of the populace (the popular masses), not those of a select few. In other words, the more our knowledge corresponds to the interests of the popular masses, the more socially progressive it is, and the test of this correspondence is only to be established through practical, social activism.

The positivist separation of theory and practice is reincarnated in the notion of pure and applied scientific research. It is posited that pure research is not geared to practice or problem solving, while applied research is. This cannot be further from the truth, particularly for the social sciences. Every knowledge is produced either for immediate or future practice, and the notion that there could be a ‘pure’ conduct of research is ideological. Often, it is employed to mask the motives of the researcher and the class interests they serve.

Having established that practice is part and parcel of science, in fact its test of validity, we should distinguish a number of forms of practice. First, we make a distinction between the practical theorist and the theoretical practitioner. While the former on the basis of an existing theory elaborates a scheme of practice that makes the theory more practical and real, the latter in the course of practice elaborates the theoretical underpinnings of practical actions. Gramsci’s comment on this is very apposite:

…one can construct, on a specific practice, a theory which, by coinciding and identifying itself with the decisive elements of the practice itself, can accelerate the historical process that is going on, rendering practice more homogeneous, more coherent, more efficient in all its elements, and thus, in other words, developing its potentials to the maximum: or alternatively, given a certain theoretical position one can organise the practical element which is essential for the theory to be realised.\textsuperscript{11}

The second distinction is that between intellectual and social praxis. The former refers to practice targeted at reproducing the organic intellectuals of the working people, through direct training, organization of academic networks and communities such as CODESRIA, Ake fellowship alumni, etc. The latter on the other hand has to do with practical social activism such as becoming politically active in working people’s movements and direct community work. However, this distinction should be seen as a conceptual one. In reality, both forms of practice exist in their unity.

In both intellectual and social praxes, Ake’s life was exemplary. Among many others, he was the President of CODESRIA and single-handedly reorganized it when it was close to death in the 1980s. He was also the President of the Nigerian Political Science Association and was an active member and editor of the African Association of Political Science. Of course, as part of this intellectual praxis he also founded CASS. In these capacities, he sought not only to continue to

\textsuperscript{11} Gramsci, \textit{op cit.}, p. 365.
produce knowledge, but also to produce and reproduce future organic intellectuals of the working peoples of Africa. On social praxis, Ake will be remembered for his service to the Rivers State government. He was also the State secretary of the unregistered political party, the Peoples Socialist Party (PSP) after he was constrained to leave the University of Port Harcourt. He had offered to teach and supervise students at the university gratis while serving as secretary of this party, but the university turned down his offer. Above all, Ake’s social praxis led him into direct involvement in the environmental and human rights movements in the Niger Delta during the period of military rule. A close confident of the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, he became an important activist in the struggle to protect the Niger Delta environment and protect the rights of its local communities in the 1990s. During the time, he switched his focus from writing for purely academic purposes to writing for popular consumption. Thus he wrote numerous newspaper articles and granted many interviews. Again, these underscore the unity of theory and practice, as well as of intellectual and social praxes.

Western social science in Africa: practice deficits and imperialism

One of the boldest legacies of Ake was his study of the epistemology of Western social science as practiced in Africa. As a result of its roots in Western social science, social science in Africa is necessarily characterized by far-reaching practice deficits. For instance, Behaviouralism and its positivist and liberal traditions dominated Political Science in Africa from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s. At the heart of its study of Africa was the theory of political development. Among other things, ethical issues were denied and theory testing predominantly using the quantitative method was emphasized. At the same time, classes were banished from analysis. Implicit in this approach is the idea that the concern of political science is the production of value-free and precise knowledge, and not how that knowledge is used. At the same time, the value-free knowledge is of universal applicability because of its objectivity. Based on these claims, political science in Africa posited that concerns with the masses and ideas such as the class struggle were ideological and unscientific. Normative political science was everywhere derided as outmoded and only a handful of courses on political philosophy were taught, at the same time that it became a disciplinary fad to engage in empirical political theory, understood as the production of verifiable, value-free knowledge.

In terms of practice, this science is sterile. Practical sterility incarnates a disconnection between social theorizing and social activism. However, this was indeed a mask for the fact that this science served the interests of the ruling class, and that knowledge was produced to serve a state whose interests in the final analysis corresponds to the interests of the ruling classes, both domestic and international.

By the mid-1970s things began to change and Professor Ake was clearly one of the drivers of this change. He characterized this social science as imperialism because:

12 Claude Ake, Social Science As Imperialism: The Theory of Political Development (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1982).
It reinforces dependence, it inculcates an inferiority complex, it weakens the will of Third World peoples to take their own destiny into their hands, and it renders them more available for exploitation. In addition, it is irrelevant to the real needs of the Third World, and it is not conducive to the development of scientific knowledge of Third World Societies.\(^{13}\)

Drawing examples from political science, sociology and economics, he demonstrated the irrelevance and subterfuge of this social science and called for both academic and practical political struggles against it. Among other things, these struggles must entail:

- A detailed and systematic critical review of the received social science and existing social science practice.
- Clarification of the idea of development and the invention of an appropriate model of development.
- Ensuring that the revolt against Western social science does not exhaust itself national consciousness.
- Adequate preparation for the onslaught of ‘delegitimation’ against academics that participate in this revolt.

**Aspects of Ake’s analysis of the African condition: appreciation and critique**

In this section, I focus on some of Ake’s late political works. I must confess that I do so because of my disciplinary bias. More importantly, however, I do so because while Ake recognised that the economic instance of structures was determinant in the final analysis, he consistently argued the centrality of the political in understanding the African condition. He framed this centrality of the political instance around the capitalist state in Africa.\(^{14}\)

In the 1990s, Ake added the theme of democracy to his study of the capitalist state in Africa.\(^{15}\) I think that this move had to do with the surge of the ‘Third Wave of Democracy’\(^{16}\) discourse and the widely trumpeted victory of liberal democracy. In his characteristic way, interrogated liberal democracy in the context of the African condition, and in doing this, he deconstructed both its theory and practice, with the aim of transcending them. He was always mindful of the tendency of dominant paradigms to address only their subscribers and supplicants, ‘the interpretative community’ as he aptly calls it. By so doing, he exposed underlying ideologies, exploded embedded myths and unmasked disguised political projects. His ultimate concerns were twofold: to advice scientific knowledge and

\(^{13}\) *Ibid*, p. 187.


to speak for the underprivileged in Africa. Still, he tacked the many knotty theoretical and methodological issues in a sublime, refreshing and accessible way.

In two very illuminating pieces published in 1985 Ake describes the state as a ‘specific modality of class domination.’ He points out that this form of domination represents the way in which class domination is autonomised. By autonomy is meant that the institutional mechanisms of this domination are constituted in a way that they enjoy independence from the society and social classes, and appear as ‘an objective force standing alongside society’. The ability of an agency that represents class domination to also appear as dissociated from the class struggle is, for Ake, an essential characteristic of the state form of domination. How then is autonomised domination achieved? According to Ake, ‘Essentially it does so by virtue of its mediation by the thoroughgoing generalization of commodity exchange’. Every member of society appears as a commodity bearer even if the commodity is only labour power. Of course, every commodity is assumed to have a fair chance in the market depending on the forces of demand and supply. The effect of this is a highly atomized society in which the operative norms are individualism, competition proprietorship and formal equality.

At the political level, these conditions are reproduced in the way the state is constituted: an autonomous force above the interests of one class or the other. Ake puts it thus:

These conditions, which activate the law of value, are also the conditions which engender the institutionalization of political domination as a largely autonomous force. Being formally free, equal and self-interested proprietors, the community of commodity bearers will necessarily evolve executive power (or government) as an independent public force administered in strict conformity to the rule of law.

The foregoing conditions are said by Ake to be non-existent in the periphery, and he attributes this to two mutually reinforcing factors: the non-pervasiveness of commoditisation and low level of development of productive forces. As a result, he questions the stateness of the peripheral state and demonstrates empirically the consequences of ‘unautonomised’ domination for Nigeria.

When I first read Ake’s analysis of the peripheral state, I had no doubt that it was one of the most concise and yet impressive Marxist constructions that I had ever encountered. Still, I felt that a resolution of a number of theoretical issues remained outstanding, and called for clarification. They included:

- The impression that only class domination under capitalism could constitute the state form of domination.
- The argument that the peripheral capitalist state cannot properly be a state because of the low development of the commodity form and, therefore, low autonomisation of class domination.
- The impression that the state is not as much related to class domination as it is related to commodity relations.

Footnote 4.

Political Economy of Nigeria, p. 2.
• The suggestion that autonomised class domination is a necessary feature in the constitution of the capitalist state, rather that the religion of the bourgeoisie’ as Engels argued.
• The affinity between Ake’s commoditisation and the modernization logic.

Understanding the Hegemony of Capital

A central preoccupation of Ake’s, which I think is a very important contribution of his analysis to our understanding of the African condition, is the link between the economic, political and ideological levels of structures. We may summarize and extend his points in the following ways:

• The hegemony of capital is only actualized with the complete separation of the producer from the means of production.
• It is this complete separation that constitutes everything including labour power, into a commodity. Since commodities are produced exclusively for exchange, they are by nature depersonalized. In fact, they are extraneous to their producers who neither produce them principally for their own use, nor necessarily know whom the final user is.
• This depersonalization logically brings into being certain impersonal’, autonomous ground rules that guide the production and exchange of commodities, namely, the forces of demand, supply and competition. They determine what commodities are traded, who purchases them, when they purchase them and, above all, the price at which they purchase them.
• Thus, appropriation of products in their new commoditised form is not direct (e.g. requisitioning and tributes by the feudal lord or confiscation by the slave master). Rather, it is indirect through exchange based on impersonal rules set by the ‘invisible hands’ of demand, supply and free competition. In this new form, what is appropriated is no longer physical products by an invisible thing called profit.
• Still, the reality beyond this illusion of impersonality and freedom is the dominance of capital. Once this whole system is achieved, the dominance of capital is then reproduced almost automatically (and ‘legitimately’) in all spheres of social life, or what is another way of saying the same thing, at all levels of social structure/relations. In essence, the capitalist society becomes one huge market in which this logic of commodity production and exchange (derived at the economic level for structure) drives both the political and ideological. Table 1 summarises the operation of the huge market society. The political and ideological levels function according to norms of formal equality and impersonality derived from the economic level. Autonomous state and the mass media become the main political and ideological incarnations of the free market. The depersonalized commodities that they offer are political offices and information.

Table 1: Operation of different levels of structure in a market society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Relation /Structure</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Ground rules (‘Impersonal’ laws)</th>
<th>Commodity Traded</th>
<th>Medium of Exchange</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
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The separation of the producer from the means of production is reproduced at the political level in the political disempowerment of the masses. Although the masses are engaged in politics through elections, which gives the impression of control, it is only an illusion of power. In elections people choose without making a choice. First, there is no real choice between candidates – they all belong to the ruling class and the masses have no hand in nominating them in the first place. Second, there is no real choice between programmes – they are the same policies in different packages. In essence, although casting of votes appears as a means of determining political outcomes, it is only illusory. In reality, it is a disempowering process and a legitimization of that disempowerment. It is for some of these reasons that Ake rejects liberal democracy as being both inappropriate and undesirable for Africa. It is inappropriate because the fundamental requirements of thoroughgoing commoditisation and atomisation of society have not become pervasive in Africa, and it is undesirable because there is little that is democratic about it. Liberal democracy is a devalued democracy.

Characteristically, Ake’s commentary on these issues is profoundly reasoned. What we are currently witnessing in Africa is not democratisation in the sense of establishing real popular power. Rather, what we see is a resurgence of Tocquevillean and Schumpeterian notions that associate democracy with institutional political arrangements originating from the West and spreading to the rest of the world.\(^{19}\) In the process, civilian rule, which oftentimes is as authoritarian and disempowering as military rule, is mistaken as democratic rule.

Still, we should point out that in his analysis Ake sometimes seems to conjure up a sylvan and idealized rural Africa. It is an Africa in which commoditisation is unknown, in which a sense of community prevails, and in which primary groups are dominant.\(^{20}\) While we do not contest the presence of these conditions in Africa, we hasten to point out the need to recognise the dissolution-preservation effects of capitalism on rural Africa, and of an acceptance-rejection reaction of rural Africa to capitalism. Consequently, some communalist features have been preserved by capitalism in rural Africa, while some individualist features have been accepted by rural Africa. In the same vein, some communalist features have been dissolved by capitalism, while some individualist features have

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\(^{20}\) *Democracy and Disempowerment, op cit.*, p. 6.
been rejected by rural Africa. The rule seems to be that those communalist features that restrain the commoditisation of labour power and the free reign of capital are dissolved, while those that are either supportive or of no effect on capitalism were preserved and sometime romanticised as the lasting features of Africa.

Perhaps Ake was making a political rather than an academic point with this type of analysis. It appears to us that he had to paint this picture of Africa in order to counter the resurgent doctrinaire bourgeois ideology that is paraded as social science, which privileges the individual over the community and then universalises this self-referential view of the world. This ideology treats community feeling as pre-modern, a disposition that must be shed in order to midwife a rational, functionally specific and achievement-driven modern (Western) society. Still, the interface of the individual and community should be seriously problematised for analysis.

Our position is that neither of the two poles, which we may characterise as the opposition between the Lockean (also Kant and Mills) and Hegelian extremes is correct. Posed as either the individual or the community, both extremes reflect the African reality poorly. While the Lockean extreme dissolves the community in individual interests, the Hegelian extreme dissolves the individual in the community. The intervention of individualism in an African superstructure that is still predominantly communal, leads to the deflection of individual interests as those of the community. At the same time, unwarranted insertion of communalism in an economic structure that has become increasingly individualistic distorts economic processes and legitimizes inefficient allocation and use of resources by unproductive ruling classes.

At the level of political practice, in totally rejecting liberal democracy as inapplicable and unacceptable to a predominantly communal Africa, African autocrats who are not even willing to stand elections could misappropriate Ake’s analysis. We think instead that what needs to be recognised is that what exists in Africa today is not a unity in which the individual is dissolved in the community. Nor is it a duality in which the individual and the community stand mutually exclusive and opposing. Rather, it is a uni-duality in which there is a symbiotic and interpenetrating dialectic between the communal and the individual, with the individual trying to realize himself/herself as a member of a community. The individual does not exist for the community. Neither can the individual exist out of the community. The process of realizing the individual in a community makes it necessary to conceptualise democracy not as an end but as a process involving struggles in which individual and communal rights are reconciled and attained.

Related to the absence of a clean cut between the community and individual is the question of whether political participation in Africa is for the community or the individual. Ake thinks that it is for the former. As we have already suggested, to pose the problem as one of either community or individual is to oversimplify and mythologize the reality of both pristine and present-day Africa. The one extreme that privileges the individual over the community is the mythology of Western liberals. It seeks to repudiate the community in order to elevate the claims of private property and individualism that are necessary for commoditisation and profit seeking, as well as suppression of the collective demands of labour. On the other hand, the notion of the communalist, undifferentiated and non-individualistic Africa is the mythology of

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21 Ibid.
African autocrats. It seeks to repudiate individual civil and political rights as inimical to communal solidarity and economic development. Its teleological end is the manipulation of the community for the pursuit of narrow individual and elitist interests. This would never have received Ake’s backing, hence the need to forestall the misappropriation of his analysis.

In addition, it is not clear from Ake what constitutes the critical social and political community is in the African setting. There seems to be a blanket treatment of all levels of communal grouping as equally relevant to the politics of all African societies, as if they all have the same political dynamic or logic. We need not rehash the basic tenets of historical and dialectical materialism that, among others, insist on a relation of determination between the level of development of productive forces and the character of political communities. But suffice it to say that the reality in Africa is that the relevant community in some situations is the extended family, in others it is the kin group, and still in others it is the clan, racial group or ethnic group. Of course, these are very dynamic and not static. In our opinion, rather than romanticize and blanket the different levels of community in Africa, there is need to disaggregate pristine communities (kin group, village group, racial group and clan) and study how they articulate and interface with the more recently invented communities like ethnic group, nation, state and supranational organizations in the political mappings of different classes in Africa. An important scientific issue would be the conditions under which any or a combination of these communities becomes relevant to the politics of an African country and why. What is the significance of each of these levels of communal organization for politics and democracy in present-day African States?

Furthermore, the notion of political participation for the community has been undermined by over a century of mediation by capitalism. For one thing, there is now for rural Africans many communities to which they simultaneously belong, rather than a single community. For example, there is the village, town, clan, sub-ethnic group, ethnic group, race, local government area, region, state, minority, etc. The full range of implications of these multiple identities in not fully fathomed. But still, the African has come to recognize and perhaps accept the reality of their relevance to his/her survival. More importantly, Africans develop strategies for moving from one identity to others as the demands of survival dictate, without necessarily repudiating any. This hybrid African, the product of capitalist penetration, practices ‘communalism within the gates’ and stiff ‘individualism outside the gates’. In other words, the community is mostly one in a repertoire of instruments that individuals use in competing with individuals from other communal groups.

For another thing, before the intervention of capitalism the community was limited in scope. It was basically a number of kin groups linked by bonds of blood and/or marriage. Its widest scope would be the clan. But now, the community has extended tremendously in scope, from kin groups and clans to ethnic groups, racial groups and nations. For instance, in the Igbo areas of Nigeria, until the very recent past an Onitsha person could never have imagined belonging to the same community as someone from Oboisi a few miles away, even more so an Owerri person many miles away. Indeed, Huntington reports that as late as the 1950s, B.O.
Eluwa, an Igbo educationist and politician, led a campaign in parts of Eastern Nigeria urging astounded villagers to accept a common Igbo identity.\textsuperscript{22}

**Informal Polities as Caring**

Deriving from this strong sense of community among Africans, Ake argues that informal (community-based) polities, unlike formal polities (the state) are caring.\textsuperscript{23} It may be correct that informal polities’ are more caring than formal polities. However, we must be careful again not to romanticize pre-capitalist structures like the family and clans. To do so is to be ahistorical by overlooking the transformation they have undergone (dissolution-preservation effects) under capitalism. To be sure, the so-called informal polities are in many cases as regimenting and alienating as the state. The interpenetration of the formal (state) and informal (clan, ethnic groups, etc.) polities also needs to be properly studied. Through the ruling classes, an identical or near-identical culture now tends to permeate both. Again, formal and informal polities are not a duality in which one remains separate from the other. Rather they constitute a ‘uni-duality’ in which the two remain intermeshed and engaged. Even in their pristine form, it is rather sweeping to say that they were caring. The killing of twins and denigration of women are hardly caring.

On the whole, the notion of an Africa that is predominantly rural, with a unique way of life, probably cut off from the rest of the world and for which liberal democracy is not apropos is ahistorical. It is so for two reasons. For one reason, it does not periodise African history and particularly the history of this idyllic rural Africa. For another reason, it glosses over a number of germane issues:

- Class character of that society: was it classless?
- Character of interaction among social forces: was it co-operative or contradictory?
- Character of the technique of power: was it benevolent or oppressive?

Let us simply note that rural Africa, then and now, is varied. There is no uniform rural Africa. Different rural communities in Africa encountered capitalism at different levels of development of their productive forces. In effect, not only did pre-capitalist relations of production differ markedly from one part of the African continent to another, the new relations constituted by capitalism (following the dissolution-Preservation effect and acceptance-rejection matrix) also differ widely. Many parts of rural Africa before capitalism were, in fact, class and state societies. They became more so with the constitution of capitalism. Profound analyses rather than sweeping analogies are called for.

It is important to make one last point about democracy. We agree with Ake that democracy must address the character of the state in Africa, with a view to transforming and transcending it. But we do not think that the place to begin this unravelling is rural Africa, where people live in commodity virginity. It seems to us that the place to start is the class character of that state. It means, first and foremost,
understanding the relations of production underlying it and, through these, its class configurations. It also means understanding its class contradictions, that is the social forces that control it, the social forces that oppose it, the social forces that are benign, the social forces that are active, the social forces that are its props and the social forces that are its negation. In this, we think that the character of domination in each African country should be concretely studied, both synchronically and diachronically.

In the Nigerian case, we agree with Ake that the synergy of military rule, petroleum and ethnicity provides a basis for understanding the state.\textsuperscript{24} We have developed this elsewhere as ‘the present moment of state-making in Nigeria’.\textsuperscript{25} This moment of state making is defined by the conjuncture of the \textit{militariat, petrobusiness} and communalism. Singly, they represent the major political, economic and cultural dimensions of state making in Nigeria. Jointly, they set the limits and congeal the crisis of that state. By the \textit{militariat} we designate the dominant social category in Nigeria since the recent past. Although the ascendance of this social category to dominance was set in military rule, it is by no means an exclusively military ensemble because it draws its members from both military and civilian groups. In terms of its class character, the \textit{militariat} articulates positively with the business (comprador) classes. This positive articulation arises principally because the \textit{militariat} draws the bulk of its members from among the comprador classes. Secondly, they are united by their interest in the maintenance of authoritarian rule generally, whether military or civilian. Thirdly, and most specifically, corruption effected predominantly through public works contracts is also a uniting factor.

Apart from the comprador, the \textit{militariat} as a social category also draws members from others classes and fractions including in particular the professionals (petty bourgeoisie) and foreign business interests, especially those investing in the crude oil sector. Although the petty bourgeoisie is presently the weakest constituent of the \textit{militariat}, it is a traditional supporter of the emergence of the \textit{militariat}. As the class that inherited the colonial state, the petty bourgeoisie has always supported a ‘strong state’, ostensibly because it is only such a state that can engender rapid economic transformation required in the post-independence era. More correctly, however, because of its engagement in petty commodity production and its inheritance of the institutions of the colonial state (particularly the bureaucracy), the petty bourgeoisie invariably requires a militarist state capable of continuing the colonial project of regimenting and controlling labour. Indeed, petty bourgeois politics was responsible for the politicization of the military, which is necessary for the emergence of the \textit{militariat} as a social category in the first place. However, the petty bourgeoisie has increasingly lost its social dominance, so much so that Nigerians widely speak of the disappearance of the middle class. The economic reforms of the 1980s (Structural Adjustment Programme) were particularly conducive to the pauperization and paling of the petty bourgeoisie.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{24} Verbal discussion with Ake on the causes of conflict in Nigeria
We should emphasize that the militariat, enlists both military and civilians members. It is important to point this out in order to avert the illusion that links militarism in Nigeria exclusively to the direct occupation of the state by the military. Surely, the project of the militariat does not necessarily need to be realized through military rule. In fact, a strategy of the militariat is to appropriate the legitimizing value of democracy. That the militariat also draws its membership from civilians is underscored by the defining role of serving and retired military officers in the present civilian (democratic?) government. In addition, the strong business and political connections between civilian politicians and retired and serving military personnel all point to the deepening of the rule of the militariat even under the present ‘democratic’ government. The militariat constantly mobilize clan, ethnic and religious sentiments for the purpose of winning state power. State power, in turn, guarantees access to petrodollars. Enter petrobusiness, the third dimension of the troika.

By petrobusiness we mean social groups that are the dominant beneficiaries of the oil industry, both domestic and foreign. These are to be found as oil contractors, joint venture partners, consultants, marketers and intermediaries, who are usually government officials. The interest of foreign business classes (global capital) in the rule of the militariat is most forcefully linked to the petroleum industry in Nigeria. The bulk of foreign private investment in Nigeria is in this sector of the economy. With the presence of international oil giants like Shell, Elf Aquitaine, Mobil Total and Chevron, this sector remains a money-spinner for foreign capital. However, it is also a very volatile sector because of increasing hostility of local host communities towards the practices of these oil companies, especially their environment impact. Here, foreign capital enlists the militariat in cowing down their increasingly hostile host communities and to continue to exploit crude oil at low monetary cost. This usually translates into a high environmental cost and repression for the communities. The second area where the interests for global capital and the militariat coincide is the huge foreign indebtedness of Nigeria that stands at about $35 billion, with repayment arrears of over $15 billion. Working with the militariat has ensured that this debt, accumulated mostly in profligacy, will not be repudiated. Instead, it ensures that Nigeria will constantly go cap in hand asking for debt relief and doing the other biddings of global capital. This explains why sections of the ruling militariat are currently campaigning for President Obasanjo to unconstitutionally extend his stay in power. It is not surprising that a major reason given by the campaigners is that if Obasanjo goes, economic reforms will falter and Nigeria’s creditors will deny debt reliefs.

But in spite of the economic reforms that in fact date back to Obasanjo’s ‘belt tightening’ in the late 1970s, the Nigerian economy is one that continues to pursue essentially the colonial project of export of primary products and import of finished ones, especially consumer goods. Even the import substitution industrialization of the 1970s, which only served to deepen Nigeria’s external economic dependence, has virtually collapsed, heralding a return to the very pure form of the colonial economic scheme. At the centre of this dependent economy is crude oil. Today, crude oil exports account for between 90 and 95% of Nigeria’s external earnings, and with the level of domestic economic activities dwindling by the day, crude oil accounts for over 80% of all national wealth. This over-dependence on oil revenues have focused demands on the system and sharpened
contradictions among different communal grouping in Nigeria. This is particularly so because most of the oil comes from ethnic minority areas. As a result, the politics of oil inevitably locks into the politics of communalism.

The Militariat and the Niger Delta

Nowhere is the rule of the militariat and the three defining moments of that rule – authoritarianism, communalism and petrobusiness – better expressed than in the politics of oil in the Niger Delta. The rule of the militariat, which continues till date, has created three paradoxes of the petro-state in the Niger Delta. First is the paradox of plenty, which refers to the tendency for petroleum wealth to create enormous poverty. Second is the paradox of security, namely the tendency in a petro-state for national security to undermine the security of nationals. Thirdly, there is the paradox of development, which is the tendency for the putative development efforts of the petro-state to generate underdevelopment. Put differently, an analysis of the rule of the militariat clearly demonstrates how wealth makes the Niger Delta poor, how national security makes nationals in the Niger Delta insecure, and how development underdevelops the Niger Delta.

One of the most glaring paradoxes of the petro-state in Nigeria is the level of poverty in the Niger Delta, which is the source of the country’s oil wealth. Only about 27% of people in the Delta have access to safe drinking water and about 30% of households have access to electricity, both of which are below the national averages of 31.7% and 33.6%, respectively. There is one doctor per 82,000 people in the Niger Delta, rising to 132,000 per doctor in some areas, which is more than three times the national average of 40,000 per doctor.27 According to the World Bank, despite the vast oil reserves of the region poverty is still widespread, exacerbated by the high cost of living. In the urban areas of Rivers State, the cost of living index of 783 is the highest in Nigeria. GNP per capita is below the national average of US$280 and unemployment in Port Harcourt the major city of the region is as high as 30 percent, probably as high in the rural areas. Education levels are below the national average and are particularly low for women. While 76 percent of Nigerian children attend primary school, this level drops to 30-40 percent in some parts of the Niger Delta.28

By law, the Nigerian state owns all mineral deposits in Nigeria, including crude oil. This ownership is established through a series of statutes that govern the petroleum industry, dating to the colonial period. The central government controls revenues from petroleum and sets up a formula for distributing them to the other tiers of government namely, States and Local Governments. This has continued to nettle communities in the Niger Delta, as they often feel cheated in the distribution of revenue from petroleum. A Supreme Court ruling in April 2002 that gave control of offshore petroleum deposits to the Federal Government, further reducing revenue accruable to oil-producing States, has increased the feeling of deprivation in the region.29

29 On April 9, 2001 the federal government went to the Supreme Court asking for clarification of section 162 (2) of the 1999 constitution requesting among other things a declaration that petroleum
Without doubt, Niger Delta’s poverty is in part the consequence of oil production, especially its environmental consequences, which have destroyed livelihoods by destroying farmland and fishing waters. The numerous negative environmental impacts of crude oil mining and refining are well known. Pollution arising from oil spillage destroys marine life and crops, making water unsuitable for fishing and renders many hectares of farmland unusable. Brine from oil fields contaminates water formations and streams, making them unfit as sources of drinking water. At the same time, flaring gas in the vicinity of human dwellings and high pressure oil pipelines that form a mesh across farmlands are conducive to acid rains, deforestation and destruction of wildlife. In addition, dumping of toxic, non-biodegradable by-products of oil refining is dangerous to both flora and fauna, including man. For instance, metals that at high concentrations are known to cause metabolic malfunctions in human beings, such as cadmium, chromium, mercury and lead, are contained in refinery effluents constantly discharged into fresh water and farmland. They enter the food chain both by direct intake via food and drinking water, and indirectly. For example, fish is known to be able to store mercury in its brain without metabolizing it. Man in turn could eat such contaminated fish. In the specific case of Ogoniland, it has been recorded that 30 million barrels of crude oil were spilled in the area in 1970.\textsuperscript{30} According to Shell, this was because of sabotage by the Biafran Army after the civil war, a claim that many local environmental groups contest. Shell figures also say ‘in Ogoni from 1985 up to the beginning of 1993, when we withdrew our staff from the area, 5,352 barrels of oil were spilled in 87 incidents’.\textsuperscript{31} However, other independent sources give much higher figures. According to Earth Action, there had been more than 2,500 minor and major oil spills in Ogoniland between 1986 and 1991, including a major one in which Shell dallied for forty days before patching a ruptured pipeline.\textsuperscript{32} However, rather than take responsibility, state officials and oil companies are quick to blame oil spills on sabotage by local communities. For instance, Shell insists that out of 87 oil spill incidents in Ogoniland between 1985 and 1993, sixty (about 70%) were sabotage, 44 using hacksaws. This agrees with the position of government. According to the Rivers State government, out of 11 incidents in Ogoniland in 1990, 8 or 73% were sabotage.

Apart from oil spills, there have been other far-reaching environmental damages in the Niger Delta. For instance, Mitee reports that in the 1960s Shell constructed a narrow road through the town of Dere to link its oil wells. This destroyed the drainage system of the town leading to sever flooding. To date, the resources in Nigeria’s territorial waters are federally derived. In April 2002, the Supreme Court agreed with the federal government, thus further reducing the revenues of littoral oil producing states. A bill sponsored by the President and passed by the National Assembly in October 2002 abolished the onshore-offshore distinction. However, the President has been seeking an amendment of the bill over what constitutes Nigeria’s offshore – ‘contiguous zone’ used in the President’s draft bill or ‘continental shelf’ inserted by the National Assembly. The President has since vetoed the bill and in December 2002 Northern elders led by the Emir of Kano joined the fray, warning Northern members of the National Assembly not to override the President’s veto because the abolition of the onshore-offshore dichotomy is not in the interest of the North. All these have raised fears of a new round of conflict in the Niger Delta as there are now even more forceful demands for resource control by youths in the Delta.

\textsuperscript{32} op cit.
Community is still seeking compensation for thirty-nine years of suffering. In Gbaran, Shell also constructed a road to link its installations with a major road from Yenagoa to Mbiam. Consequently, water flow to a large section of timberland was cut leading to the atrophy and death of 1,000 acres of forest. There is also the problem of gas flaring, which we have already alluded to. In November 1983 alone, Shell flared over 483 million cubic metres of gas from its oil wells. In these gas flares, temperatures reach as high as 1,400°C. Although there are existing attempts by oil companies to end flares, the situation is still one of the worst cases in the world. For instance, in 1991 Nigeria exceeded the world average for gas flares by 72%. In that year, Nigeria flared 76% of gas produced. Compare this with the world average of 4% and OPEC average of 18%.

Ecological damage has gone hand in hand with resource scarcity in the Niger Delta. Consequently, local communities have come to associate the two, sometimes unjustifiably. For instance, there is no doubt that the general economic situation in Nigeria has deteriorated tremendously in the last two decades. Inflation has risen in leaps and bounds and the value of the national currency (the Naira) has fallen dramatically from about $1 = N3 in 1986, to $1 = N140 in 2002. Under difficult economic regimes canvassed by International Financial Institutions, successive Nigerian governments have cut public spending, virtually frozen public sector employment and withdrawn state subsidies to mass consumption goods such as petrol. At the same time, most public enterprises have been sold to private interest and their workers disengaged, notwithstanding public outcry. The pump price of petrol, the major energy source, has risen from N0.75/litre in 1986 to N26 under the present government, with recurrent periods of serious scarcity when one litre of petrol could cost as much as N100. All these have drastically affected living standards of ordinary people across the country, including oil-producing communities. However, because oil exploration by multi-national oil corporations has dominated the lives and livelihoods of people in the Niger Delta for four decades, and being increasingly aware of the contradiction of riches between themselves and petrobusiness, local communities are holding oil companies responsible for their deprivation and poverty. This has shown in the demands that are being made on oil companies: roads, schools, hospitals, employment, support for farming, indeed everything to improve their livelihoods and everything that in fact should be the responsibility of government. Part of the problem is that, as we have already argued, the strong affinity and coziness between oil companies and governments, including the most oppressive ones. In any case, people in the Delta reason that if oil companies can easily call out military detachments to quell protests at their facilities, there is no reason to make a distinction between them and government.

The rule of the militariat and its tendency to give a privileged position to national security (read: regime security) remains the prime driver of the persistent conflict and insecurity in the Niger Delta. The most fundamental basis for conflict

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between the Nigerian state and communities in the Delta is the contradictory conditions of security they project. For the forces that control the Nigerian state (state officials and petrobusiness) national security, which they say takes precedence over everything else, means an uninterrupted production of crude oil at ‘competitive’ prices. This is their paramount concern irrespective of the impact on the local inhabitants and environment. On the part of local people in the Niger Delta and their organizations, the condition for security is the maintenance of the carrying capacity of the environment. Security for them is recognition that an unsustainable exploitation of crude oil, with its devastation of farmland and fishing waters, threatens resource flows and livelihoods. Therefore, protection of the environment is invariably linked to this perception of security. When livelihoods are threatened, a feeling of deprivation ensues. A people that feel deprived also feel anxious about their livelihoods. Such people are insecure. Consequently, a condition of security for the people is the elimination of deprivation through a just distribution of resources. This, for them, means that a good part of wealth generated from their land should return to them.

Both under military rule and presently, the almost reflexive response of state officials to this contradiction of securities is not to seek consensus and negotiate common grounds. Instead, it is to unleash state violence through militarism. State violence clearly illustrates the continuing tendency of people in power to privatize the instrumentalities of the state, in this case using them to pursue the private interests of state officials and petrobusiness. In effect, although conflicts in the Delta involve social groups, this is only an illusion because actually it is the violence unleashed by a privatized state that is the cause of conflicts. Ake et al (n.d.) therefore argue that what is happening for the most part is violent aggression by the state rather than conflict. This is because:

Those groups who are aggressed, communities, ethnic groups, minorities, religious groups, peasants, the poor, counter elites, are often not in any dispute or even systematic interaction with the people who aggress them. The aggression often occurs in the routine business of projecting power, carrying out policies without consultation or negotiation with other parties or spreading terror to sustain domination.  

State aggression against the people of the Niger Delta has taken four main forms namely, constant harassment of the leaders of popular movements and organizations, instigating inter-communal conflicts, especially along ethnic, religious and clan lines, instigating internal division of popular organizations and direct repression using the army and police. In response, communities in the Delta mobilize to engage the alliance of state and petrobusiness for improved livelihoods and a clean environment. Often, in the violence that ensues, as in the case of the Ogoni, women are the prime victims.  

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A good case study of the aggression of the Nigerian state against the Niger Delta is the experience of the Ijaw ethnic minority in Bayelsa state between 1998 and 1999. This was particularly illustrated by the Egbesu wars and Odi massacre. From the time of its creation in 1996, Bayelsa State, the heartland of the Ijaw ethnic group, was like a simmering earthquake waiting to erupt. The repression of the Niger Delta by the military had left the region highly charged and mobilized and it was only a question of time before the situation exploded. In August 1997, over 10,000 youths from across the Delta demonstrated at Aleibiri in Ekeremor Local Area of the State to demand an end to all Shell activities in the Niger Delta. Aleibiri was chosen as the focus of the demonstration because, according to the youths, Shell had refused to clean an oil spill that occurred there on 18 March 1997. Even at the time, evidence clearly pointed to more conflicts between the state, oil companies and Ijaw youths, in spite of repeated claims by government that peace had returned to the area. Speaking at the Aleibiri gathering, a community leader and retired Navy Lieutenant, Chief Augustine Anthony, clearly stated that Ijaw youths would fight until there is freedom in the Niger Delta because ‘we have been exploited for so long’.

Within one year, Ijawland exploded in what became known as the Egbesu38 wars. It began in early 1998 when an Ijaw youth leader was arrested and detained by the military Governor of the State during the rule of General Abacha. He was held without trial in the Government House (the military Governor’s official residence) for distributing ‘seditious’ documents questioning the financial probity of the Governor Navy Captain Olu Bolade. In reaction, a group of youths believed to be members of the Egbesu cult, stormed the Government House in Yenagoa the State capital city, disarmed the military guards and released their leader. Many residents of Yenagoa that we spoke to, including policemen and soldiers, believe that members of the cult were able to break into the well-guarded Government House because they wore charms that made them impervious to bullets. The success of the first Egbesu war obviously enhanced the profile of the youths and the cult, and encouraged more young people, many of whom were unemployed (youth unemployment in Bayelsa State is very high), to join the cult and the ensuing protests. In a matter of weeks, the invincibility of the Egbesu had spread throughout Ijawland and beyond. The success of the Egbesu youth in the ‘first war’ also fed into wider demands by the Ijaw for more petroleum revenues. Prior to the Egbesu action, the Ijaw National Council and the Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEN) had made vociferous demands for more petroleum revenues to be allocated to the Ijaw.

The death of the dictator Abacha in June 1998 and improvements in human rights and expansion of the political space made it possible for Ijaw demands to become more openly articulated and pursued. The first Egbesu war had guaranteed a central role for the youth in this new dispensation. This became clear in late 1998 following a spate of hijacks of oil installations by Ijaw youths. This phase of Ijaw resistance, as they called it, culminated in a grand Convention of Ijaw youths in Kaiama town. The meeting issued a document addressed to the government and oil companies requesting more local control of oil revenues and better environmental practices. The Kaiama Declaration also gave the government until 31st December

38 Egbesu is the Ijaw god of war. The 1998 Egbesu wars were reminiscent of events a century earlier when King Koko mobilized 1,000 Nembe warriors in 1895 to attack Goldie’s Royal Niger Company headquarters at Ashaka bolstered by their belief in Egbesu
1998 to respond positively to their demands. The government upped the ante with a spate of condemnations and threats to use force against the youths. In his new year/budget broadcast on 01 January 1999, the Head of State General Abubakar, gave indications of a military action against the youths. Since early December 1998, there had been massive military build-up in Bayelsa State by the government, including the positioning of frigates in the Gulf of Guinea.

Throughout December 1998 and early January 1999, Bayelsa State was virtually under siege and the atmosphere was tense. The second Egbesu war was imminent. It started when military men in Yenagoa, the capital of Bayelsa State, confronted Ijaw youths participating in a cultural festival. In the ensuing violence, which lasted for over one week, many Ijaw youths lost their lives in Yenagoa and Kaiama, property worth millions of Naira was destroyed and scores of people were displaced.

The military invasion of the town of Odi in Kolokuma-Opokuma Local Government Area of Bayelsa State in 1999 by the new civilian government seemed to confirm the fears of the human rights community that it will take some time before the vestiges of the rule of the militariat are eliminated. Odi is the second largest town in Bayelsa State, after the capital Yenagoa. Trouble began in mid-November 1999 when a criminal youth gang took some policemen hostage and later tortured them to death. The team of policemen had gone to the town to investigate rumours of renewed Egbesu mobilisation, this time to storm Lagos. This was thought to be a reprisal for attacks a month earlier on Ijaws in Lagos by the ethnic Yoruba youth group called the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC). It was widely believed that the OPC attacks on Ijaws in Lagos was a carryover from the conflicts in the State of Ondo between the Ijaw and Ilaje, a Yoruba clan. The government interpreted the killing of the policemen as renewed Egbesu challenge to the state. However, it is known that one leader of the gang that murdered the policemen at Odi was in fact a member of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the party of both President Obasanjo and Governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha of Bayelsa State. This youth leader is known to be very influential among Ijaw youths and mobilised them to support the PDP in the gubernatorial elections of January 1999. In response to the death of the policemen, President Obasanjo ordered Governor Alamieyeseigha to produce the culprits. When this failed, he ordered in the army.

The consequences were chilling – over two thousand deaths, many more missing, thousands forced to flee and virtually no house left standing in Odi. As if this was not enough, the President in a televised interview ordered security forces to shoot rioters at sight. These draconian measures have been widely criticised in Nigeria, but the government continues to defend its actions. The excessive display of military force at Odi against a civilian population is unprecedented for a democratic government. A very useful reflection of the psychology of the soldiers that led the invasion are captured in the graffiti they left behind. Scratched on walls with charcoal and hard objects, many of them give an insight into the rules of engagement given to the soldiers by their political and military superiors. Table 2 presents a selection of the graffiti.

**Table 2: A selection of graffiti left behind at Odi by invading soldiers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRAFFITI</th>
<th>COMMENTS/INTERPRETATION</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>We will kill all Ijaws – by Soldier</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bayelsa will be silent forever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Odi people take your time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Don play with soldier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>As from today Odi people if you see soldier or Mopol or police try an touch one of them again you will see what go happening by soldier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Nobody can save you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Odi people no be our fault na ona government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Where is Egbesu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Idiots, why Egbesu no save una!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>So Odi youths this is the end of Egbesu in Odi village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>You bagers of Odi (Egbesu) should be very careful with d living God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>No power from Odi will ever supercede that of God. Therefore Egbesu is a man made power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Thou will serve God the maker of heaven and not Egbesu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Bloody civilians!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Any hope of crude oil becoming the engine of development in the Niger Delta has now been completely dashed. In the first place, the pattern of exploitation of crude oil in the region is patently unsustainable. It is instructive that many renewable resources like land and underground aquifers are being destroyed in the process of extracting a finite, non-renewable resource like crude oil. The destruction of the Niger Delta environment as a result of the petroleum extraction industry not only destroys local livelihoods now, but also undermines their future prospect. One of the consequences of the rule of the militariat in the Niger Delta is the prevalent unsustainable use of petroleum resources in Nigeria.

Second, the level of infrastructural development in the Niger Delta is generally poor. To be sure, the terrain of the Delta is harsh, but generally inadequate attention has been paid to the provision of facilities like education, health, roads, electricity and potable water by both government and oil companies.
Yet, these facilities are readily available at oil installations dotting the Delta, making these installations islands of affluence in a sea of deprivation. This has heightened the sense of relative deprivation in communities and made oil installations ready targets of their anger. Oil companies will readily point to the huge investments they are making in community development. For instance, Shell says that it spends about $60 million annually in community projects like water, agriculture and health. However, activists in the Niger Delta dispute these figures. They claim that a great deal of the money goes to political payments by Shell and for establishing infrastructure for its activities such as construction of roads to its installations and dredging canals to facilitate its activities. They insist that local communities are not part of decisions on projects to be established and they call for structures for monitoring funds that are supposedly spent on development projects in Niger Delta communities.

In recognition of the poor state of infrastructure and the harsh terrain of the Niger Delta, successive governments since independence have established special development agencies for the region. First, there was the Niger Delta Development Board in the 1960s, which was recommended by the Willink Commission. The Commission had found that the harsh terrain of the Niger Delta necessitated a special development Board for the area. Second, in the 1970s when the military government used River Basin Commissions as the principal tool of rural development, the Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority was established as one of 11 River Basin Commissions across the country. Since then, other efforts have included the Special Fund created by the 1981 Revenue Act for Oil Producing Areas and the Special Presidential Task Force for the Development of the Oil Producing Areas, which administered the special fund amounting to 1.5% of the federation accounts, created in 1989. However, the principal intervention of this sort began in July 1992, when the military government of General Babangida by Decree No. 23 of that year, established the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and committed 3% of oil revenues to it.

There were high hopes at its inception that OMPADEC will become the driving force behind the regeneration of the Niger Delta. The huge financial resources that ostensibly were available to the Commission bolstered this goodwill. Based on the 3% commitment, it was expected that the Commission would be receiving about one billion Naira ($50 million) every month from the federation account. However, this did not materialize due to inter-ministerial intrigues and diverse political calculations in government. For instance, according to A.K. Horsefall, who chaired the inaugural Board of the Commission from its inception until it was dissolved in January 1996, ‘governments – civil or military – never stopped eyeing our funds with a view to either poaching them or indirectly controlling or sharing in them.’ Still, as Table 3 shows OMPADEC received very substantial funding for the five years it was operational. In 1993 alone, it received about $250 million for its activities, and by December 1997 had expended some $870 million.

40 General Abacha dissolved the OMPADEC Board and appointed Prof. E. Opia as Sole Administrator.
41 A.K. Horsfall, The OMPADEC Dream, p. 66.
### Table 3: OMPADEC monthly financial receipts, 1993-1997 (Millions of Naira)

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>316.0</td>
<td>225.0</td>
<td>318.0</td>
<td>275.5</td>
<td>355.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>2,680.1</td>
<td>216.0</td>
<td>270.3</td>
<td>233.1</td>
<td>388.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>243.6</td>
<td>327.6</td>
<td>288.5</td>
<td>231.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>227.4</td>
<td>243.6</td>
<td>211.4</td>
<td>299.9</td>
<td>140.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>172.9</td>
<td>206.2</td>
<td>286.0</td>
<td>279.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>243.4</td>
<td>191.5</td>
<td>322.4</td>
<td>312.3</td>
<td>274.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>239.5</td>
<td>197.2</td>
<td>309.2</td>
<td>310.8</td>
<td>278.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>230.1</td>
<td>198.9</td>
<td>188.4</td>
<td>146.9</td>
<td>287.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>450.5</td>
<td>237.4</td>
<td>315.7</td>
<td>246.7</td>
<td>248.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>193.1</td>
<td>260.8</td>
<td>195.2</td>
<td>152.0</td>
<td>293.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>165.1</td>
<td>254.2</td>
<td>207.7</td>
<td>275.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>398.8</td>
<td>184.0</td>
<td>239.2</td>
<td>471.3</td>
<td>470.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4978.9</td>
<td>2536.0</td>
<td>3157.8</td>
<td>3230.7</td>
<td>3522.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Unfortunately, OMPADEC became in the popular consciousness of the people of the Niger Delta another ruse designed to enrich the families and friends of the military government, while pretending to be investing in the Delta. OMPADEC was often accused of mismanagement of its resources if not outright corruption. Incidentally, there seems to be some truth in the public perception of OMPADEC. By his own account, Horsfall accepts that there were shortcomings in the management of its finances. For instance, in March 1993, two billion Naira was taken from OMPADEC account by the Federal Ministry of Works for projects, which according to Horsfall ‘never ever took place’. In addition, the management of OMPADEC made advance payments to contractors, sometimes amounting to over 50% of project cost, even before projects were executed. In one instance in 1993, this led to the loss of 275 million Naira over a disputed water project. It is not surprising that when OMPADEC was finally scrapped, it owed billions of Naira to its contractors and had hundreds of projects abandoned. In 1999, the military government requested the National Economic Intelligence Committee to evaluate OMPADEC debts to its contractors by assessing the extent of work on abandoned projects. In Bayelsa State alone, the Intelligence Committee found over 300 abandoned projects, the extent of work on many of them intentionally overestimated by OMPADEC staff and in others contractors had received huge sums of money for work they did not carry out. In addition, in many communities projects were unnecessarily duplicated. For instance, in one community there were three jetties, two by oil companies and one by OMPADEC. The OMPADEC jetty was about 70% complete, while the other two were already operational. Yet, this community lacked many other basic facilities like schools, healthcare and clean water.

42 *Ibid*, p. 68.
The latest special development intervention by government in the Niger Delta is through the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The Commission took off in January 2001, with a revenue profile as good as its predecessor, OMPADEC, projected to be at least 40 billion Naira annually. The NDDC is to be funded from the following major sources:

- 15% of federal allocation to the nine states of the Niger Delta
- 50% of ecological fund due to the nine states
- 3% of annual budget of oil companies.

Presently, OMPADEC is trying to develop a Master Plan for the development of the Niger Delta through a contract awarded to GTZ, a German Company. The plan is expected to be ready in April 2003.

Already, civil society organizations in the Niger Delta are expressing unease about the Commission. The feeling is that it is another patronage system, an avenue for corruptly enriching party loyalists. They point to the fact that already a director in the Commission has been removed from office for financial malpractices. As a matter of fact, the NDDC was nearly stillborn. Soon after his inauguration, President Obasanjo toured the Niger Delta and promised a major government intervention in the region. The President followed this with consultations with representatives of communities and other stakeholders in the petroleum industry, consultations that did not always end on an amicable note. Later in 1999, he finally sent a bill to the National Assembly to create the NDDC. However, from start the bill was mired in controversies involving the people of the Niger Delta, the National Assembly and the Presidency over the definition of the Niger Delta, the funding of the Commission, location of its headquarters and staffing. These controversies continue to date. Other observers also think that the structures of decision making in the NDDC are not participatory enough and that direct consultation with communities are either not conducted or where they are conducted are farcical. Even the oil companies have been critical of the NDDC and threatened to withhold their remittances until the Commission shows what it has done with the monies already paid to it.

Postscript

Let me end by suggesting that we need to characterize the present moment of the dialectical process of revolt against social science in Africa and founding an African social science. This moment is principally defined by the bold intervention of international financial institutions like the World Bank in shaping the African educational agenda in general and social science research priorities in particular. Among other things, this has entailed first, an emphasis on policy and action-oriented research. While it appears as linking theory and practice, we must be careful about this new form of praxis. Implicit in it is a belief that Africans need not dissipate energies in producing original theoretical knowledge, which is expensive and time consuming. Instead, emphasis should be on applying theories developed elsewhere to practical situations. This is justified on grounds of the

After the Assembly passed the bill, President Obasanjo withheld accent leading to threats that the Assembly would override his veto and force the bill to become operational.
enormity and urgency of Africa’s problems. An extension of this position is that Africans should concentrate on primary education, which is said to have a high rate of social return, rather than university education. Suffice it to say that those who subscribe to this type of research are merely glorified data collectors, and they directly and indirectly legitimize the imperialism of social science in Africa. This attitude to higher education has also conduced increased authoritarianism in universities as lecturers who do not join this bandwagon are classified as unproductive and targeted by university authorities and government.

Second, this agenda has entailed projecting non-governmental organizations as alternative sites of knowledge production to universities. Again, this is meant to justify an ideological position that insists that original thinking and knowledge production on Africa by Africans is either unnecessary or improbable. It is then suggested that unlike universities, NGOs are engaged in practical research and information gathering, which are invaluable to the immediate developmental needs of Africa such as poverty alleviation and combating HIV/AIDS. On the contrary, however, we argue that what is needed is a synergy between the practical work of NGOs and deep, reflective and original knowledge production in the universities. This synergy should be constructed around the project of building an authentic African social science.

Thirdly, the IFI agenda has been behind the difficulties that social scientists subscribing to the revolt against social science in Africa have been experiencing in getting research grants. Ake already pointed to this when he spoke about ‘delegitimation’ of such scholars. Even independent Foundations and grant making agencies have followed the cue of the IFIs in avoiding such researchers and devaluing serious academic research in universities. For instance, the initiative of four US foundations on higher education in Africa emphasises issues such as fundraising, ICT, strengthening university structures, and to some extent staff training. While we do not deny the importance of these issues, we think that they remain deformed if funding does not support scholars to do original research.

Finally, we call for three related struggles at this moment in the revolt against social science in Africa:

- Struggle against IFIs and their attempts to devalue university education and original social science research.
- Struggle against authoritarianism in universities.
- Struggle to regain the solidarity of our students. They are increasingly losing touch with us in the struggle for an African social science because they are blighted by authoritarianism of university administrations and government, as well as material poverty and massive decay of infrastructure.

Permit me to end as I began with a quote from Ake. They are the very last words he wrote in *Social Science as Imperialism* and I consider them extremely instructive:

The pursuit of the new social science and the new idea of development is not an adventurist project, doomed to failure. For it manifests aspects of the consciousness correlative with the emerging realities we speak of. Thus it has an objective base which
even now is considerably powerful because it is pregnant with the future.
RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

By Jibrin Ibrahim¹ & Ibrahim Muazzam²

Focus of the Research

The research took place between 1999 and 2004 and was coordinated by Jibrin Ibrahim and Ibrahim Muazzam. The Project was funded by the Ford Foundation. Seven Separate Research Reports have been prepared and are at various stages of editing/printing. They are:

1. New Christian Religious Movements and Democratic Governance in Nigeria, Dr Jibrin Ibrahim, Political Scientist and Director, Centre for Democracy and Development, Abuja.
2. New Islamic Religious Movements and Democratic Governance in Nigeria, Ibrahim Muazzam, Ag Director, Centre for Research and Documentation and Lecturer in Political Science, Bayero University, Kano.
4. Religious Pluralism and Democratic Governance in South Eastern Nigeria, Professor Okechukwu Ibeanu, Political Scientist, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
5. Religious Pluralism and Democratic Governance in North Eastern Nigeria, Dr. Auwalu Anwar, Historian and Adviser to the Minister for the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.
6. Religious Pluralism and Democratic Governance in South Western Nigeria, Adigun Agbaje, Professor of Political Science, University of Ibadan.
7. Pluralism and Religious Conflict in North Western Nigeria, Dr. Haruna Wakili, Historian and Director, Centre for Democratic Research and Training, Bayero University, Kano.
8. The main output is a policy briefing paper and a book on “Religious Pluralism and Democratic Governance in Nigeria” edited by Jibrin Ibrahim and Ibrahim Muazzam. The book is in press.

Major Research Findings:

High Level of Religiosity in Nigeria

The level of religiosity in Nigerian society has been growing in a remarkable manner over the past two decades. This is expressed in the multiplication of religious authorities, texts, discourses and identities. Growth is expressed both in the intensity of belief and in the expansion of time, resources and efforts devoted to religious practice. There is however considerable complexity, variety and

¹ Dr. Jibrin Ibrahim is the Director, Global Rights: Partners for Justice, Abuja Nigeria.
² Dr. Ibrahim Muazzam is the Ag Director, Centre for Research & Documentation (CRD), Kano, Nigeria.
ambiguity of the said religious practices. In addition, the practices have been subjected to political instrumentalisation by various actors, which the research project has sought to capture. A number of observations can be made.

Open Access to Religious Space

The first idea that has emerged in explaining this phenomenon is that the Nigerian religious sphere appears to be a relatively democratic and accessible space, which is open to a wide range of actors who have multiple motivations and objectives, some of which are spiritual while others are banal or even materialistic. This idea is however relative and needs to be theorised in a cultural context. A refinement of the postulation would suggest that the phenomenon we are analysing is less of an opening of democratic space and more of the colonisation of cultural space. The explanation for this is linked to the fact that the norms and practices of the growing number of religious movements and their activism is characterised by norms that are often antithetical to democratic ones. They include gender inequality and impenetrable hierarchies, sectarianism and exclusiveness, intolerance and a propensity to hate speech and undemocratic organisational practices. Not surprisingly, the relationship between the trajectories of religious pluralism and democratic culture in Nigeria have tended to work against each other. One of the reasons for this factor is the intense rivalry and politicisation of Muslim/Christian relations in the country.

Religious Pluralism and Political Conflict

Muslim and Christian actors in Nigeria are engaged in a constant struggle to control “theological space”. In so doing, they always try to link political contentions with longstanding attempts to ‘capture souls’. The development of both Islam and Christianity in Nigeria has depended on their capacities to convert believers in traditional religions. In the 1931 census, 50% of the population were registered as "pagans" with the percentage declining to 34% in 1952 and 18.2% in 1963; leaving Islam with 47% and Christianity with 34% of the population. Almost nobody is registered today as a pagan and as the 1991 census did not pose the question of religious affiliation, it is not known which of the two religions gained a majority of the rest of the "pagans". While traditional religions have faded away as official identities, they still dominate the lives of a substantial number of Nigerians who are syncretists in practice. One of the major objects of Colonial Rule was the conversion of "pagans" to Christianity. After independence, the Sardauna of Sokoto initiated a major Islamic conversion campaign among "pagan" groups of Northern Nigeria from 1963. Since the mid-1970s, evangelical sections of the two religious groups have focused their attention on the "last remnants" of the pagans. Conversion is a major crisis-generating factor in contemporary Nigeria. Conversion, a Godly and positive achievement for the receiving group is apostasy, an evil act for the losing one. Worse, converts are proudly and loudly displayed in the media, in mass congregations etc; almost as if they were war booty, an act that breeds more triumphalism on one side and bitterness on the other. In addition, conversion campaigns tend to use provocative methods - such as attempts to debunk the validity of the sacred texts of the other group or holding mass meetings in the "territory" of the other side; thus igniting serious conflicts.
State Abdication of Social Provisioning

The Nigerian State has moved away from the position it occupied at the period of independence as an organ with primary responsibility for producing the fruits of independence in the form of infrastructure, education, health, potable water and so on. Not only has it abdicated its responsibility for social provisioning, the state has also largely withdrawn its commitment to promoting equitable social and economic development in the country. Given that nature abhors a vacuum, religious organisations were quick to seize the opportunity of occupying the terrain and using their nexus for social provisioning as an instrument for the control of social and theological space.

Some of the more specific research findings from the project include the following:

i. There is a dangerous growth in the number of conflicts that are presented or understood as “religious conflicts” in the country. Research findings indicate however that beneath most of these “religious conflicts” are economic and political conflicts.

ii. Economic factors play a major role in the dynamics of the religious sphere. Struggles over markets, grazing lands, seasonal dry season farming by migrant farmers and perceptions of growth or decline in the prosperity of groups have generated numerous “religious conflicts”.

iii. Political domination has become an important lens for viewing the religious situation. It is part of popular histories of exclusion and victimisation. It is also a major vector for the expression of possible futures, which include visions of security and insecurity for different groups. The politics of exclusion is lucrative and has encouraged the invention of increasingly more exclusionary visions of possible futures.

iv. The youth have become the most active and visible actors in the dynamics of Nigeria’s religious pluralism. Their socio-economic situation characterised by the double-edged crises of lack of access to educational institutions and jobs makes them vulnerable to religious ideologies and influences. They are available to experience and act out new forms of belief and activism.

v. The mapping of Nigeria’s religious pluralism indicates significant gender specificities. Gender ideologies are imbedded in religious ideology and practice. Women have generally become more visible in the religious/political sphere, especially in new religious movements. However, they are often denied leadership roles while conservative patriarchal ideologies still remain strong in the orthodox movements.

vi. The mapping also revealed regional specificities. Certain regions tend to be more prone to religious conflicts than others. While the Northwest and Middle Belt are very prone to violent conflicts, the South West expresses more tolerant forms of inter-religious relations.

vii. The field of religion is one that is susceptible to manipulation. The manipulation thesis on its own is however problematic because it does not take into account people’s deep beliefs and understanding of their religions.
which make them susceptible to such manipulation. In their actions, most activists see themselves as defending their rights.

viii. The quality of religious education is relatively poor and emphasis has been placed on orienting members of religious organisations towards interreligious and above all, intra-religious rivalry rather than the core religious values of piety love for humanity, tolerance and respect for others.

ix. The combination of rivalry, poor religious education, intolerance and power struggles has created a situation in which the dynamics of religious pluralism in Nigeria have had a negative effect on the expansion of democratic space and entrenchment of democratic culture.

Policy Dimensions of the Research

Nigeria is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society with enormous potential for economic, social and democratic development, which has been blocked by authoritarian leadership, the emergence of an over-centralised state, corruption and prolonged conflict. In the process, Nigerians have been losing their freedom, their resources and the good relations they have hitherto enjoyed with their neighbours. The development of the Nigerian project would therefore require the deepening of democracy and increased commitment to what we call “true” federalism. The development of democratic culture is dependent on the existence of a modern state that can protect the rights of its citizens and extract duties from them. Modern states are characterised by the practice of equity, the rule of law and the search for legitimacy.

The legitimacy of the state is linked to its capacity to present itself as a provider of necessary public goods and more important, a neutral arbiter that guarantees the security of all sections of society. When the state is generally perceived as serving the particularistic interests of one group, it starts losing its legitimacy, and indeed, its authority. As state capacity declines, fear of "the other" rises and inhabitants of the state resort to other levels of solidarity such as the religious, ethnic and regional forms in search of security. Religious insecurity is particularly insidious and dangerous because it makes people feel threatened not just in their present lives but also in the hereafter. The research project of the Centre for Research and Documentation on “Religious Pluralism and Democratic Governance in Nigeria” addresses the issue of understanding and doing something about the manifestations of our religious differences and our desire for advancing democracy and federalism. This policy brief summarises the major policy implications that have flowed out of the studies undertaken in the project. The paper starts with two caveats, which make the development of policy difficult. The first is that the state has virtually abdicated its responsibility in social provisioning while the revelations from most of the studies is that an increased commitment from the state to the social sector is a necessary precondition for addressing most of the problems identified. The second problem is that the sharp politicisation of opinion over the Shariah debate makes the development of a coherent consensual policy package difficult.

State Abdication of Social Provisioning

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independence in the form of infrastructure, education, health, potable water and so on. Not only has it abdicated its responsibility for social provisioning, the state has also largely withdrawn its commitment to promoting equitable social and economic development in the country. Given that nature abhors a vacuum, religious organisations were quick to seize the opportunity of occupying the terrain and using their nexus for social provisioning as an instrument for the control of social and theological space. The role of the state in addressing social and economic development cannot be abdicated and left to religious actors without serious social consequences. The denial of the social and economic rights of citizens has implications for what kind of society is produced. What is clear is that governments should be more active in attempting to even out social and economic development, if they want to be recognized as furthering the aims of equity and social justice.

Issues such as these are not only policy issues. A social and economic policy will not, in itself, bring about the realisation of such rights. What may be even more important is to engender public and popular debate on the exercise of social and economic rights, which will create the pressure for governments to be seen to move in that direction. Any approach towards developing policy proposals capable of effectively addressing the problems created by religious conflicts and contentions must therefore be broad-based and take up in particular the following problems:

**Youth Unemployment**

The youth have been the major actors in religious activism and in the various conflicts generated by various forms of manipulation of religious sentiments. They have energy and they have time due to the high rate of unemployment and non-attendance or dropping out from school. There is no possibility of effectively addressing the problems of religious pluralism and democratic governance without a serious youth policy that puts the nation’s youth in schools and in jobs.

**Improving the Administration of Justice**

Too many Nigerians have lost confidence in the system of the administration of justice in the country. As long as people believe that the police cannot protect them and their property and the courts cannot guarantee justice, then their belief in the state and its agencies reduce and they search for alternative methods of protecting themselves and seeking redress. The state must therefore significantly improve its competence in the performance of basic functions.

**Ignorance and the need for Religious Education**

While the intensity of the performance of religious rituals has increased significantly over the past few years, the level of ignorance people have of the basic tenets of their own religion and the religions of others remains high. The promotion of religious education aimed at eliminating religious bigotry rooted in ignorance is imperative. The younger generation should be educated in such a way that they can question religious interpretations that encourage hate speech and action towards others.
Civic Education

Religious education must however be accompanied by civic education. Nigerians have to learn or relearn the duties and responsibilities of citizens and the necessity of respect for others, tolerance and the importance of the promotion of human rights and the rule of law.

Promoting Equity

The search for equity is basic to the Nigerian problem. Those in power have too often succumbed to the temptation of preferential treatment for themselves and the groups they belong to. This tendency has been creating anxiety and fears about “hidden agendas” by the powerful people in society who have, or appear to have the intention of restricting or denying the rights of others.

The Religious Policy of the Nigerian State

Since 1979, the essence of the religious policy of the Nigerian state has been best expressed by Section Ten of the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions which carries a very short prohibition section stating that: "The Government of the Federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as a State Religion." This formulation followed the acrimonious debate in the 1978 Constituent Assembly over the establishment of a Sharia Court of Appeal. Since that time, the Shari’a has become a major bone of contention in Nigerian politics. It has become an important idiom through which civil and political society actors have been carrying out their struggles. Specifically, Christian and Muslim members differed over a proposal for the establishment of a Shari’a Court of Appeal. Many Christians saw the suggestion as the first step towards the establishment of an Islamic state in the country. Muslims on the other hand argued that the established of the Appeal Court was a logical extension of the existence of inferior Shari’a courts which Muslims had been demanding for, for a long time. In the compromise that emerged, the Shari’a Court of Appeal was established but its appellate jurisdiction was limited to civil law. The situation at that time seemed to have been as follows. Christians appeared to have accepted that the Shari’a juridical structure be federalised and the Muslims accepted that the application of Shari’a be restricted to civil matters. The Shari’a question entered a new phase on 27th October 1999 when Governor Ahmed Sani Yerima of Zamfara state inaugurated the adoption of the Shari’a legal system, which took effect from 27th January 2000. The Zamfara Law extended the application of Shari’a from personal law to criminal law. Following the Zamfara example, eleven other Muslim dominated states in the North have also adopted similar laws.

Over the past 25 years therefore, Christian and Muslim activists in Nigeria have passionately argued for the adoption of an expressly secular and a more pro-Shari’a provision in the Constitution respectively. The formulation in Section 10 was done by the Obasanjo Administration in 1979 in such a way as to assure each group that the Constitution respects its core values. To satisfy Muslim concerns, the word secularism is not used in the Constitution. To satisfy the Christians, the Grand Norm provides a guarantee against the adoption of a state religion. To achieve this dual purpose, the formulation of Section 10 has been deliberately
ambiguous. The result has been constant haggling over the “true” meaning of Section 10. While some have argued that the provision guarantees secularism, others have contested the assertion. The major problem with the provision is that it appears to allow for preferential treatment to be accorded to particular religions without formally adopting the said religion as a state religion. The 1989 Constituent Assembly tried to clarify the situation by formulating a less ambiguous provision: "No Government shall overtly or covertly give preferential treatment to any particular religion". This formulation was however rejected on the grounds that Nigerians are a very religious people so their state cannot hands off from religion. Indeed, the Preamble to the Nigerian Constitution declares the resolve of Nigerians: To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign Nation under God. The question that is posed therefore is how can such a country in which the resolve to obey and live under God’s guidance has become an article of faith declare itself to be secular. Very many Nigerians have come to accept that the State has a duty to sponsor or promote religious education, pilgrimages and so on. The implication of the retention of Section 10 is that a political choice for an ambiguous formulation has been deliberately made to allow political actors have more room to make public policy choices on the terrain. It is this ambiguity that has created the conditions for the current political crisis over the introduction of Shari’a criminal laws in some states in the country. Each side has interpreted it in a manner that supports particular conceptions of Nigeria’s political order – federalism. The basic principle of federalism is that such problems have to be politically negotiated. Section 10 allows us to do that and is therefore adequate for our current needs.

Religious Freedom

The most important objective of the religious policy of the state is to guarantee religious freedom. Section 38 (1) in Chapter four of the Constitution on Fundamental Human Rights has clear provisions on religious rights:

Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private), to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

The problem that usually arises is that this constitutionally entrenched right is often breached in practice. It is therefore imperative the state makes constant efforts to protect this right.

Educational Policy

One of the most important reasons why religion has become such a contentious issue is that basic policy decisions are often not implemented in Nigeria. Section 38 (2) and (3) in Chapter four of the Constitution on Fundamental Human Rights has clear provisions on the rights of people to receive religious instructions of their choice:
No person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or to take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if such instruction, ceremony or observance relates to a religion other than his own, or a religion not approved by his parent or guardian.

No religious community or denomination shall be prevented from providing religious instruction to pupils of that community or denomination in any place of education maintained wholly by that community or denomination.

The reality in many of our schools however is that some pupils and students in different parts of the country are obliged to take religious instructions they have not chosen to take. Religious courses CRK and IRK in particular, are often denied or imposed on students. As some states are deciding to return secondary schools to missions, and as more missions are granted licenses to start universities, it is imperative that the policy of the rights of citizens to religious instructions of one’s choice are respected. All educational institutions must guarantee the freedom of worship to their pupils and students, especially those from minority faiths.

**The Role of Security Forces**

Over the past two decades, numerous violent conflicts related to religious identity problems have occurred in the country. Security forces have often played a role that has exacerbated rather than resolve the conflicts. They have often refused to take preventive measures to nip conflicts in the bud, even in situations where everybody knew the conflicts were brewing. When they have taken action, their neutrality has often been questioned as they have shown tendencies of siding with one or the other protagonist. On the whole therefore, there is a major task of re-orienting security forces to promote peace and reconciliation in such situations.

**The Role of the Mass Media**

The mass media, just like the security forces, have often shown bias and prejudice in reporting and analysing religious conflicts. They have frequently deliberately engaged in provocative or one-sided reporting. There are occasions on which they have indeed engaged in inciting people to riot. The media cannot be allowed to continue with such action with impunity.

**Religion and Gender Policy**

Religion has remained a bastion of conservative policies that often work against the interest of women. One of the legacies of Christian missions and colonial influence in Nigeria relates to the underdevelopment of girl education. Education for girls followed the gender stereotypes of Victorian England in which the utility of female education was de-emphasised. The same case has been made for Islam in which conservative and erroneous readings of religious tenets have been used to discourage girl child education and promote girl child marriage. Women’s efforts to challenge religious orthodoxy in the new religious movements have resulted in contradictory processes. Women are often denied access to leadership positions. It
is necessary to challenge support from state agencies for conservative actors in their selective use of ‘religion’ against women. In general, states should desist from supporting oppressive and anti-democratic forces in their use of ‘religion’ against women. At the same time, there is a need to subject official discourses on gender to greater scrutiny, critical analysis and public debate.

**Land Policy**

One of the disturbing developments in the country is the systematic denial of land to certain religious groups to build places of worship. In such places, the groups denied such land allocations have resorted to securing land meant for residential purposes from the commercial market and erecting their places of worship in such places. They are in turn harassed for not adhering to planning rules and the result is attempts to destroy such places of worship and the heightening of tensions. All state governments must have policies that guarantee the acquisition of land for building places of worship to all religious groups.

**Proselytisation Policy**

The Constitution guarantees the right to proselytisation. We note however that when such rights are not pursued cautiously, tensions emerge. Inflammatory and provocative speeches and hate speech need to be prevented if we are to promote religious harmony. Nigerians need to consciously promote civility towards each other. Polished and refined manners are expressions of respect for other members of society. It is a pre-condition for democratic practice as citizenship cannot be effective if the rights and the dignity of the person are not respected. Part of the African tragedy is that refined and civil manners, which are essential elements of socialisation in most traditional societies, have been eroded by economic crises, state terrorism, hunger and the parochial politics of authoritarian leaders, which have pushed people into losing respect for their neighbours. What has not been sufficiently emphasised is that many active religious movements have an even more effective capacity and record of inculcating intolerance, an ideology of contempt and exclusion and indeed, incitement to annihilate the other. This tendency must be reversed. In addition, people should learn to show respect to traditional African religions and to non-monotheistic religions in general.

By Rasheed Olaniyi

Introduction: The Trans-location of Ethno-religious violence

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, the trans-location of mutual genocide in the form of ethno-religious violence has ravaged communities in Nigeria. Hostilities and intolerance are on the increase and reprisal attacks are bourgeoning. The era witnessed youth restiveness, the resurgence of ethnic, religious and political militias, private army as well as hired mercenaries from neighbouring countries using sophisticated weapons for massive carnage. Between 1999 and 2004, over 1,000 violent communal clashes occurred with over 50,000 lives lost, over one million citizens internally displaced and billions of Naira lost by the victims and the local economy. The traditional flashpoints of violence have continued to experience more regular carnage, while areas that were hitherto relatively peaceful, transformed into battlefields as witnessed in Kano and Plateau States respectively. This paper argues that the translocation of ethno-religious violence exposed the fragility of the Nigeria nation, the weakness of constitutionalism as it relates to the principle of citizenship and the increasing militarisation of ethno-religious identities. It concludes that the spiral of ethno-religious violence were characterised by spill-over conflicts, but such violence had salient issues including resource control, indigene/settler dichotomy, contracted political space, social exclusion and responses to economic recession.

Indeed, the period 1999 to 2004 could only be compared to the genocide witnessed from 1966 to 1970 in the entire History of Nigeria. In the context of hegemonic control and competition for resource control, the politics of identity has been militarised and directed at eliminating other interest groups, re-negotiating ethnic boundaries and ethno-religious space. The trans-location of ethno-religious violence implies mutual genocide in which violence has given rise to violence and counter-violence in several communities. This has led to wanton destruction of lives and property and frightening state of insecurity. As one community recuperates from orgy of violence, the spill-over would erupt in another community with more devastating consequences that reverberates across the country. Violence became contagious spreading from one part of the country to another and from rural to urban. Nigeria is witnessing a recrudescence of seemingly endless hostilities among communities. There is increasing attempt by Nigerians to resist subjugations from the yoke of either the ‘settlers’ or the ‘indigenes.’ The spill-over conflicts were nurtured passionately to either avenge the killings of ones ethnic group and/or of religious faith that engulfed parts of Northern Nigeria since the Maitatsine religious violence in the 1980s. The violence of genocide has been

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1 Rasheed Olaniyi holds PhD in History from the Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. He is CODESRIA-SEPHIS Young Historian and AAPS/HF Guggenheim Foundation Young Scholar. He is currently the Programme Officer, Centre for Research and Documentation, Kano, Nigeria. E-mail: rasolaniyi@yahoo.com
enormous not only because there is seemingly lack of institutional mechanism to prosecute the perpetrators, but because the perpetrators are either protected by governments or escape with impunity. Equally, the processes of memory associated with the traumatic experience of ethno-religious genocide and refugee crisis were fundamental elements in the trans-location of violence in Nigeria. Ethnic and religious violence is the extreme manifestation of conflicts rooted in the crises of identity. Although it involves grievances directed against state incapacity and unequal distribution of social and economic power, it can hardly be ascribed with attributes of social emancipation often associated with revolutionary violence.2

When the boundaries overlap between those who control political power, the economy and an ethnic group, the conflicts become more complicated at the ethnic level.3 This has been the experience of the Hausa and Yoruba episodic conflicts on the one hand and with other ethnic groups on the other since the transition from military to civilian rule in 1999.4 For example, as noted by Gasa:

There has been an increase in the incidence of conflicts between the Hausa and Yoruba settler communities living outside their respective home regions; within the Niger Delta; between Ilaje and Ijaw in the riverine part of Ondo state; between pan-Yoruba activists (OPC) fighting alongside Itsekiri against Ijaw in metropolitan Lagos (partly a spill-over of the Niger Delta crisis); between Ijaw and Yoruba in Port Harcourt and other cities and towns in the Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta states; and between Yoruba and Hausa Fulani in the major cities of South-western and far Northern Nigeria. There have also arisen fierce and extremely bloody clashes involving communities of otherwise similar ethnic and linguistic identities…. These rising inter-ethnic and communal conflicts and clashes have already resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives and massive destruction. Combatants on both sides have used all means for the prosecution of their objectives, including criminal acts like abductions, torture, rape, physical mutilations and murders.5

Hate memories aggravated ethno-religious genocide, while a mass of ethnic, religious and political entrepreneurs who mobilised primordial sentiments contributed to its trans-location through calumnny campaigns in the media, sponsoring of militia groups and incendiary remarks. The protracted genocide has created deep sense xenophobia and nostalgia among Nigerians and intensified the

push for a re-negotiation of the Nigeria nation by persistent clamour for a Sovereign National Conference from organised ethnic, religious and regional groups; politicians, human rights activists and government officials. For example, a group of Muslim organisations led by Dr. Ibrahim Datti Ahmed after an emergency meeting in Kaduna on 11th May, 2004 observed that:

It is either Sovereign National Conference or we go to war because the Federal Government has failed and the system has collapsed.6

This paper presents three case studies of genocide in Yelwa, Kano and Numan during which the militarisation of identities was displayed, leading to reprisal attacks both in time and location.

**Yelwa Genocide, 2nd - 7th May, 2004**

This presents an apt example of the spiral of ethno-religious violence that has engulfed Nigeria since the return to democratic rule. For four years, violence engulfed communities in Plateau State with reprisal attacks in Kano. Political intrigues among the power elites snowballed into ethno-religious violence. Land scarcity, chieftaincy disputes and political competition set communities against their neighbours. Political competition fuelled the riots in Jos over the Chairmanship of Jos North Local Government in 1994. This was compounded by the long-standing contested hierarchies of citizenship leading to the deepening of the dichotomy between the socially stratified categories of ‘indigenes and settlers.’ In this way, ethno-religious identities were deployed in militarised fashion. Both the democratically elected leaders and traditional rulers remained combatants in the violence through provocative pronouncements or deliberate security laxity. Indeed, Plateau State has a large pool of disenchanted retired and decommissioned soldiers, some of whom emerged as traditional rulers. For example, paramount rulers of Ngas, Mwaghavul, Ankwoi, Doma Wamba and more recently Jos, where violence have festered for years are either former soldiers or policemen. The state was equally a ‘trough of poverty’ despite abundance of agricultural produce and solid mineral deposits. While agriculture has collapsed due to poor facilities, the illegal mining of minerals by immigrants who repatriate their gains could not boost the local economy. In all, recurrent conflicts caused by competition over resources created a large population of refugees, large scale destruction of lives and property depleting the food reserves and accumulated capital of those affected.7

The build-up to the protracted crisis in Plateau State had its roots in the conflicts between local farmers and Fulani pastoralists over recrimination on the destruction of crops by cattle or killing of cattle by local farmers. At Quann Pan, communal disturbances occurred in March 2001 when some Fulani pastoralists attacked the Tiv compounds in Kundum village of Bakin Ciyawa in Kwande district that led to the killing of one Mr. Anthony Dafaan, a Kwan man and some members of his family.7 This resulted in a reprisal attack by Kwan mercenaries

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hired to avenge the death of their Kwan kinsmen. In May of the same year, marauders attacked Shendam and unleashed violence on Gidan Zuru village. Between 11th – 15th April, 2001, there was another outburst of violence in Wase following a lingering dispute as to who should harvest a locust bean tree in Nassarawa village of Wase between a Taroh and Bogg homem Muslim man. By 20th May, 2001, a reprisal attack on the Muslims in Langtang occurred after most of their people became refugees as a result of the spill over war in Wase. The violence was largely due to the inter-ethnic strife in nearby Kanam Local Government Area that led to the displacement of the Taroh of Wase who became refugees in Langtang North. The spiral of conflicts, refugee crisis and memory of hate culminated into a bigger violence in Jos metropolis between 7th to 12th September, 2001.

On the September, 2001 violence broke out in Jos metropolis due to the agitation of Christians against the attempt to introduce Sharia in the state. After Juma’at Services at the Congo Russia area of Jos, Muslim and Christian youths carried out attacks and counter attacks against each others interests and institutions. The violence was alleged to have been sparked off when a young Christian lady, 21-year-old Rhoda Haruna Nyam attempted to pass through a blocked section of the street meant for Muslim prayers. Muslims persuaded her to turn back but she refused. She was eventually beaten and chased off. The reprisal began between Christians and Muslims. The fratricidal war was a fall-out of age-long intrigues of resource control and political rivalry over the ownership of Jos. The intrigues were between the Berom, Anaguta and the Afizere predominantly Christians categorised as indigenes and the Hausa/Fulani Muslims who were categorised as settlers. Arms were freely employed. Over 1,000 people were killed; 5 Mosques, 3 Churches, 41 vehicles and 56 houses were burnt; 7,000 persons were displaced as refugees and over N80 million worth of property were lost to looting and inferno.

Jos mayhem sparked off crises and reprisal attacks in other parts of the country as the displaced persons arrived their towns. In Onitsha, the arrival of three corpses sparked off demonstrations. Hence, Hausa Muslims numbering over 700 took refuge at the 302 Artillery Barracks Onitsha. In an unprecedented manner, many were stunned that the dreaded Bakassi Boys rather than fighting on the side of the rampaging youths controlled the mob and appealed to them not to revenge on the Hausa living in Onitsha. At Uyo, the capital of Akwa Ibom State, Hausa/Fulani Muslim residents fled their homes and business premises in the wake of the crisis. They were attacked by angry youths following the gory tales relayed by twelve students of Uyo who were in Jos for a Law conference but managed to escape. These reprisal attacks had their antecedents in the history of conflicts in Nigeria. Between June 1978 and December 1989, 34 religious clashes involving Christians and Muslims were recorded. In December 1980, the Maitatsine riot started in Kano and engulfed other Northern cities. Between December 1980 and April 1985, Maitatsine struck in five states: Borno State (October 26, 1982); Kaduna State (October 29, 1982); Kano State (October 1983); Defunct Gongola State (February 27, 1984); and Bauchi State (April, 1985). In 1987, Kafanchan riots spilled over into Kaduna, Zaria and Katsina as Muslims attacked Christians

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and their businesses in retaliation for the death of their fellow Muslims in Kafanchan. In 1999, the Yoruba-Hausa genocide in Sagamu was revenged in Kano; Lagos and Ibadan in 2000 and 2001. In February 2000, a similar reprisal attacks were carried out on the Hausa/Fulani residents in Aba, Umuahia, Owerri and Okigwe over the Sharia riots in Kaduna State that affected Igbo residents. The Sharia riots between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna and its environs led to killing of over 600 people; 67,208 persons displaced; 961 houses destroyed; 746 vehicles burnt; 123 Churches and 55 Mosques burnt; 100 persons sustained injuries and one police out-post burnt.10

From 30th December, 2001, various communities in Plateau State continued to live in turmoil, constant apprehension and pandemonium. Turu, Vwang, Fwul, Dagyel, Kwall and several communities were attacked by groups of Hausa and Fulani. Many people were killed and property destroyed. In these attacks, many people were killed with the use of sophisticated weapons such as AK 47.11 On 12th June, 2002 the communities of Kwi, Kassa, Sho, Gwei, Rakot and surrounding hamlets were attacked with sophisticated weapons in another round of attack. On 26th June, 2002, violence erupted in Yelwa. Many people were killed and rendered homeless. Churches were destroyed. This violence spread to Shendam, parts of Langtang, Dadin Kowa, Quan Pan and Mabudi. By 1st July 2002, it had spread to Kadarko, Wadata-Garga, Farin Ruwa, Wase, Chepkwai and parts of Kanam. The attacks were allegedly perpetrated by armed bandits of Fulani stock. The state government lost the ability to ensure security of lives and properties, redressing the scale of fighting, revenge and counter revenge. Taroh people alongside some other Plateau ethnic groups signed a memo demanding for a Wase South Local Government to be carved out of Wase Emirate. But the Wase Emir conferred on Governor Joshua Dariye the title of Sardaunan Wase, thus making him a senior counsellor or adviser of the Wase Emirate Council. The Taroh Elders’ Forum (TEF) and the Taroh Progressive Youth Association (TAPYA) observed that Dariye had romanced with the Hausa/Fulani since he was out of favour with the indigenes. According to Taroh Elders Forum, the massacre started on a deceptive note. The Emir of Wase, Alhaji Haruna Abdullahi invited Taroh Community leaders and elders all over Wase LGA to come to his palace for a meeting to discuss the rising crisis. However, the Taroh leaders were ambushed by Hausa/Fulani. Some of the leaders were killed. The killing-spree spread in the entire Wase Local Government Area. About 94 villages and towns were deserted and over 300,000 refugees were camped at Gazum, Bwaret, Pil-Gani, Langtang, Mabudi, Talwang Jidadi.12

In February, 2004 Hausa/Fulani Muslims launched an armed attack on the indigenous Gamai and Christian neighbours in Yelwa, killing over 300 people, 49 of them in a Church where they took refuge. For ten weeks, the Gamai and Christians furtively planned their revenge mission. According to one of their war commanders, Danjuma Mugnan:

For how long shall we continue to live outside our domain (as refugees)? We have to re-group and fight for where we belong. This is our land; it’s not as if we came from somewhere to settle.\(^{13}\)

The attacks were influenced by religious sentiments, given the hoisting of the portraits of Osama Bin Laden in Yelwa Shendam. The town was also declared as part of Zamfara State where Sharia was first introduced as part of the criminal law in 1999. Churches and houses belonging to Christians were razed.\(^{14}\) The leadership of the Christian Association alleged that Muslims invited mercenaries from neighbouring states and countries.\(^{15}\)

On 3\(^{rd}\) May Christians who thought they had lost out in previous genocide carried out revenge mission on the Hausa/Fulani Muslims. The devastation of the attack was allegedly masterminded by serving and retired army officers. This was because of the level of professionalism shown in the way attacks and retreats were conducted; the quality and quantity of guns and bullets used and the level of destruction suffered by women and children. Heavily armed Taroh militia invaded Yelwa on foot and in jeeps, shooting semi-automatic rifles and burning houses. The attack rendered 15,000 people homeless. Many of took refuge in Bauchi and Nassarawa States and over 630 people were killed.\(^{16}\) According to Prof. Igna Gabriel, Federal Commissioner, National Commission for Refugees, Plateau State has the lion’s share of the 800,000 people in relief camps across the country.\(^{17}\) The Ulama indicted the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN). Shendam, in conjunction with the Christian Association of Nigeria, as the brain behind the orchestrated ‘genocide’.

The Governor of Plateau State, Joshua Dariye was accused of being partisan in his responses to the crises and indeed, his actions inflamed the embers of hatred among the warring groups. Dariye considered the 2004 ethno-religious war in Plateau State as a Fulani/ Hausa Muslim agenda to celebrate the bicentenary of the Sokoto Jihad that was fought by Shehu Usman Dan Fodiyo in 1804. He further questioned the citizenship status of the Hausa/ Fulani and categorised them as settlers without any right to claim any part of Plateau State. According to him:

Jos, capital of Plateau state is owned by the natives. Simple. Every Hausa man in Jos is a settler whether he likes it or not… Even if I spend 150 years in Bukuru, I cannot become an indigene of Du…. It is an Alqaeda agenda to bring down Plateau State…\(^{18}\)

Dariye’s policy of exclusion was reinforced by Victor Dung Pam, the paramount ruler, Gbong Gwon Jos who that ‘even if the Hausa/ Fulani spent 1,000 years in


Plateau, they cannot claim indigeneship. The Hausa/Fulani will not be indigenes here.’

The concept of settlers or non-native syndrome hardened into the theory of ethnic exclusiveness, moulded and propagated to foist a pejorative meaning to advance economic and political control among competing elite groups. Since the riots in Yelwa, there has been the resurgence of vendetta repeatedly invoked in response to communal or religious violence in Nigeria. Those from Yelwa maintained that their action was meant to avenge the genocide of their kinsmen in Taroh. The genocide in Taroh was equally an act of vengeance.

It was indeed an endless circle. The continual deployment of vendetta indicates that the Nigeria state has failed in its statutory obligation to guarantee peace and stability forcing people to revert to violence in settling scores. There is a growing disenchantment with the state in respect of its ability to guarantee the rule of law. This has given rise to extra-judicial political, religious and ethnic militias such as the Bakassi Boys, Oodua Peoples’ Congress, Ijaw Youth Congress, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Tiv Defence Corps and Hisbah (Sharia Police). These groups compete with the state in the use of violence and are sometimes financed officially by state agents. For example, between January 1999 and January 2000, the youth wing of the Oodua Peoples’ Congress (OPC) was alleged to have launched 53 violent attacks in Lagos and masterminded about 60 per cent of the 200 violent conflicts recorded nationwide. In both Western Nigeria and the Niger Delta, youth mobilisation challenged the erstwhile culture of class compromise that has characterised the traditional and modern elite with the state, and replaced it with a culture of confrontation and heightening ethnic tension.

For four years, the government of Plateau State showed incapacity in dealing with the spiral of genocide, exposing citizens to attacks from ethnic militias and mercenaries on both sides of the divide until the culmination of the process in Yelwa genocide. Large-scale killings in the form of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by mercenaries took place in Langtang South and Langtang North. Mercenaries were recruited and were allegedly offered N15,000.00 per day. While the Taroh recruited the demobilised soldiers whose pensions and welfare have not been met by the state, the Hausa/Fulani recruited mercenaries from neighbouring states and countries.

In his special national broadcast on the State of Emergency in Plateau, President Obasanjo averred that:

Since 2001…the situation has steadily deteriorated politically largely due to the failure of governance and the gross inefficiency in managing the rich and robust diversity of the state. Tension and social differences have been exacerbated rather than building new bridges of harmony, tolerance, inclusion, and accommodation….Violence has reached

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unprecedented levels and hundreds have been killed with much more wounded or displaced from their homes on account of their ethnic or religious identification.

...it has become imperative that the bloodshed in Plateau which has reverberated in Kano and is threatening Kaduna, Bauchi, Taraba, Gombe, Benue and Nassarawa, even the Federal Capital Territory, should and must be stopped. The spill-over from Kano is already threatening Owerri and Umuahia.\(^2^3\)

The slamming of the State of Emergency in Plateau State (leading to the suspension of the State Governor and the House of Assembly) merely gave credence to President Obasanjo’s autocratic rule, but did not in any way served as panacea to the violence.

Despite the State of Emergency, violence continued in unabated Plateau State because the fundamental causes of unequal access to justice, power and resources were not addressed. On 18\(^{th}\) May, 2004, militiamen from Atiri and Azara villages in Nassarawa invaded Sabon-Gida village at Shendam, killing five persons. On 20\(^{th}\) May, Fulani insurgents killed 30 persons in Quaan Pan Local Government Area. By 22\(^{nd}\) May, casualty had reached 74 persons in the renewed fighting in five Gamai villages of Quaan Pan. According to the Stephen Sarki Musa, the Secretary General of Gamai Unity Development Association:

> Those armed men used the neighbouring border villages of Atiri and Azara in Nassarawa, killed 24 people in Barkin Giyawa, 10 in Sabon-Gida, 15 in Jirin, 18 in Gidan Sabon and 7 in Saminaka village.\(^2^4\)

On 25\(^{th}\) May, five persons were killed during the genocide in Lyangjit village of Wase Local Government and on 2\(^{nd}\) June, militiamen killed 13 persons at a border town between Benue and Plateau States.

Since the declaration of Emergency Rule on Plateau State on 18\(^{th}\) May, 2004 violence has not only continued in the state, but also spread to states such as Benue, Adamawa, Cross River and Rivers States. Over 13 violent clashes occurred in these states with over 205 persons killed and several others displaced as refugees. For example, the Tiv Defence Corps (TDC) an ethnic militia group invaded Adikpo village in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State and killed five persons during a politically motivated crisis. Between 28\(^{th}\) May and 16\(^{th}\) June, further communal clashes in Benue State claimed 18 lives: the Ullam/Ugambe crisis and the Igubua in Kwande crisis. By 17\(^{th}\) June, 10 persons were killed when the Tiv Defence Corps (TDC) militiamen attacked Jato-Aka community in Benue State.\(^2^5\) Some ex-servicemen in Benue State were indicted by the Senate Committee on the crisis in Benue as the militant leaders responsible for the procurement of arms and training of the militia in the politically motivated crisis. Large quantity of illegally acquired arms


abounds in the state especially in the hands of militia groups. Most of the houses destroyed were done by means of sophisticated weapons.²⁶

The spiral of violence produced thousands of internally displaced persons. In Lafia, Nassarawa State, there were 8,000 refugees; 25 camps in Bauchi State spread across nine local government areas had 30,000 refugees; there were 25,000 refugees at Ibbi in Taraba State and 25,000 refugees in Boki, Cross River State.²⁷

By 31st May, reprisal attacks of the ethno-religious violence in Yelwa-Shendam had spread to Jega, the commercial nerve centre of Kebbi State. Two persons were killed, eight Churches and two residential houses were burnt, while 28 shops were vandalised.²⁸

In the South–South, on 4th June, a team of police and military personnel revisited the Odi massacre on three Rivers State communities killing 30 persons. They were sent to rescue two of their colleagues kidnapped by some militia men. On 12th June, eight persons were killed in a communal violence between the people of Ikot Efut Inwang and Ifiang at Isighi in Akpabuyo, Cross River State over land dispute. The war of cults in Rivers State has claimed over 500 lives with violent clashes in Port Harcourt, Okrika, Buguma, Tombia, Ogbukiri and Amadiama.

According to the revelation of the leader of Ijaw Youths Congress and Egbesu Boys, Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari:

> The streets of Port Harcourt are no longer safe. Night life has equally vanished due to attack and counter attack of the various cults…. Our old beautiful Port Harcourt has lost its beauty…. Buguma is laid waste. Tombia is desolate. Amadiama has become a battle ground. Okrika is the centre of cannibalism. Our streets are no longer safe for children.²⁹

Babarinsa (2004:5) sums up the situation:

> If the Middle-Belt is the manufacturer of refugees, the Delta region is the creator of cemeteries. Who can count the weeks since 1999 that Delta region had been freed of communal violence? Who can remember when last the region had witnessed a week without violence against outsiders?³⁰

**Kano Mayhem, 11th –13th May, 2004**

Yelwa-Shendam reprisal in Kano had its root cause in the occupation,.hostaging President Saddam Hussein; the continued presence of America in Iraq; and the

opposition against the full implementation of Sharia legal system in Kano State by the Christian and non-indigene associations. Urban violence in Kano particularly in 1953, 1966, 1967-1970, 1991, 1994, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004 were characterised by four basic traditional tendencies. The first explanatory schema is its reprisal characteristics. Most of these conflicts were rooted in deep-seated local grievances triggered by national and/or international events. For example, the May 1953 riots occurred as a violent revenge of the assault on northern Nigerian parliamentarians in Lagos and the stance of the Action Group to launch self-government campaign in Kano; the 1966 riots were in retaliation of the brutal killing of Northern Nigerian leaders and politicians and the 2001 ethno-religious violence was a spill-over of the occupation of Afghanistan by the Allied Forces led by the United States of America. The second explanatory schema is the early warning sign. Special prayers, peaceful processions and assaults often preceded urban violence in Kano. The third is the actors. Most of these violent acts were perpetrated by dreadful youth gangs including the Yandaba, Yandoka Amarya, street urchins and Almajiri. The fourth is the target in which the politics of violence is selective. The targets of these violent acts were the non-indigenes and their socio-economic institutions.

Some weeks before the May 2004 mayhem, tension was rife in Kano over the American presence in Iraq, the killing of Muslim civilians and assaults on prisoners. In Kano, some non-indigenes and Christians opposed the 2004 Amended Bill by the State House of Assembly, which places a N50,000 fine and/or one year prison term for any non-Muslim caught consuming alcohol while a Muslim that commits the same offence would receive 80 lashes.

The President of Hotel and Liquor Licences Association of Nigeria, Kano State Branch, Chief Olayiwola Adio Adeaga noted that there are about 350 hotels, 500 beer parlous and over 250 taverns, stressing that if the Sharia bill should be passed, at least 500,000 people would be thrown out of business. Christian associations considered the Sharia law as an attempt to forcefully Islamise the Christians in Kano State. The situation was aggravated by the resurgence of ethno-religious violence in Plateau in which many Muslims were killed and some victims forced to relocate to Kano as refugees. The arrival of the refugees and corpses from the Yelwa-Shendam genocide triggered reprisal attacks in Kano. The intelligence community, the Federal government, concerned citizens and the Kano Emirate Council alerted the Kano State Government on the simmering tension and warned against protests under any guise.

On 11th May, 2004, some leading members of the Ulamah (Islamic scholars) in Kano organised a special prayer at the Ali Ibn Abu Talib Mosque, situated along Zaria Road to demonstrate their protest against what they perceived as anti-Islamic policies of international and local leaders particularly in the Middle East and Plateau State, Nigeria. After the prayer session, the Islamic scholars, including the state Chairman of the Council of Ulamah, Sheikh Umar Kabo; and the Chief Imam of Kano Central Mosque, Sheikh Idris Kuliya Alkali led the procession of 10,000 Muslims to the official residence of Malam Ibrahim

Shekarau, the Executive Governor of Kano State to present letters of protest to him for onward transmission to President Olusegun Obasanjo and the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Anan. Sheikh Umar Kabo remarked that since the Kafanchan crisis 17 years ago and the Zango Kataf massacre, genocide on the Muslims continued unabated without caution from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). Sheikh Kabo accused the USA of sponsoring the killing of Muslims, not only in Nigeria, but also in many parts of the world. He urged Muslims to stop patronising the American dollar and US made products. The demonstrators burnt the effigies of President George W. Bush of USA, Ariel Sharon, the Prime Minister of Israel and Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau State.

Governor Shekarau told the protesters that up to 11.00 pm on Monday, he was on telephone speaking with President Obasanjo during which he told the President that he was part and parcel of the organising committee for the protest. Shekarau said the ‘organised massacre’ against Muslims globally would rather give fillip to Muslims than force them to submission. He said:

I personally told Chief Obasanjo that living peacefully has its yardstick, which Muslims in Nigeria for long time faithfully followed; but reckless killings by on-Muslims would no longer be tolerated in the country.

The Governor persuaded the protesters to return home peacefully and await the response of the appropriate authorities. He calmed down the angry youths and convinced them not to take laws into their hands. He reminded them that doing anything to harm or kill a fellow human being who is innocent of the charge for which s/he is being attacked is grossly unIslamic. As the address at the government house was going on, there were violent demonstrations and attacks at Zoo Road; Uguwa Uku, Zaria Road; Shagari quarters; Tukuntawa; Sharada; Kofar Kabuga; Gadon Kaya; Gwammaja, Dadinshe, Kofar Ruwa, Ja’en, Panshekara, Rijiyar Zaki and the old campus of the Bayero University, Kano. The killings, maiming and looting took place simultaneously in many parts of the town aimed at engulfing the whole town in mayhem. Non–indigenes were cringe with terror and some relocated to safety zones including houses of trusted Hausa neighbours, Sabongari, military and police barracks. Official statistics stated that the violence claimed 30 lives. But the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Kano branch claimed that the human casualty was over 1,000, 40 people hospitalised for treatment of various injuries and 30,000 displaced, over N150 million worth properties were lost. An estimated 17,000 persons fleeing from the rioters sought refuge in Sabongari, police and army barracks. Despite the mounting starvation, the refugees rejected the relief items donated by the Kano State government on account that the government fuelled the crisis that led to the killings. Most of the victims were entrepreneurs, professionals and casual workers. The Sharada and Chalawa Industrial Layouts were worst hit by the violence. The National Union of Chemical Footwear Products Employees (NULFRLAMPE) lost

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35 of its members and N35 million worth of members’ properties. The National Union of Textile and Garment Workers (NUTG) lost 26 members in the mayhem when rioters invaded the African Textile Mills and killed 20 workers; six workers at the Angel Spinning and one at the Bagco Super Sack factory. At the Bayero University, Kano, six people were reportedly killed while 16 senior and junior staff houses were burnt and property destroyed by Almajiri and Yandaba groups.

Like what happened during the 2001 riots, Igbo Christians in Sabongari burnt six Mosques belonging to Yoruba Muslims while Hausa Muslims burnt twelve Churches. The riot led to the burning of the house of the Eze Igbo of Kano, Barrister O.T. Nnadi. He observed that:

In all my 34 years in Kano and 11th year as the Eze Igbo, the May 11 riot was the highest and the most destructive. Many Igbo whose number is yet to be known lost their lives. I have interacted freely with people in my number 20, Court Road residence. I don’t know why it should be burnt.

Various factors had been advanced for the Kano mayhem. The official explanation by the Kano State Government was that the killings were politically masterminded and that the peaceful protest was permitted in the spirit of a constitutionally guaranteed democratic freedom of assembly. It was argued that prior to the protest, Kano State Government from March 2004 had permitted different pressure groups to carry out demonstrations for the pressing of their needs through the government. The examples of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) protesting against the over 1000 what increase in accommodation rate; the Association of Motor Cycle Riders in Kano and Kofar Wambai Traders demonstrated by marching to Government House to hand over their letters of protests to the Governor. The Quadiriyya Muslim Sect staged a peaceful procession to government house demanding for some adjustments in the structure and composition of the state cabinet.

It was equally argued that political opponents perpetrated the violence. The defeated PDP Governorship candidate who was then incumbent governor and now Minister of Defence, Engineer Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso was indicted to have instigated and financed the mayhem in his bid to escape his trial for alleged financial scandal while in office. Kwankwaso was indicted to have sponsored electoral violence during the local government election of March 2004. It was argued that most of the killings unprecedentedly took place along Kano West, an area considered to be the stronghold of Kwankwaso’s political base. Contrary to this view, it was in this area that most of the refugees and corpses from the Yelwa Shendam genocide were dumped. In fact, many of the displaced persons took

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35 Abdulkadir Garba, ‘NUTG Loses 26 Members to Kano Crisis’ in NewNigerian Newspaper, June 8, 2004, p. 11.
38 Anselm Okolo, Murphy Gana-Gana and Ibrahim Barde, ‘Echoes of the Kano Mayhem: It was systematic genocide in BUK-University Don’ in Saturday Sun Newspaper, May 22, 2004, p. 5.
refuge at the Sharada Central Mosque. This was the more reason why Sharada and Panchekara areas were devastated by the mayhem.

There was an argument that hoodlums and social miscreants who were idlers and unemployed who often unleashed violence at the slightest provocation fomented the violence. It was further argued that Kano people are very tolerant and accommodating and that foreigners were behind the Kano crisis. Another reason was the unprecedented rise in religious fundamentalism that has given rise to the resurgence of Maitatsine sect and the infiltration of Kano State by killer group called Tubawa from Niger Republic, which were the alleged mercenaries that attacked the Taroh in Plateau State.

The riot generated mixed reaction across the federation. In his letter to the Governor of Kano State, President Olusegun Obasanjo stated that the highly regarded ancient city of Kano had produced some of Nigeria’s best leaders, but has rapidly acquired the reputation for intolerance, violence and political rascality. He warned that the ‘tactical miscalculation’ of the State Government should not be allowed to occur in the future. Governor Shekarau replied the president that some disgruntled elements in the ruling Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) that was ousted in the gubernatorial elections in the state fomented the riots that led to killings and had planned to make the state ungovernable. He pointed out that the peaceful protest and the violence that ensued were not correlated. The special prayers and peaceful procession, which took place within half a kilometre of the government house in Kano, could not have triggered off mob riots that erupted in places as far as ten kilometres from the scene of the procession. He argued that his government encouraged peaceful co-existence with the non-indigenes in Kano State and had embarked on road rehabilitation in the Sabongari area that was abandoned for almost two decades. (Sufuyan Ojeifo, ‘Shekarau Replies Obasanjo on Kano Killings: You Don’t Need My Undertaking’ in Sunday Vanguard, May 30 2004, p.1). PDP leaders in Kano State, Alhaji Uba Lawan Jigo and Senator Bello Hayatu observed that:

There is just no way Shekarau can exonerate himself or his government from blame in what happened in Kano. It is on record that some very senior members of his government led the procession to Government House.

Governor Sam Egwu of Ebonyi State insisted that Shekarau is to be held responsible for the tragic fate of non-Muslims, particularly Igbo Christians during the Kano mayhem. According to him:

I am constrained to reaffirm that you are to be held responsible for the tragic fate of non-Muslims during the Kano mayhem… in view of the volatile nature of Kano and its antecedents as a

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religious hotbed, your posture and utterances in such period of
tension have all the trappings of an organised incitement….

Other state governments whose indigenes were affected in the Kano riots provided
security for the Hausa Muslim migrants in order to forestall possible reprisal
attacks. In Akwa Ibom State, security was beefed up around locations inhabited
by the Hausa people as the first batch of the victims of the Kano mayhem arrived
Uyo. The arrival of over 200 displaced persons from Kano and Jos in two luxury
buses provided by the State Government swelled the anger of indigenes who
mobilised with the plan to attack the Hausa Muslims. Various state governments
including Anambra and Benue States sent relief materials to their indigenes
affected by the riots. The Delta State Government evacuated 41 families made up
of 52 persons back to the home state from Kano.

Other groups threatened to pay back the violence in future attacks. According to Pastor Joseph Ajayi, the Chairman of Pentacostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Kaduna State:

We have realised that the growing trend of terror has become a
global phenomena that cannot be wished away or begged to
stop. We have, therefore, decided to alert all pastors and
Christians in Kaduna State, and indeed the whole North, to
immediately commence training in minimum self-defence
techniques as we will no longer wait to be killed like
chicken or slaughtered like goats for sacrifice during attacks
by Muslim fundamentalists.

Numan Massacre, 8th June, 2004

Two weeks before the violence broke out, the politically embattled Governor Boni
Haruna of Adamawa State whose victory in the 2003 elections was being
challenged in a law court raised alarm over the impending violence in Adamawa
State. The dateline was 8th June, 2004. Prior to the violent attacks, Bachama
Christian youths had applied to the security operatives and the local government to
observe the commemoration of one year anniversary of the killing of Lady
Evangelist Jinkai Ethan which was turned down. Evangelist Ethan was killed by a
Hausa water vendor, Muhammad Salisu on 8th June, 2003. The killing led to

44 Joseph Ushigiale, ‘When Egwu, Shekarau Trade Words over Kano riots’ in Thisday Newspaper,
45 Ben Duru, ‘Hausa go into Hiding in Overri’ in Daily Independent, May 14 P. A5; Maxwell
Oditta, ‘No Reprisal Against Hausa Muslims in Lagos’ in Daily Independent, May 14, 2004 p. A5);
Victor Ehimomi, ’OPC Denies Reprisal Attack on Hausa/Fulani’ in Daily Independent, May 31,
2004, p. A3; and Ben Duru, ’Igbo Group Condemns Killing of Non-Indigenes in the North’ in Daily
46 Udial Iniodu, ‘Akwa Ibom Beefs Up Security Around Hausa Indigenes’ in Daily Independence,
47 Sunny Ogefere, “Anambra Donates N1.5 million to Kano Riot Victims’ in The Guardian Newspaper,
June 7, 2004, p. 5.
48 Sunny Ogefere, ‘Delta Evacuates Displaced Indigenes from Kano’ in The Guardian, June 7, 2004,
p. 5.
49 John Shiklam, ‘Sectarian Clashes: Northern Christians Prepare for Future Attacks’ in Daily
further violence between the Hausa Muslims and Bachama Christians leading to the destruction of the Central Mosque on the pretext that it was within the precinct of the palace of the paramount ruler. Since the violence of 8th June, 2003, the state government made futile efforts through peace committees to resolve the issue. Muslim youths insisted on the reconstruction of the Mosque destroyed by the Bachama Christian youths who claimed that the Mosque was directly overlooking the palace of the paramount ruler of Numan. The Bachama youths claimed that the site of the Mosque was an affront to their traditional institution, religion and culture. The Security Council in the local government resolved that the Mosque be reconstructed without the minaret overlooking the palace, but the Muslim youths insisted on reconstructing the entire Mosque. The fragile peace which Numan town had enjoyed for a year was shattered on Tuesday, 8th June, 2004 when the palace guards and Christian youths attacked the Hausa/Fulani masons reconstructing the Central Mosque. According to Musa Yakubu, one of the masons, they were stunned when the Bachama palace guards of the paramount ruler of Numan attacked them with horsewhips for defying the order of the monarch against the reconstruction of the Mosque and by claiming equal rights with the indigenes. He said:

As we were struggling with the guards, Bachama youths numbering about 50 cordoned the area armed with guns, machetes, and spears everybody ran for his life towards the market, but it was too late, about 16 people had been killed.

Killing spree began between the predominantly Christian Bachama who claimed the indigeneship of Numan and the Muslim Hausa/Fulani, who though settled in the town for about a century, are still categorised as settlers. As the Bachama youths who had slated 8th June for a procession to mark the first anniversary of the killing of the Evangelist burnt down houses of the Hausa in the Angwan Kwata and Sabon Pegi areas, the Hausa equally resisted. According to the Red Cross officials, the number of deaths recorded was 24. The number, however, shot up to 68 in the evening when the police recovered more bodies. More than 50 casualties of various degrees ranging from gunshots, machete cuts and people burnt with petrol were recorded.

In order to halt the spread of the genocide, Governor Boni Haruna took a stern decision by deposing the paramount ruler of Numan, Fredie Soditi Bongo and ordered the relocation of the Central Mosque from the disputed area. Adamawa State government charged Bongo with polarisation of the Numan Chiefdom by pursuing a policy of exclusion, made with his connivance and approval since the first violence of 2003 up to the advent of the second one in 2004. Bongo was indicted for acts of impropriety and corrupt practices, which included illegal acquisition of his subjects’ farmlands; building plots of land, miscarriage of justice and vindictive disposition which advances internal bickering within the Chiefdom. The deposed ruler was equally accused of security breach and

possession of arms. While the violence in Numan was going on, he was found with a gun and ammunition in his official vehicle by the police on patrol.\textsuperscript{53} Besides, Bongo had pressurised the police to release one private soldier who was intercepted with 30 rounds of ammunition and a rifle. Unlike Bongo, the traditional rulers of communities bordering Numan such as Hama Batta, Murum Mbula and Adamawa Emirate sealed their borders against trouble makers and prevented the conflict from escalating.

However, the decisions of the state government to depose the monarch and to relocate the Central Mosque were rejected by the Bachama Christians on one hand and Hausa/Fulani on the other hand. The Bachama Christians argued that the Adamawa State Government favoured the Hausa Muslim community for political considerations while the Adamawa Muslim Council faulted the relocation of almost a century old Central Mosque. The discontent of both parties to the resolutions of the state government constitutes the potential for future violence.

**Conclusion**

The roll-back of the state in social provisioning coincided with the neo-liberal economic reforms. This was coupled with the tenuous concept of citizenship, institutionalised corruption, distorted federalism and unitarist hegemony, bureaucratic and authoritarian democracy. In this way, there was a resurgence of ethno-religious identities to assuage the suffering of the masses through informal networks of providing social security, welfare neo-liberal political and economic reforms and shrinking democratic space were interpreted in ethnic terms. Genocide was unleashed on groups perceived to be exploitative and domineering. Genocide became a resource deployed by the cultural brokers in the form of ethnic, religious and political entrepreneurs to challenge the existence of the state. Cultural brokers in collaboration with the militarised youths used warfare strategies including ethnic cleansing, child soldiery, banditry and mercenaries to exert pressure on the state.

The cultural diversity of the Nigerian nation and enormously endowed resources have been mismanaged through corruption, overlay ethnicity and hierarchies of citizenship, over-centralisation of power and elite manipulation. In this process, militarised identities were deployed by disenchanted youths under the platforms of ethnicity and religion. Mutual genocide and the trans-location of violence have been deployed as a way of renegotiating the structure of the nation, access to resources and equal justice. The spiral of violence compounded the problems of underdevelopment, mutual insecurity and suspicion, poverty and depletion of resources. Xenophobia consumed the nation, blemished the cordial relations communities had hitherto enjoyed with their neighbours and decimated the will to keep Nigeria together. There is proliferation of dreadful ethnic, political and religious militias across the geo-political zones and communities in Nigeria. In post-military era, the trans-location of

\textsuperscript{53} Tony Ailemen, ‘Adamawa Crisis: Why Bachama King was Deposed’ in *Sunday Champion*, June 20, 2004, p. 3.
violence has become a ready tool of political discourse and crisis management, which exposes the contracted nature of political space for dialogue and inclusion under the civilian administration. In order to curtail genocide, a review of the constitution would be imperative to address the entrenched dichotomy between settlers and indigenes, the tenuous concept of citizenship as well as centralisation of the police.
CHRISTIANITY AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

By Jibrin Ibrahim

Introduction

This research project, initiated by Dr Jibrin Ibrahim is sponsored by the Nigerian Presidency and started in December 2004. The research team is composed of leading scholars from the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution and some Nigerians Universities including Ahmadu Bello, Obafemi Awolowo, Babcock, Nigeria and Jos. They include Dr Ochenya Ojiji, Professors Mathews Ojo, James Makinde, Okey Ibeanu, Ogor Alubo and Sam Egwu. Others are Dr. Otive Igbuzor and Ms. Julie Sanda. About 2,200 questionnaires were administered to church leaders and members in all states of the country and the data is currently being processed.

Research Issues

The project proposal was conceived within the context of interrogating and researching the Nigerian personality characterised by the seeming incompatibility of the coexistence of the following traits:

1) Very high level of religiosity in society – maybe the highest in the contemporary world.
2) An extremely high level of public, private and community corruption – both at the moral and material levels.
3) A high level of violence, intolerance and conflict in society in apparent contradiction to some Christian principles such as love, forgiveness and fraternity of human kind.

Within this context, the research set out to understand the conditions under which the transformation of Christianity in Nigeria is occurring within a framework of rapid changes in doctrine, structure, membership, liturgy and theodicy. The high points of the transformation are the emphasis on agency and requirements for demonstrated proof of the efficacious nature of the religion.

The following issues have constituted major debate items among the researchers:

Research Focus

The most successful strand within the new Christian movements in Nigeria is Pentecostalism. Be that as it may, researchers feel that the Pentecostal movement should not be the sole focus of the study. Nigerian Christianity is characterised by a myriad of fellowships, missions, prayer groups and churches. This diversity should be captured in the study.

1 Dr. Jibrin Ibrahim is Director, Global Rights: Partners for Justice, Abuja, Nigeria.
**New Christianity?**

There was a long debate on establishing what is new about new Christian movements. One point of entry is that of demography. The vast majority of the present generation of Nigerian Christians have little or no knowledge of the character of colonial “orthodox” Christianity, which defined the first phase of the development of the religion in the country. They are also no longer imbued with the nationalist passion and cultural affirmation that was responsible for the popularity of the African Churches of the early 20th century. Not surprisingly, they have no respect for some of the values associated with earlier forms of Christianity such as the focus on the hereafter rather than the here and now, a life of service and poverty while waiting for heavenly wealth. The categories of agency, equality, rationality and individualism were identified as important conceptual points of entry in interrogating the category “new” in investigating Nigerian Christianity.

Sociologically, Christian belief in contemporary Nigeria is becoming increasingly evidence-led as adherents demand for and obtain “rational proof” of the efficacy of the (Christian) religion in the form of miracles and real changes to their life. Failure by religious leaders to provide concrete results of course leads to exit from the site of failure and experimentation at the doorsteps of potentially more effective sites of Christian powers.

In terms of the sociology of organisations, new Christian movements are generally new until the founder dies, and a second generation without the charisma of the founder emerges. The new leadership usually finds out that it needs the security and stability provided by routinisation and bureaucratisation. Indeed, with the routinisation of many movements, a certain convergence of Christian strands is now developing in the country as the old “new” Christian movement searches for its pathway to orthodoxy.

**Values and Ethics**

An important research question that was emphasised was that of placing the study within the context of changing values and ethics in our society. Currently, some churches are addressing the question of corruption in our society while others appear to be led by charlatans who are on the cutting edge of scams, primitive accumulation and moral decadence. As freelance evangelism grows, this contradiction deepens.

**Democratic Governance**

The crux of the research project is the deepening of our understanding of the relationship between Christianity and democratic governance. The democratic paradox of religion in Nigeria has received considerable attention in the project. Religious movements are veritable arenas for expressing democratic demands. Entry into the religious arena is easy but actors have limited voice except when they exercise their right to exit the space. A contradiction therefore seems to be developing between a democratising external environment and an increasingly authoritarian internal religious environment for members. This process is heightened by growing tensions between rising religiosity in the society and
demands and movements for secularity. One problem highlighted was that of Christian minorities in Muslim dominated areas whose democratic rights are being threatened especially with the adoption of Sharia Penal Laws by some states.

**Definition of Christianity**

The project proposal is silent on the definition of Christianity and the articulation of its foundational principles. There were discussions on the possibilities of definition but the consensus was that it is presumptuous and difficult to define Christianity in a project that has no pretension of studying theology. In addition, the project has an important mapping function and attempts at definitions might lead to the exclusion of some “Christian movements”. Finally, people’s claims to religious belief and piety are extremely difficult to verify even with the aid of a behavioural checklist.

**Traditional African Religions**

Traditional African Religions has been largely evacuated from the discussions on Nigerian Christianity and should be brought back into the attempt of understanding the sociology of the phenomenon. Indeed, contemporary Nigerian Christianity devotes considerable attention, even if unknowingly, to discourses about traditional African religions and cultural practices. Colonial Christian Missions simply condemned traditional religions and did not respond to the issue of the reality of the forces contending in the African cosmology expressed through cultural practices and beliefs. For many Nigerians, the problem of the workings of evil forces is real and part of the “newness” of many Christian movements today is their willingness to expose these forces and show their members how to overcome their dangerous and destructive influence. These narratives enable the liberated Christian to constitute himself/herself as an historical agent who is not only empowered in his/her personal life, but together with other believers has the strength to do battle with "principalities and powers". The biblical notion of “principalities and powers” has been an important point of entry for African cosmology into what we can call African Christianity.

**The Research Objectives:**

1) To carry out a broad social scientific study of Christian Movements in Nigeria focusing on their diversity, membership, doctrine, spread, leadership, religious, social and political action.
2) To analyse the social forces that shape the development, character, outlook, practices and significance of Christian movements in the country.
3) To investigate the real and potential impact of Christian movements on the social relations, political process and democratic governance of the country.
4) To assess the impact of and insertion in the globalisation nexus of Christian movements in the country.
5) To compile a comprehensive electronic and hardcopy directory of Christian movements in the country.
6) To study leading and important Christian movements with a view to understanding and documenting their articulated views and perceptions on leadership, religious pluralism and freedom, democracy and political accountability, human rights, citizenship, justice and political equality.

7) To investigate the Christian perspectives on violent religious conflicts in Nigeria.

8) To propose a public policy framework that would enhance the positive contribution of Christian movements in promoting democratic governance, peace building and social harmony.

Preliminary Findings

1. The Church is not primarily a democratic organization as church sovereignty does not lie with the people but with God. The Church is a community of believers, a communion of people defined by belief and doctrine. Church organization has however been changing constantly over the ages and one of the directions of change has been towards the incorporation of democratic values in church administration and Christian engagement in expanding democratic space in the wider society. Preliminary analysis from the field research shows a clear interest in the democracy question among Christians.

2. In organizational terms, churches vary from the democratic to the authoritarian ends of the continuum. The research results however, show that most churches are not authoritarian organizations. They have constitutions that govern their operations and abide by internal principles of the rule of law and state principles guiding their registration at the Corporate Affairs Commission. Almost ten thousand churches are registered at the Corporate Affairs Commission.

3. Even the new Churches, most of which are Pentecostal, strongly identified with charismatic individuals have moved towards institutionalization and routinisation as they transited from the first to the second generation of leaders.

4. There is a strong new consciousness among the Christian community that – Christians have a stake in the consolidation of the democratic order. The interviews revealed that there is widespread belief that Christians have suffered from Nigeria’s history of authoritarianism and there is thus a civic consciousness on the need for increased Christian engagement to protect and advance democracy.

5. At the same time, there is strong concern among the respondents that core Christian values such as love, humility, honesty and non-violence are not sufficiently manifested in the political life of Christian politicians.

National Spread

6. The field research has clearly shown that there is virtually no state or town in Nigeria where there are no churches. However what the survey showed is that each section or town or state tends to have a particular church or churches that are predominant in the area as a result of their
evangelical history. The final report of the study will identify the dominance per area.

7. Apart from the Catholic and the main line Protestant churches such as the Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, the Apostolic church, the Christ Apostolic church, the Seventh Day Adventist church, the Four Square Gospel Church, Assemblies of God, and ECWA that have been in existence for over fifty years, the majority of the churches currently in operation were established recently, mostly from the 1980s. Most of these new generational churches are founded by single individuals who claim to have received the call directly from God.

8. Many of these churches are in temporary or rented apartments including fabricated make-shift buildings.

9. The nation-wide survey shows that the new generational churches - mostly Pentecostals, constitute the largest numbers of registered and operational Churches in the country even if their congregations tend to be small. However, the older main line established churches have larger membership than all the new generational churches put together.

Democracy and Good Governance

10. Most respondents believe that democracy and good governance are enshrined in Christian theology and are part of the Christian socialization process. Christianity perceives good governance as a gift from God – which is invested in office holders by God Himself. Every office holder is therefore held accountable by Him on how the governor or administrator exercises such powers. Political office holders must therefore totally rely on God for continuous guidance and directives. The argument is that to depend, rely and trust in “Self” will lead to pride and ultimate failure.

11. Interviews with Christian leaders revealed that in the Christian approach, democracy and good governance must exhibit the following traits.

   • The freedom of the church to perform its unconditional God given duty, to offer salvation through Christ Jesus to all and sundry.
   • The promotion of the principles of truth, justice and peace.
   • The promotion of the culture of non-violence and equity to all and sundry.
   • The necessity for governance aimed at promoting human development including basic rights to security, food, clothing, shelter health facilities and free qualitative education.

12. Most Pentecostal movements are influenced largely by American Pentecostalism. They accept and practice liberal democracy rooted in equality, rationalism, individualism, pluralism and responsiveness.

13. In recent Nigerian history, there seems to be an inverse relationship between state democracy and church democracy. As the state moves away from democracy in the direction of authoritarianism, the state democratic space contracts, while internal church democracy expands.
This is understandable because the church is increasingly becoming an arena for articulating popular demands and opposing state authoritarian rule.

**The Church and Partisan Politics**

14. Most churches do not promote partisan party activities. In spite of the new civic consciousness we have described above, the church prefers to maintain its mainly religious identity and transcendental nature. However the church plays its social institutional role in general politics as guardian-counsellors piloting its members on doctrinal and scriptural principles for the overall social and economic enlistment of the citizenry in general. In this regards the church is scripturally bound to support or withdraw its support for government policy in accordance to its doctrines.

**Organizational Structure**

15. Most of the mainline churches, particularly the evangelicals and the main line Pentecostal churches use democratic principles in their administrative and governance structure. ECWA and the Foursquare Gospel appear to be the most open and democratic in this regard. While the Nigerian established charismatic Pentecostal are the most secretive about their operations and wary of our researchers. This is most evident with those churches that are still within the first generation of their leadership. Living Faith (Winners) leads this pack and has kept all our researchers at bay.

**Documentation**

16. Access to the constitution of a large number of churches is very difficult and new Pentecostal churches routinely refuse to allow researchers access to their constitutions. Ironically, there is free access to the constitutions of most African instituted churches (the spiritual white-garment churches). The Pentecostal churches were very protective of their constitutions and refused to allow access. There were however some exceptions, in particular, the Foursquare Gospel Church, the Assemblies of God and a few others. Access to the constitution of the main line protestant churches was however very easy.

17. The various states Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) seems to have difficulty with keeping pace and updating their records on the number of churches in their various domains.

18. Most orthodox churches and some Pentecostal churches believe that there should be some minimal control measure with legislative support empowering CAN, PFN, AIC to monitor the registration of churches in collaboration with Corporate Affairs Commission.

**Social and Economic Reform**

19. Nigerian Christians are happy with the anti-corruption stance and the promotion of the Due Process by the Government. Many Christian leaders
have taken up the dictum that “God is a God of due process”. The church has not only joined the crusade but has taken it over through its various mobilization organs. Many churches have now made transparency a regular preaching topic.

20. There is however a strong feeling among Christians that reforms should have a human face and that palliative measures are necessary to reduce the high social cost of social and economic reform.

**Relationship between Christianity and Islam:**

21. Many Christian leaders argued that Christianity has a process and Islam also has a process. The two religions should come together, develop common denominators concerning issues on which they agree and move forward from that point.

22. The major problem of religious intolerance in Nigeria is due to lack of formal education and the education of church members about the other faiths. Most Christians interviewed believed that the problem of religious violence is always traceable to Muslim.

23. The concept of interfaith dialogue the government is currently promoting must involve serious mobilization of the citizenry for any meaningful impact, government must further sharpen their skills of mass mobilization.

24. The major issue that came out of the research in Northern states practicing the Sharia was that of the human rights of Christians:

   a. Churches generally had great difficulty in obtaining land to build places of worship. When they get land, they are usually restricted to the outskirts of towns and cities.

   b. The infringement of the rights of Christian children to receive Christian education in public schools is widespread. Islamic education is made a right while Christian education is treated as a privilege even in Sharia states that have over 20% Christian population. There were allegations that IRK teachers are paid from government fund’s while CRK teachers are paid from church funds.

   c. Allegations of discrimination against Christians in political and Board appointments

At the Barricades – A Review of Kayode Fayemi’s *Out of the Shadows*  

By Wale Adebanwi


From the quintessential public sphere that was evident in the Greek *polis* and the Roman *res publica* through the age of Enlightenment in Europe to contemporary times where Hannah Arendt and Jurgen Habermas note a decline in the public sphere of action and express nostalgia for the past age, the role of the public intellectual in the public sphere has always been central to the struggle for democracy and freedom. This role has not always been ennobling, however; in fact, it is often, in totality, an ambiguous one, given that intellectuals have been found on both sides of the divides in social struggles. Which is why, when the addition of ‘public’ to intellectuals was no longer sufficient in limiting the description to those who engaged in social struggles on the side of the people, Jean Paul Sartre, the French public intellectual par excellent, added ‘critical’ to his notion of intellectuals, who bear witness, analyse, expose and criticised social evil.

Nigeria has produced her own measure of this ambiguous category of public intellectuals, many of whom have either exhausted their mental abilities on the side of repressive and retrogressive power (the palace intellectuals) or have spoken truth to power and organized for progressive change in a tragic polity (the critical intellectuals). Nigeria’s recent struggle for national validation, which - as Sina Odugbemi so competently captured it in a piece in *The Guardian* in the mid 1990s – caused the ‘middle ground’ in public, national issues to vanish forever, produced and reproduced the two groups of public intellectuals. Given that the democratic struggle itself - which began under the mercurial and mischievous General Ibrahim Babangida and reached a crescendo under the murderous and larcenous General Sani Abacha - signalled a deliberate attempt to bring a myriad of foundational issues pertaining to the very idea of Nigeria into public debate, many of the major actors of that era, particularly those who sided with the people, democracy and freedom have a duty to relate and articulate the ground and grand rules that authorized their activities.

Gladly, this duty has been taking up by some of the key critical intellectuals of that era. The latest is Kayode Fayemi’s *Out of the Shadows: Exile and the Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Nigeria*. The cover page of the book itself is a reflection of a certain dynamic which the book covers. It took quite a while after this writer got a copy of the book before he realized that some images form a backdrop to the photograph of the author on the cover. One could miss it. It turns out to be the faded photographs – ‘shadowy’? – of the biggest faces of the democratic struggle: MKO Abiola, the symbol of the struggle, Wole Soyinka, Africa’s public intellectual par excellent and the intellectual arrow-head of the struggle, and Anthony Enahoro, the leader of the democratic coalition. It is an
interesting reversal that, Fayemi, who was little known to most Nigerians during the struggle, but who made such laudable personal sacrifices and prosecuted amazing and daunting tasks at the behest of these great men, is now ‘unveiled’, released from the anonymous hold of ‘shadows’, as the old men of the struggle take the back seat.

However, Fayemi, as the book chronicles, was never anonymous to Abacha’s security operatives (among whom he would have numbers, were he not to have decided against a career in the SSS after meeting Ismaila Gwarzo) and was never anonymous in the deliberative and deliberate efforts by the exiled Nigerians to take the country back from the soldiers who seized it. There were few people who would not have heard Fayemi’s ‘voice’ during the struggle, either through his occasional interventions in the pro-democracy press in Nigeria, through the ingenious Radio Kudirat, which, as Soyinka said, allowed Kudirat Abiola’s voice to ‘continue to ring out to haunt her murderers in the deepest recesses of their citadels’.

Out of the Shadows, which has fifteen chapters divided into four parts, starts with a personal history of the author from his birth in the ‘Penkelemeesi’ years in Ibadan, through his education, both formal and social, to the point when he was attempting to find his feet in Britain by going through the usual hard times; a common narrative, with different and differing infections, among African immigrants in the West.

In Part II, where the real story of the author’s intervention in public, political life in his country abroad starts, the author provides the context of the founding of the New Nigerian Forum (NNF) in London. Dissatisfaction with the attempt by Gideon Orkah and co. to dismember a section of the country provided the immediate reason for the formation of the NNF by the author and similarly-inclined elements in the UK. Despite the gross imbalances in the pseudo-federation which provoked the ungrammatical angst which Orkah unleashed on radio on April 22, 1990 (‘insensitive dominatory repressive intrigues (sic) by those who think it is their birthright to dominate till eternity’), the brains behind the NNF felt that ending Nigeria’s tragic history was not a solution to the stunted growth of Africa’s putative power-state. The group later became crucial in the struggle to draw international attention to the crisis in Nigeria. Nigeria Now, the group’s organ, exemplified the importance of information sharing in the struggle to counteract a pyramidal autocracy.

This becomes even more telling when the group, more or less, morphed into Prof. Wole Soyinka’s NALICON, to help in establishing Radio Kudirat. The story of the pirate radio is taken up in Part III of the book. From the first attempt to establish a secret radio station in Nigeria, which led to the Radio Freedom Frequency (on FM), operated almost on a mobile basis within Nigeria, to the founding of Radio Democracy International (on the short wave) – which later became Radio Kudirat International when Kudirat Abiola was assassinated - the author narrates a story of sheer courage, democratic commitment and patriotic zeal. Fayemi’s own earlier contact with a young man in the London who supplied equipment to pirate radio operators became crucial in getting the transmitter for the operation of the FM station within Nigeria, before that had to be stopped when it became impossible to operate it within Nigeria. The risk which everyone involved in this project ran is an amazing story that all lovers of freedom and democracy would read not without some trepidation, but with generous praise.
Fayemi correctly states that: ‘The launch of Radio Freedom Frequency was a propaganda coup and it revived optimism about possibilities in a struggle weary democracy movement, providing concrete evidence that the movement was not dead after the NUPENG/PENGASSAN strike and buoyed the flagging spirits of a disappointed populace’. But, Radio Kudirat even did more than that. The Herculean task of getting funding for the station and the complex operational details are contained in chapters eight and nine. With Soyinka’s involvement and Fayemi’s leg work, Radio Kudirat was finally set up in a small studio in Norway; the signals were received in Nigeria and elsewhere around the world, while Abacha’s goons were celebrating the ‘death’ of the Radio Freedom Frequency. In his maiden broadcast, the patriarch of the democratic coalition, who himself had been forced to flee Nigeria, Pa Anthony Enahoro declared to Nigerians: ‘I know that there were times when you were not aware what our representatives abroad were doing to help you, just as there have been times when even your protests at home were not heard abroad. I hope that that situation will now change. We in exile will keep the flame of the struggle alive on your behalf. We will ensure that the world knows about your struggle, about your suffering, and about your aspirations’.

Thus, the radio, a popular medium, which had been monopolised by irresponsible and unaccountable regimes, was seized and re-functioned in the service of a struggle for democracy and freedom. RKI produced counter-knowledge and rival motifs in the fight against a rampaging military regime. TELL was to note that, ‘many Nigerians have come to look eagerly to the broadcasts (of RKI)...They say if Radio Kudirat succeeds in contributing in sensitizing the world that Nigerians are still an embattled people struggling to free themselves from the random brutalities of an ambitious...military clique’.

Kayode Fayemi’s own intellectual training and understanding of the dynamics at play were crucial to his work in exile; they are also evident in his interventions in the democratic struggle, as contained in Part II, particularly chapter six of the book (‘Annulment and its Aftermath’). He notes, for instance, that ‘the subtle approaches utilised by General Babangida to ‘hijack’ the military and the polity, (was) in clear distinction from the approach of previous military rulers’. On Babangida’s corporatist and neo-patrimonial project which produced the annulment of the June 12 presidential elections, the author notes that: ‘On the one hand, it was possible for Babangida regime to retain power with some measure of authority in areas where the personal projects of the ruling elite coincided with group or corporate interests of the military. On the other hand, in areas where the ruling elite made no attempt to respect institutional interest or restraint, they hung on to power on the strength of their coercive capabilities and co-option strategies which depended on alternative power centres outside the military – in the intelligence sector, civilian bureaucracy, business sector and intellectual circles.’

The student of military politics argues further, and I quote at length: ‘In the larger society, privatization exacerbated the prebendal politics with its attendant pressure on ethnic relations as many who lost out in the Babangida scheme of things concluded that the overwhelming power of the centre was responsible for their fate. Had these tendencies been simply limited to the government, they would have been less disturbing. But by institutionalising favouritism and bribery as legitimate instruments of governance, the military regime headed by Babangida succeeded in breeding a myriad of anti-democratic practices reproduced regularly
in the worldview of the ordinary Nigerian, either in the common belief that everyone has a price, or in the disappearance of loyalty to the state as militarism became embedded in the psyche of the average individual. In the end, the restructuring of the economy along monetarist lines could be said to have represented a daring attempt by the ‘techno-military’ authoritarian state under General Babangida to generate a new hegemonic bloc and this was carried out on two broad levels – economic and political.’

These observations are important in that they provide an understanding of the bedrock of the devastation that Babangida was to visit on his fatherland. The twin strategy destroyed the middle-class, made the semi-industrial class totally dependent on personal ties with those running the state, discredited the political class, and made it difficult, if not impossible, in many ways, to build cross-ethnic alliances and sustained pan-ethnic solidarity to counteract and defeat the politico-military establishment that has ruined and continues to ruin Nigeria. The resultant formation made it possible for a semi-criminal soldier, who had absolutely no conception of Nigeria or the possibilities inherent in that very idea, to take over the country and even sustain his vile power for five years.

The debilitating side-effects of the ascendant order show clearly in the book where the author narrates the daunting task of building alliances and negotiating the mined network of egos and pride among the exiled activists (‘Alliance Politics and Its Discontents’). This chapter (seven) is an important one that dwells on the evident ‘inherent weaknesses of a tired and divided opposition to military rule’: NADECO, CD, NALICON, JACON, UDFN and allied organizations. The difficulties and challenges of networking among a people, and in a country, fixated with mundane issues of personal recognition are evident here: ‘It was a bizarre logic but such was the delusion of grandeur that was prevalent in the exile movement, and every pretender believed in arrogating to himself a ‘king-making’ role.’ Because of this – because people needed their own fiefdoms and some could not work with some others - in facing the challenge to ‘organize’, they indeed ‘over-organized’ with ‘the proliferation of umbrella organizations’, leading to the absence of ‘revolutionary discipline’.

Part IV (‘Diplomatic Shuttles and International Campaigns’) deals with the various facets of the attempts to rally countries behind the opposition movement towards ending the debilitating autocracy led by General Sani Abacha. In these chapters, the reader is let into the details of the duplicity of the British in the Nigerian democratic struggle, the almost casual disinterestedness of the Americans, the complicity of the Germans and the French and the laudable roles of the Swedish, the Norwegians and the Canadians. Regrettable is the fact that it was the United States and Britain that the ‘inheritors’ of power in 1999 repeatedly thanked and visited for their ‘support’ for Nigeria’s democratic struggle. These inheritors of power had to be persuaded to thank Canada, Sweden and Norway, countries which became, more or less, Nigeria’s ‘frontline states’ in the days of the struggle. The author seeks solace in this: ‘But then, as one discovers, the post 1999 phase of our fledging civilian rule was littered with several remnants of the Babangida and Abacha past, and it would be asking for too much to expect ay fundamental transformation from this pacted transition.’

One other key issue which this story throws up is the complicity of MKO Abiola and allied forces in the hijack of power by Sani Abacha. Although some of the key players made efforts to deny this, particularly while Abacha was in power,
so as not to give legitimacy to the criminal junta, it is clear from the details in this book, that Abiola and his co-travellers put their fate in Abacha’s intervention. Writes Fayemi: ‘Mr. Aka-Bashorun, even though a fatherly figure who could easily browbeat people with his confident mien and lawyerly disposition, was very fond of me and he must have decided to let me into what was considered to be, at the time a major secret plan. He said it would be premature for Chief Abiola to leave London since there were genuine efforts with military backing, to get him back as the country’s president. When I asked who these military officers were, he mentioned Generals Abacha and Diya as the main drivers, but that they have a lot of support from other officers. He indicated that the plan was to first get rid of the ‘IBB Boys’… In advance of the judgement in Lagos, he also informed me that Justice Dolapo Akinsanya will declare the interim national government illegal, and the vacuum created by this in law would offer the needed opportunity for the military take-over that would pave the way for Abiola’s return. My knowledge of civil-military relations led me to believe that this was unlikely to happen, but not knowing the extent of the conversation between Abiola and Abacha and their higher echelons, I promised Aka-Bashorun not to breach the confidence.’

It is true that at that juncture, even the pro-democracy press, started an indirect prodding of Generals Sani Abacha, Oladipo Diya and co. to take over power and ‘save the country’ from the mess of the ING. They often quoted Abacha’s speech where he spoke to the subordination of the military to civilian authorities. They were all collaborators in an ill-judged move to goad the military - Sani Abacha of all people! – toward saving the nation from perdition. It failed, as Fayemi and NNF warned. Why then did Abiola and his constituents deny that there was any such pact? Perhaps, one because it was expedient to do so; they realised rather late that the minuscule general was intent on holding on to power. As the NNF said in Nigeria Now, ‘(Abiola) relied solely on the goodwill of his contacts in the military, most of who have their own personal agenda…and no singular interest in indulging in some great patriotic or heroic act simply put to him in place.’ But, beyond the critique of Abiola, who also faced daunting odds, perhaps a question that remains unanswered by those who criticised Abiola and the pro-democracy coalition is: What could have been done beside the military or armed option to install Abiola in power? Perhaps, the author - like many others - shies away from a detailed discussion of this so as not to be accused of supporting (radical) military option or armed insurrection. [He was, at any rate, at some point accused of gun-running] The truth is that several groups, particularly in the west of Nigeria, considered the armed option in the late Abacha years, and in fact, began a process of working out this option. The democratic struggle in Nigeria has also shown that when all the tactical and strategic moves are complete, the critical edge of the struggle would still need a forcible conclusion to compel the atavistic forces ranged against the idea of Nigerian possibilities to surrender. If there was any doubt about this, recent experience has shown that these forces are not only unrelenting, they are shamelessly bound to power. Nothing that has come to be honoured in civilised human community can be used to stop these forces from organizing and seizing the collective weal. Which was why the Babangida and Yar’ Adua forces which prevented the democratic struggle from triumphing, would work together to foist an anti-June 12 element like Obasanjo on the country. This book, like others, beyond examining the lessons learnt, should also have addressed
this crucial lacuna. How do you ensure, beyond tokenism, the triumph of truly
democratic forces in the dark and darkening political firmament that is Nigeria?

This also relates to the critique of Campaign for Democracy in *Nigeria Now*, as captured in the book: ‘CD has failed, not for want of trying, to erect the popular base necessary for effective and speedy mass mobilisation’. The NNF was qualified to offer a critique of what the CD, and other organizations, did or failed to do well. NNF itself could as well face similar charges; as the author acknowledges, he also faced some of these charges. Beyond this, what could the CD have done that it didn’t do in the circumstances of those dark years? Soyinka already addressed this in some of his lectures, particularly the charge by a collection of semi-democratic, anti-democratic and outright absolutist elements, who argued that the June 12 struggle was ‘ethnicised’. Save some of the tactical errors committed by the pro-democracy organizations, it was, for the most part, an insulting charge by many who had no sufficient honour or courage to feel totally affronted by the annulment.

As Soyinka argued, those who could not stand should not accuse those who did that they did because they were Yoruba. CD organised and called for protests around the country. People responded principally in the west and failed to do so in other parts of the country. There were members of these organizations – CD, NADECO, etc. - in other parts of the country. Why couldn’t they mobilize their people, or why did these people remained immobilized or ‘un-mobilizable’ for the June 12 struggle? The people in the other parts of Nigeria also voted for Abiola, so why didn’t they protest the annulment of their mandate? Why would the same people who rioted at the slightest instigation in the name of religion or region, not do so in the name of justice and democracy? If we were to witness the same level of carnage that is regularly recorded in the core north in the ‘name of Allah’ for the cause of democracy, would the result not have been different? And with people like Sani Kotangora and Wada Nas blasting the Yoruba regularly during the struggle, and thus demanding a response by the Yoruba in defence of their own cultural integrity and democratic standpoint, and the mendacious arguments of otherwise informed minds like Ojo Maduaeke, and the recently departed Bala Usman - who had a vicarious ability to trivialise and argument in an attempt to deepen it - what else would NADECO, CD and sundry other organizations have done? Or what could the generality of the Yoruba and specifically the leadership in the pro-democracy struggle have done when even the Ekiti, a sub-group of the Yoruba attempted to make a separate peace with a collective threat by drawing a local victory from a collective tragedy when they started supporting Abacha only because he ‘gave’ them a state of their own? These are critical questions that go to the heart of the Nigerian tragedy.

Nonetheless, the absence of cohesion and what Fayemi calls ‘revolutionary discipline’, at a level, badly affected the pro-democracy coalition at the collapse of Abacha’s autocracy: ‘The fact that we did not succeed in achieving this, was also responsible for our inability to have a movement or political party in place when ‘power was lying on the street’ in 1998 and those who never really played any major part in fighting for freedom and democracy literally picked it up and ran with it’.

Chapter Fifteen of the book addresses the way forward (‘Where Do We Go from Here?’). Here, Kayode Fayemi relates the highlights of a useful encounter in Stockholm with General Olusegun Obasanjo who was soon to assume office as the
president in a new Republic. Writes the author: ‘On my point about truth and justice, the General added reconciliation, explaining to me that what we really needed as a country was reconciliation since many groups were hurting and to heal their wounds, we all must be prepared to forgive.’ Truth and justice were, ostensibly, not of primary importance to Obasanjo. One cheeky question this raises is: if ‘reconciliation’ was the most important thing for Obasanjo, why didn’t he lead the way by ‘reconciling’ with the Abacha family? When again the author, in company of Justice Oputa, met President Obasanjo in Abuja during the negotiations that led to the creation of the Oputa Panel, Obasanjo told Justice Oputa, ‘I know this man (Fayemi), probably more than you do, Justice. He wants revenge, I want reconciliation’. Nigerians know better now who seeks, and almost always ensures, revenge! This section of the book, again clearly shows that Obasanjo never wanted the end of impunity, what he wanted was the end of other people’s impunity against him. [Doris Rewane, the widow of the assassinated elder statesman, Alfred Rewane, was succinct in puncturing the callous conceit in such fixation with ‘reconciliation’ as against the end of impunity: ‘My lord’ she affirmed at the Oputa panel, sobbing, ‘I have not come here for reconciliation; I want justice!’]

Fayemi concludes that, ‘It is of course sad that after all the work that the Commission did, the Government did not deem it fit to release its report to the Nigerian public…. Deep inside, I really wished I were wrong. I desperately wanted Nigeria to get it right but the signs pointed more in the direction of neo-militarism than genuine democracy’. Why so? ‘The fact that the military elite was not responding to a full-scale defeat by the population could hardly be discounted in understanding the nature of the post-military governance. For example, the dominance of the party hierarchy by retired military generals and civilians closely connected to the military elite set the tone for party formation and also resulted in an authoritarian presidential governance, rather than in democratic governance. Essentially, the nature of that transition ensured a reconfiguration of the political space, rather than a transformation of politics that would have resulted in a comprehensive overhaul.’

Consequently: ‘So far, the consensus seems to be that the expectations that were widely held by the ordinary people in 1999 had been grossly exaggerated…. Indeed, the affirmation of democratic values is always a work in progress and in a constant process of construction in any polity’. Therefore, as Soyinka notes in the Foreword to the book, the struggle is not over: States the Nobel laureate: ‘One ceaseless complaint against the democratic movement is that its protagonists carried out this struggle at immense personal sacrifices of varying dimensions, only to hand over future responsibilities – a word I prefer to ‘harvest’ – of that struggle to proven reprobates and political opportunists… by the avoidance of contests for political positions, we have indeed left the field to brigands, parasites and unworthy custodians of power and authority, including even collaborators, that is, those who have not only made such struggles necessary in the first place, but contributed to our personal woes, and even stained their hands with the blood of our fallen comrades.’

Fayemi pleads in the preface to this book that, given that what the reader gets in this book is based on how he saw (sees) things, ‘Others involved in some of these events will, no doubt, recall them differently.’ True. But, no doubt, by the activities and efforts recorded in this well-written, and important book, Kayode
Fayemi has become part of that noble formation that rooted for, and still roots for, our national freedom and greatness. Even if the result obtained falls short of the desired, he can take a bow for having bore witness, analysed, exposed and criticised social and political evil, all geared toward pushing his motherland towards her manifest destiny.

Wale Adebanwi
Cambridge University, UK.


Could any good come out of Africa beyond sad tales of human miseries caused by famine, poverty, diseases and pestilence, violent conflicts and civil wars? On a somber note, there is very little in Africa’s recent history suggesting, even vaguely, that all is well with the continent for it is the only one presently showing the worst and the most disturbing signs of weakness, retardation and crises. The various ways in which contemporary Africa is affected by, and coping with the myriad challenges facing it against the background of globalization is the focus of these two very engaging edited books. Zack-Williams et. al., in Africa in Crisis: New Challenges and Possibilities comprising thirteen chapters on a range of current issues affecting the continent in the millennium: globalisation, imperialism and exclusion; youth, food and peace; debate on the African renaissance; the colonization of political consciousness; the unaccountable state; US democratic experiment in Ghana; international donors and civil society in Zimbabwe; the world market and African export policies; contract farming, food security and the labour market in northern Mozambique; continuity and change in French foreign policy towards Africa; subaltern terror in Sierra Leone; and finally, problems of peace-keeping and enforcement. In short, the diversity of topics covered in the volume is only matched by the impressive list of contributors. In the introductory chapter, Zack-Williams set the tone of debate by interrogating how Africa found itself in the complex developmental morass facing it. He traced the genealogy of Africa’s crises to the contradictions in colonial accumulation that indigenous elites who inherited power after independence simply took over wholesale. The structural deficit has culminated into reactionary politics, by which ‘the oppressed were pitched against each other, whilst petty bourgeois accumulation continued’ (p.2-3). The situation is complicated by what he called a ‘troika’ of seemingly insurmountable problems: economic marginalization from the global market; a major health crisis stemming from the destructive effects of malaria and HIV/AIDS; and the search for peace and political stability (p. 3).

Zack-Williams queried the intellectual basis of the growing nostalgia in Africa to deploy traditional institutions and methods that colonialism mangled, froze or completely destroyed toward solving Africa’s myriad developmental problems. He cautioned however that important as this retrospection might sound, it unduly over-romantises the past, while leaving many unanswered questions as to the continued relevance, authenticity and efficacy of colonial methods and
institutions towards tackling contemporary African problems. Yet, his suspicion of the ‘back-to-the-basis’ thesis did not go a step further to provide credible alternatives that can catapult Africa to the Promised Land. In ‘Globalisation, Imperialism and Exclusion: The Case of Sub-Saharan Africa’, Hoogvelt argued that imperialism is not just in, but also central to the agenda of capitalism in the age of globalisation. As a feature of inter-state relations, imperialism also reproduces a network of hierarchical relationships in which the wealth of some areas, groups or peoples benefit from the transfer of economic surplus, hence the underdevelopment of other areas, groups and peoples (p.19). Still, mainstream scholarship prefer to blame the victim while ignoring to question, say, the ‘divine right’ of foreign companies who, for the sake of gaining access to the resources necessary to sustain lifestyles in the West, engage in rapacious extractions that lead inexorably to violence (p. 20). Hoogvelt’s sincerity and boldness comes highly recommended for one of the strongest points made in the entire book is that: ‘We in the centre and the heartland of the global capitalist system are the cause, and the excuse, of much plunder, degradation and dereliction in the margins of the world. It is our own humanity that is at stake if we continue to profit from the trade… blaming Africans for complicity…does not let us off the hook’ (p. 25-26).

In Youth, Food and Peace: A Reflection on some African Security Issues at the Millennium, Paul Richards analysed the structural templates of the contemporary social order in Africa, and how that is influencing and altering conventional thinking about the continent. Youths, of course, are at the epicenter of the on-going social re-ordering given their unruly social behaviours in diverse settings – from the rainforests of Liberia and Sierra Leone to the oil-rich Niger Delta of Nigeria. According to Richards, the crises of youths in many places have taken a dangerous dimension given the presence of a high number of dispossessed young people lacking education and access to gainful employment. Animated by a deep sense of grievance about their predicament as social outcasts, those youths have envisaged that only by forcefully disrupting or hijacking the processes of mineral resources extraction – crude oil and diamond – can they arm-twist their governments to becoming more pro-active on development issues. It is against this background that Richards challenged Africanists to deepen their understanding of the ways in which young people understand, respond and seek to influence forces of globalization (p.33). Although he did not specifically say so, it is clear that studying youths can yield profound insights into the dynamics of and challenges/ opportunities facing societies, and how they confront them.

One unmistakable fact about Africa’s so far elusive quest for qualitative development is that it is not short of ubiquitous experiments. The project of African Renaissance is one of the most recent. According to Cliffe, the idea started gaining popularity against the backdrop of Africa woefully performances; and hope that the future can still be salvaged. Again, there are issues and concerns about the visions and requirements for the African Renaissance given the controversy over whether the project should commence in problem areas of peace, democracy and development, or begin with a rigorous pursuit of an intellectual and cultural renaissance as Mamdani and others have suggested earlier (p.45). Quite sadly but true, Cliffe concluded that African Renaissance, like other bogey ideologies is an aspirational work-in-progress.

Of course, at the centre of the long-standing debate about the causes and dimensions of Africa’s developmental misfortune is the pervert character and ambitions of the post colonial state and the dis/order they radiate within the civil society. Dixon focused on this in The Colonization of Political Consciousness: States
and Civil Society in Africa. Here, he questioned how the state became the singular form of political community in postcolonial Africa, and of what effects? According to Dixon, the post-colonial state is a formidable Leviathan by virtue of its ability to colonize ‘political consciousness’- defined as ‘the process of socialization and acculturation of politically dominant groups operating within colonial civil society into the ‘idea of the state’ as the ‘natural’ form of political community for Africans’ (p.62). In the past, this consciousness allowed the colonial order to overawe traditional, non-state versions of political community. Today, this colonization of consciousness is having a profound and perilous impact on the development of identity, community, citizenship and statehood in Africa.

A glimpse of how the perversions of the post-colonial state can retard progress in the African was the subject of Kandeh fascinating analysis of decline into Subaltern Terror in Sierra Leone (Chapter 12). According to him, the elite class is pivotal ‘in creating the conditions that allowed armed subalterns to usurp power and terrorize society with impunity’. This, they did over time by valorizing pillage, massifying society, banalizing violence and sobelising the army. As ‘licensees of violence’, political patrons ensure that the scarcity of legitimate political order invariably led to widespread discontent, social disorder, armed insurrection, and in some cases, state collapse (pp.179-180). But then, there is an unsettled argument on how patrimonial redistribution usually leads to full-blown armed conflicts and state collapse in Sierra Leone. While Paul Richards claimed that it resulted from the fact that resources available for patrimonial redistribution in the case of Sierra Leone went into sharp decline in the 1980s and 1990s, Kandeh argued that the decline in state revenues was not the problem but that political patrons simply helped themselves to what little was available (p.183). Kandeh insisted that ‘[What] elites do, especially how they exercise state power and the manner in which they engage political opponents, condition what subalterns consider permissible’ (p.188).

Obviously persuaded by an intellectual tradition impatient towards the English School within the mainstream international relations discipline, Dixon indicted their genre for neglecting ‘the role that international capitalist economy has played in marginalizing Africa from the global mode of production’, and overlooking the extent to which international capital ‘has served to induce frailty and instability in virtually all African states’. Thus, apart from the fact that the ‘empirical realities’ of statehood is still absent in Africa, many of them are still governed by corrupt and inefficient elites, possessed feeble and ineffectual state institutions, and are weakened by vast ethnic and cultural heterogeneity (p.63). Baker illustrated this further in The Unaccountable State when he argued that the notion of democracy in Africa tends to give preference to elections while ignoring the central question of accountability, defined as ‘the institutional, traditional and symbolic mechanisms by which, on the one hand, the governed call their governors to account for their deeds, and, on the other, the governors discharge the responsibilities of political obligation’.

But then, is the failure of the nation-state project in Africa solely responsible for the plights of African peoples, or are there other external dimensions and ramification? Very often, for instance, the role of established democracies and the international community in twisting, stalling and subverting the process of democratic enthronement and consolidation is swept under the carpet. In their accounts, mainstream western scholarship dwell less on the reverse
outcomes of what has become an unprecedented degree of external involvements in virtually every part of Africa’s democracy, governance and development enterprise. Hearn discussed this important concern in the context of *The US Democratic Experiment in Ghana* (Chapter 7), Pankhurst in *Globalization and Democracy: International Donors and Civil Society in Zimbabwe* (Chapter 8), and Huliaras in *Continuity and Change in French Policy Towards Africa* (Chapter 9).

Hearn recalled the growing doubts among critical segments of the civil society in Ghana about the sincerity of Washington’s intervention in the Ghanaian democratic project given what they complain to be a curious gap between domestic expectations in each country and the package of intervention that supposedly come from abroad. Hearn saw the situation differently noting that criticisms against USAID-led interventions in Ghana politics miss the point in two significant respects: first, that the US is fully engaged in the country’s most sensitive political issues but believes that the ‘liberal battle for the hearts and minds of Ghanaians rests in rural, grassroots civil society’; second, that such criticisms of USAID activities in Ghana unfairly ignore the groundbreaking consequences of foreign intervention represented by the existing projects. Unfortunately, the optimism so infectiously touted by Hearn is deflated by her own conclusion that it is sufficient that the civil society is in the discourse both as the ‘language of interaction’ and as ‘the language that local government officials as well as community activists will be using’. Can someone most kindly be reminded that the practice of democracy in Ghana, as elsewhere in many African countries, have been appropriated by a small clique of political while donor countries and agencies look the other way? (p. 106-107). If the truth about Africa’s democratic balance sheet is to be summarized, it would be that ‘the more things change the more they remain the same’.

There is wisdom however, in the conclusion by Pankhurst that having failed to bring about concrete transformations in the short term, an ‘unfamiliar humility’ has allowed the international financial institutions to recognize that pressures for democratization from within African societies stand much more chance of success than those imposed from outside’ (p.126). This conclusion is strengthened by the arguments made by Huliaras on the complexities of French policies toward Africa. The thrust of his argument is that nothing significant has changed regarding the basic thrust of France’s African policy in the post Cold War era. A demonstration of this is unambiguously revealed by the lack of enthusiasm on the part of Elysee Palace to implement the policy framework unanimously adopted at the Franco-African summit in La Baule in 1990 that democratization will become a guiding principle of French engagements with Africa. This decision was promptly jettisoned at the subsequent summit when Paris unilaterally reordered its priorities in favour of security, development and democratization in that order. Nothing fundamental has changed also in the area of French military intervention, for despite publicly celebrating troops reduction and shutting down some of its garrisons in Africa, Paris continues to maintain a Rapid Response Force (RRF) comprising of 44,500 men in various military bases in France (pp.171-172).

Some of the major issues and challenges of effective peacekeeping and peace enforcement in a radically altered post-Cold War environment were discussed by Clapham using examples from on-going multinational peacekeeping operations in Africa (Chapter 13).

Charles Ukeje
It is observable that the end of the Cold War is provoking a fundamental revision of long held views about domestic, regional and global security issues and challenges facing Africa. Previous works have been overly state-centric, as they probe the dynamics of conflicts at the level of the state, instead of from below, at the level of individuals and groups within states. *Greed and Grievances: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* edited by Mats Berdal and David Malone (2000) has become an important contribution to the analysis of the root causes and logic of modern internal conflicts. Instead of the usual focus on the economic costs of conflicts, calculated in terms of staggering human and material casualties, this book made a strong point for a deeper investigation into the economic motives and agendas that precipitate and elongate civil wars in Africa. As they pointed out, coming to terms with the ‘economic dimensions’ of war is a major step towards understanding the origins and trajectories of contemporary armed conflicts.

In the introduction, Berdal and Malone provided fascinating theoretical insights into the causes of civil wars drawing on three different perspectives: civil wars as a reflection of deep-seated developmental malaise; civil wars caused by misperceptions and failures of ‘communication’, and third, civil wars stimulated by the resurgence of long-suppressed animosities. Each of these conceives conflicts as irrational and dysfunctional. Quoting Duffield, civil wars are not necessarily driven by a ‘Clausewitzian logic of forwarding a set of political aims, but rather by powerful economic motives and agendas’ (p.4). Beyond civil wars, however, greed and grievance also determine the post-war mis/fortunes of many states making the painful transition from war to peace.

In Chapter Two on ‘Incentive and Disincentive for Violence’, David Keen challenged both the notions that ‘war is a contest between two sides, with each trying to win’, and that war represents ‘only a breakdown or collapse rather than the creation of an alternative system of profit, power and protection’ (p.19). Thus, there is a need for closer understanding of the internal dynamics that appear to be generating and sustaining civil wars beyond the misleading emphasis on irrationality and unpredictability of contemporary civil warfare, or their portrayal as evil, medieval, or both. In reality, violence can serve two other ends that are not necessarily negative: on the one hand, violence can be oriented towards changing (or retaining) the laws and administrative procedures of a society, while on the other, aimed at circumnavigating (by ignoring) the law (p.23). Although the lines are usually not as distinct as they looked, Keen distinguished between ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ violence- the former mobilised by political leaders and entrepreneurs, and the other referring to violence fomented by ordinary people as a solution to their own problems. The crux of his argument is that to effectively manage and resolve conflicts will require modifying the structures of incentive that are encouraging people to orchestrate, fund, or perpetrate acts of violence (p.25). To this end, ‘[A] lasting solution to civil war depends not simply on creating incentives for the acceptance of peace, irrespective of how exploitative it may be,
but on the creation of a peace that takes account of the desires and the grievances that drove people to war in the first place’ (p.39).

Over time, post-colonial African states have earned for themselves cynical appellations: ‘collapsed states’, ‘failed states’, ‘unfinished states’, ‘artificial states’, ‘quasi-states’, ‘pseudo-states’, ‘shadow states’, to mention a few. In ‘Shadow States and the Political Economy of Civil Wars’ (Chapter 3), Reno described a shadow state as ‘a product of personal rule, usually constructed behind a façade of de jure state sovereignty’ under regimes that control valuable resources that attract foreign enclave investments (pp. 45-46). Here, informal networks are not officially sanctioned or acknowledged, but the ruler prefers to impose negative externalities on subjects while distributing relief from these burdens on the basis of personal discretion, obedience and loyalty (p. 47). The motive for warfare in potential or actual shadow states become clearer for ‘where no authority exists that is willing or capable of providing a public good, entrepreneurs manage their own economic environments through means of violence’ (pp. 54-55). By this logic, violence is treated as a mode of accumulation, while warfare becomes an instrument of enterprise for personal enrichment and the selective reward of associates. Unfortunately, there are few vibrant agencies that can enforce an autonomous notion of legality and accountability in a shadow state. Again, missing in Reno’s account is the external dimensions to the continued existence and thriving of shadow states during civil wars. Although he mentioned it in passing, foreign capital helps to sustain shadow states as they fund, equip and train state security outfits on the pretext of ‘industrial security’. Also, the ‘criminalisation of the primary commodity trade’ that Soysa gleefully referred to later in the book would not thrive without the active, demand-driven connivance of outsiders (p. 126).

But there is more to the role of multi-nationals than meets the eye. In ‘Globalization, Transborder Trade, and War Economies’ (Chapter 4), Duffield investigated the nexus between globalisation and protracted internal/regionalised conflicts in the South, and how prevailing global neo-liberal regimes are causing ‘serial instability’ in the peripheries (p.69). Although globalisation is not the direct cause of war economies, as he puts it, market liberalisation has deepened and expanded all forms of informal trans-border activity that fuel conflicts. But then, nothing can be further from his contention that globalisation has ‘similarly affected the North and South’, or that ‘globalization has helped many emerging governance complexes in the South to pursue new forms of political and economic advantage’ (pp.71-72).

Paul Collier’s ‘Doing Well Out of War: An Economic Perspective’ (Chapter 5) entered the debate on greed and grievance by insisting that rather than looking towards the later as the main stimulant for the outbreak of civil wars, economic agendas (or greed) appears to be a stronger culprit. The narrative of grievance, as against that of greed, he argued, has assumed more prominence not simply because it is more functional externally and internally, but also because it is more satisfying both personally and publicly (pp.91-92). Thus, while ‘the pattern of rebellion is sufficiently strongly related to the proxies of greed, and sufficiently negatively related to ethnic and religious fractionalization, to suggest that most rebellion is not quixotic’. The emphasis on greed and economic profiteering as motives for violent conflicts and civil wars brings back memories of the discredited devil’s theory of war of the 1960s. Must we then conclude that greed is a grand proxy for violent conflicts and civil wars? Perhaps, instead of concluding emphatically as Collier did that the ‘true cause of
much civil war’ is not the loud discourse of grievance but the silent force of greed’ (pp.100-101), it is more rewarding as Mwanasali argued in Chapter 7, that ‘It is an arduous, if not impossible, task to identify with certainty the multiple economic agendas behind a civil war, even more so to determine who defines them and how they change as the war progresses’ (p.149).

Assuming that some people may do well out of civil wars, it still does not necessarily follow that civil wars erupt as a result of pure greed or other economic reasons. Take the case of the oil-rich Niger Delta where oil communities are pitched against the alliance of the Nigerian state and multinational oil companies, as an example. Can the argument be persuasively made, talk less substantiated, that militant youths and communities are up in arms out of greed, or that they are hiding their narrative of greed behind those of grievances? Perhaps what can be said without flaw is that greed may eventually overtake grievance, as conflicts progress not the other way round. In terms of practical policy steps, Collier proposed the curtailing of informal and clandestine channels that allow the sale of primary commodities that are financing conflicts; assisting with the diversification of the economies of high-risk countries through the instrumentalities of development assistance that target poverty reduction and increased growth rate; and finally, using political action whereby external actors can serve guarantee post-war settlement and peace-building. So far, the commitment of external powers on each of these proposals is either doubtful or gives little or no room for enthusiasm or optimism.

There is a renewed interest in the Malthusian thesis on the linkage between scarcity and conflicts as exemplified in the recent works of Homer-Dixon and his collaborators who argue that environmental degradation leading to scarcity in natural resources, is fueling civil conflicts in poor states (p.116). A refreshing perspective to new resources-induced civil wars is revealed in the Chapter 6 by Soysa aptly titled: ‘The Resource Curse: Are Civil Wars Driven by Rapacity or Paucity?’ In response to this poser, Soysa maintained that ‘an abundance of mineral wealth is positively and significantly related to armed conflict’, particularly as ‘countries with an abundance of mineral wealth are likely to suffer greed-motivated rebellion’ (p.113). The chapter drew attention to two emergent schools of thought on resource-induced conflicts. First, are those who see criminal agendas as a primary driving force behind civil conflicts, where the availability of natural resources acts as a catalyst for violence. Here rebellion is seen as being induced by the ‘desire to loot’ or rapacity. The second school predicts that it is the scarcity of natural resources that causes conflict; hence, violence results from paucity and wants (p.114). Either way, giving violence a masculine by blaming lack of education among males as responsible for violence hides quite a lot. For long, this was the pervasive but erroneous impression until studies of soccer hooliganism in Europe began to reveal that an increasing number of fanatics were educated and of middle class backgrounds, some even in conservative professions such as banking. The same point can be made with respect to rioting by university students.

Worried that the ‘informal productive and exchange systems that sustain the livelihood of entire communities in regions affected by civil wars seldom figure among popular scholarly topics and policy debates on peacemaking, peace-building, or post-conflict reconstruction’ (p.139), Mwanasali limited himself to the economic activities and trade networks that link the Eastern provinces of Congo to neighboring
countries in the volatile Great Lakes region of Africa. His central argument in ‘The View from Below’ is that the more informal the nature of local political and economic transactions, the greater the ease with which civil war factions can use them to achieve their goals. Accordingly:

…civil wars tend to generate a multiplicity of autonomous power centres and agendas as well as a continuous shift in the identity of key actors. When significant economic interests are involved, the decision to start, prolong, or end a civil war is also made possible by the nature of the economic system and the kind of economic gains and incentives it offers belligerents in their pursuit of their political agenda (p. 146).

Gamba and Cornwell examined the complexity of linkages between ‘Arms, Elites and Resources in the Angolan Civil War’, focusing on the regulation and self-regulation of the private sector during civil wars. They concluded, among others, that although ‘the availability of weapons might not be the primary cause of conflict, it does exacerbate it’ (p.160). In ‘Targeted Financial Sanction’, Porteous traced the background to sanctions, the parameters and limitations of financial sanctions, how to identify the leadership group to be targeted, the goals of financial sanctions, enforcement mechanisms, the role of the private sector in enforcing a credible regime of financial sanction, to mention a few. There is also substantive issue concerning the actual roles of humanitarian agencies during and after wars given shortfalls in their public image as protectors of the vulnerable and the hidden ones of accomplices fueling civil wars (p.189). This debate is the focus of the chapter by Shearer titled ‘Aiding or abetting? Humanitarian Aid and Its Economic Role in Civil War’. Indeed, the issues he raised in the chapter is becoming quiet topical against the background of complaints that certain aid agencies are engaged in clandestine activities such as gun-running, sex-for-favour, diversion of humanitarian resources, profiteering – all of which fall short of their mandates to rescue the perishing and care for the dying. This criticism must be read with caution for, as Shearer claimed, much of them is overstated and relied too much on anecdotes. This important book concluded with a discussion by Tom Farer on ‘Shaping Agendas in Civil Wars: Can International Criminal Law Help’ (Chapter 11).

Economic Agendas in Civil Wars sets out to achieve two objectives: (i) to improve understanding of the political economy of civil wars, especially by annotating the various ways in which globalisation is creating new opportunities for competing elite groups to pursue their economic agenda, and (ii) to examine the possible policy responses available to a range of external governments and non-governmental actors. Although the books succeeded in the former objective, it is not clear that the same pass mark could be awarded for not achieving the second objective. Over all, however, a few voices from within and outside the continent continue to whisper loud that all is not lost for Africa, and that the post-Cold War era provides one of the best opportunities for qualitative and sustainable development in Africa. Only time will tell!

Charles Ukeje
Department of International Relations, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.
Poverty reduction has emerged from behind the cloak of development economics into popular parlance as the ‘new’ raison d’etre of all development efforts – the vehicle that is to drive disadvantaged, deprived and underdeveloped economies into the new dawn of accelerated development at best, and at worst, to halt the decline in living standards of the poorest societies of the world. In the process, the traditional bigwigs of development, principally, the international development agencies, have also piggybacked on the new realities. Hence, poverty reduction has also come into its own as a core function of these international development agencies.

But with its arrival unto the mainstream comes the inevitable questions of: what is poverty reduction? How does it work in practice? And how can it be adopted? Best Practices in Poverty Reduction attempts to answer all that and more. The book focuses on the notion, borrowed from public sector management generally, of best practice and the part that it can potentially play in strengthening anti-poverty strategies. The book attempts to take the concept of best practice out of its highly politicised and applied context, and to treat it as a scientific tool that can seriously add to the toolbox needed for improved comprehension of the many failures in poverty reduction.

Best Practices in Poverty Reduction is the latest in a long line of publications on poverty-related issues from the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP) since the early 1990s. The book follows in the well trodden path of analysis, dissemination and advocacy on the issues of poverty: characteristics, causes, and consequences, building on previous work encompassing the role of civic society, governments and the international development agencies.

The notion of ‘best practices’ comes from the political and administrative world of anti-poverty strategies. Those responsible for anti-poverty interventions want to learn from successful experiments elsewhere that can be transferred to their own national or cultural setting. However, this approach has inherent risks, because cultural variations as well as variations in the target groups are likely to make it difficult to transfer a successful programme from one culture directly into a different culture.

This edited volume is an examination of the use of best practices for more efficient poverty reduction. It is also a tool to help develop a more systematic approach to the understanding of what constitutes best practice. It attempts to develop a methodology for understanding and utilising best practices. This has become necessary because best practices are presented in different ways. They are sometimes reported as success stories without specifying the criteria by which they are judged successful. They are sometimes considered as learning experiences, something worthy of being used in another setting. They are also presented as a technical challenge, can ‘best practices’ be assembled in a database and offered to interested parties?

The book is a guide to the development and functioning of a best practice. It demonstrates how each happenstance of ‘best practice’ is deeply embedded in
the social setting in which it operates and how its success depends upon the political and moral climate of individual cultures. The challenge is to identify those specific circumstances that will make a best practice both sustainable and transferable to another setting.

*Best Practices in Poverty Reduction* is a compilation of articles authored by different writers. It is organised in 6 chapters; three of the chapters analyse through different perspectives the processes underlying the development of a best practice and the organisational variables influencing the transition of an ordinary practice into a best practice. They emphasise the importance of policy-making, in spite of strong social forces running counter to poverty reduction. Other chapters offer concrete advice on how to evaluate best practices and how to avoid the pitfalls when they are transferred to another setting. Other parts of the book show how to identify a best practice from among hundreds of on-going practices and also suggest ways of analysing practices and their impacts and how to compare them.

Each chapter has a distinctive approach to the understanding of best practices in poverty reduction. Together, they form an attempt to treat a best practice as a scientific tool in the search for an understanding of the many failures in poverty reduction. The major contribution of, ‘Best Practices in Poverty Reduction’, is the efforts it makes in looking for ways to identify, develop and promote those practices that seem to add significantly to poverty reduction worldwide.

In Chapter One, Else Oyen, who edited the volume, offers a methodological approach to ‘best practice.’ It does this in six stages. In the first stage, it asks what can be learned about best practices from the already existing literature on evaluation research. It lists five elements which need to be taken into account in the process of identifying and describing the evolution of a best practice: establish a starting point for an intervention and identify the target group; describe the goals of the intervention and the expected results; make visible the kind of instruments for change that are built into the intervention; identify the political and cultural climate in which the intervention is launched; and discuss the implications of different time horizons.

The second stage in building a methodological approach to ‘Best Practice’ is to examine it as a process, teasing out the crucial variables that give the process stickability. The third stage looks at transferability and replicability, how to shift a best practice from one context to another without the loss of those elements that make it a best practice. It discusses how dumbing down the effects of the single most important variable – culture – can enhance the process and its boundaries.

The fourth stage involves an identification of the interests of political and other variables whose vested interests may impact on the outcome and judgement of best practice. The question of who should be the judges of a best practice is posed in stage five. Who are the users and against whose norms should a practice be judged ‘best?’ In the sixth and last stage of the methodological approach, one should examine the impact of best practice on poverty reduction and offer some direction to those who want to identify a good practice and transfer it to another setting.

Chapter One of the book closes by emphasising that, at the end of the methodological approach, the decision on whether a practice is ‘best’ should be simple; a best practice is an intervention that has worked. A best practice for poverty reduction is, therefore, an intervention that reduces poverty to a single
degree, keeps the gained poverty reduction at bay, and one that manages to reduce several kinds of poverty rather than just one component.

Chapters Two to Four of the book analyse, through different perspectives, the process underlying the development of a best practice and the organisational variables influencing the transition of an ordinary practice into a best practice. In Chapter Two, Joshi & Moore identify a set of characteristics common to anti-poverty programmes deemed to be effective. Their focus is not on the best practice in a particular type of programme, but rather an attempt to look for generic features across programmes that have made them work better than others. They introduce the concept of predictability drawing on two examples from Nepal and India, to buttress their point that effective anti-poverty programmes require appropriate enabling environments to thrive. For a poverty reduction programme to qualify as a ‘best practice,’ it must have credibility, programme stability and formal entitlement.

Chapter Three looks at scepticism and hope associated with best practices. In it, Miller argues that a best practice should be evaluated in terms of its transferability or replicability. He uses two examples from peer mentoring and Alcoholics Anonymous to buttress his point that administrative, political and financial contingencies can influence transferability. So, for a best practice to transfer well, its implementation or administration or management must be appropriately adaptable and flexible.

In Chapter Four, Mehrotra presents some methodological issues about best practices within the contexts of high achieving countries. He argues that an optimal context always exists for a best practice. He points out that, ‘high-achieving’ countries, those that had improved their social conditions over short periods of time, had attained their achievements within common contexts: the pre-eminent role of public action; equity in intra-sectoral spending; efficiency in utilisation of human and financial resources; sequential social investment and; women as equal agents of change.

Cimadamore et al discuss how best to identify a best practice from amongst hundreds of on-going practices in Chapter Five. They draw on examples from Argentina to outline their methodology for the selection of a best practice. They conclude that a methodology provides a logical first step preceding an in-depth evaluation of the actual contents of a best practice. In their Argentinean example, they identified several characteristics of a best practice in poverty reduction: a project’s innovation, its impact, sustainability and potential for replication.

The book closes on chapter six, where Kruger presents the results of an Internet search through different databases concerned with best practices. During the last decade, the Internet has become the main forum for publications on best practice. This last chapter of the book presents a veritable ‘who is who’ on the visual rhetoric of the best practice databases. It presents an authoritative and useful list of major databases, organisations, programmes, quotations and use of terms on awards and linking resources on best practices.

In Best Practices in Poverty Reduction, the authors have been driven by their belief that considerable intellectual work is required to transform best practice from being an impressionist designation of success stories into a more analytical tool, which can reliably be applied to poverty reduction. They have sought to introduce a more systematic approach to understanding how to identify a particular
practice or experience as constituting best practice. They have explored the social and organisational factors influencing the transition of an ordinary particular anti-poverty project or strategy into becoming established as best practice. They also examine the relevant policy aspects of the conditions under which a best practice, once identified and embedded in its own setting can be successfully transferred to other situations and countries.

*Best Practices in Poverty Reduction* provides an incisive, precise and informative analysis of the genre. To the extent that this book is a very serious attempt to take the concept of best practice out of its highly politicised and applied context, and to treat it as a scientific tool that can seriously add to the tool box needed for improved comprehension of the many failures in poverty reduction, one is left in no doubt that the authors have succeeded in their objective.

**Dan Ofori**
University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana.


It has often been said by the critics of expat African scholars, scientists, thinkers etc. that they cannot seriously hope to be effective in helping to ameliorate the problems of a deeply troubled continent by prescribing smart solutions from the safety of their European or US institutions and talk-fests. This judgement has been passed on luminaries as diverse as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Ngugi Wa Thiongo respectively – all of whom were deemed guilty of preaching in absentia at one time or another. Ikechi Mgboejio underlines this de facto rule in his book *Collective Insecurity: The Liberian Crisis, Unilateralism & Global Order*, which would seem strange as Professor Mgboejio himself writes from the relative comfort of York University in Canada. Good to know then that there are exceptions to every rule – and Mgboejios book is clearly exceptional.

*Collective Insecurity* consists of five chapters. The first two provide a thorough history of Liberia and an examination of the roots of its deterioration in the 1990s. To explain how Liberia became the latest example of the phenomenon of the ‘failed state’, necessitating extraterritorial intervention, Mgboejio appraises the damaging legacy of the colonial powers, with particular regard to the artificial state-boundaries created at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 and the problems of legitimacy inherent to these colonial creations in the post-independence era.

The myth of African statehood – as it is often described – is a good starting point. Although there has been a large body of work devoted to this subject, it is worth reviewing, certainly in Mgboejios opinion, if only to serve as a contrast to the marked inaction of African elites in having anything to say on the subject. One presumes from this reticence that African
governments, broadly speaking, are satisfied with the status quo as far as state boundaries are concerned and it serves their interests well. Nevertheless, the arbitrary nature of African political boundaries is a prime cause of the political instability experienced on the continent. For the most part, African state boundaries remain as they were from their colonial inception and imposition, entirely negating pre-colonial African nationalism and its borders. Whereas European states represent the authentic institutional expressions of the nationalist movements that fought for them and sharing a common cultural, linguistic and ethnic affinity, African states were fashioned out of European concerns for the continent's convenient economic exploitation. Yet, lamentably, African governments have shown themselves content to labour on in these ahistorical straightjackets as Mgbeoji calls them, seemingly oblivious of the political consequences.

Note that Liberia, along with Ethiopia, was never formally colonized, though that does not preclude Mgbeoji from factoring in issues such as economic exploitation, an internalised inferiority and a model of governance based upon a spoils politics that privileges endemic corruption and political repression in place of democratic accountability. He also points to the culpability of African leaders themselves, and in Liberia especially, assessing their often wretched tenures in office.

The Liberian state was exceptional in its creation only in the sense that it was not imposed by European colonisers but by the economic and political interests of African-American ones. Mgbeoji alludes to this difference vaguely but seems content to allow the reader to draw his/her own parallels. Thus, conceived in a similarly parochial vein to other African states, it contained similar political problems. In particular, since state boundaries were not coterminous with pre-colonial ethnic or political loyalties, there is an inherent problem of legitimacy towards a state that had no basis in nationalist sentiment. Mgbeoji tartly observes that almost all of Liberias ethnic groups overflow into neighbouring postcolonial states – highlighting the artificial nature of Liberias political and physical boundaries. Conversely, this problem of tribalism – as it is often crudely referred to – has produced an alternate reaction on the part of African governments who have called for unity at all costs. This convention has given rise to a clientelist-based politics in which state interests are subsumed below those of groups or individuals, whose loyalty must be bought (literally) in a desperate effort to maintain the semblance of state unity.

African states, with resident ethnic groups often overlapping and interlocking with other neighbouring states, are leaky vassals. This has massive implications for regional security. Once trouble starts in one state, it can quickly run along ethnic fault-lines into others. Mgbeoji narrates how the spill-over from Liberias own crisis triggered one of the most brutal civil wars of modern times in Sierra Leone. Mgbeojis book is particularly prescient in this area of analysis. Witness the current instability in the Ivory Coast – the former success story of West Africa, which threatens to
consume the entire region. Indeed, that precipice would perhaps have already been jumped if it wasn’t for the French peacekeeping forces already stationed in the Ivory Coast to patrol the country’s precarious border between the rebel-held North and the government-controlled South of the country.

Mgbeoji couples this instability with the effects of a divisive self-interest and power politics on the part of the superpowers (West and East) that has fostered a culture of neglect with respect to Africa. Avoiding the tendency of many authors to single out a single, primary cause for Africa’s underdevelopment (corruption is the favourite bete noire currently), Mgbeoji skilfully weaves a nuanced and considerate analysis in helping to understand Africa’s present predicament.

The remaining three chapters examine the Liberian crisis under existing international law, including the legality of the eventual intervention of the regional body, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Mgbeoji draws upon the history of the ECOWAS intervention, employing contrasts and comparisons with similar cases of intervention outside Africa, to illustrate the potential consequences of ECOWAS action and, more broadly, the legitimate use of military force internationally.

The UN, endowed with the purpose of regulating interstate conflict and limiting the use of force in international affairs, assumes primary authority with regard to perceived threats to peace – which should be referred to the Security Council. However, under article 52 of the Charter, the UN also reserves a role for regional bodies. The Liberian intervention by ECOWAS throws up concerns similar to those raised by NATO action in Kosovo. Namely, is the Security Council obliged to endorse military intervention to preserve international peace and security before it happens, or may such an intervention proceed and then seek an ad-hoc endorsement from the Security Council? In both cases, Liberia and Kosovo, the UN ratified the intervention after it had occurred. Mgbeoji is clearly disturbed by this new regime and its potential consequences. Such a system of ex post facto authorisation, he argues, encourages states to pursue military means first, without Security Council authorisation, which can be, presumably, acquired afterwards. In particular, Mgbeoji is worried that such a regime could be used by disingenuous states to mask their hegemonic plans under the banner of humanitarian intervention without being obliged to present their case to the Security Council for prior assessment. Mgbeoji is rightfully cautious that, if pursued frequently, such a regime would undermine the general custom that the use of force in international relations should be rare and undertaken only when there is a consensus that a threat to international peace and security exists.

Whilst one can sympathise with Mgbeoji’s concerns, at the same time, one must acknowledge the realpolitik that determines Security Council resolutions or, as presently with the crisis in Darfur, the lack of them. It is precisely this realpolitik – based as it is upon states self-interest – that has fostered a culture of neglect towards Africa. Mgbeoji’s hardest task is to try and reconcile his desire for military action to require mandatory Security Council authorisation together with the Security Council’s general neglect towards African instability. This means
that without African regional organisations in effect usurping the role of the Security Council in both authorising and undertaking military intervention, many of Africa's trouble-spots, including Liberia, would have simply been ignored. Sudan is a case in point. Any resolution concerning the use of force in Darfur would be vetoed by China who has invested billions in the development of Sudanese oil. For proponents of the UN – including I imagine, Mgbeoji himself – their worst fears have been realised. The UN has become a mere talking shop – offering the occasional condemnation of Khartoum – whilst intervention by the African Union has been stalled without both authorisation from the UN and the necessary funds that would be accrued from a Security Council resolution endowing it with the right to intervene militarily. Mgbeoji's flickering hopes post 9/11 that the Security Council, and the US especially, would take a more expansive view of the 'self' when applied to their respective self-interests, appear to have been snuffed out.

Nevertheless, Mgbeoji recommends radical reform of the Security Council and calls for the codification of rules governing military intervention in an effort to promote a measure of structural reform that might facilitate a more enlightened engagement with Africa, and the world in general, come the future. These recommendations are timely in an era where a good dose of normative reform is needed to remedy the current realpolitik melancholy associated with the UN in particular and international state practice in general.

In the end of this book, a fuller discussion of Mgbeoji's recommendation that a commitment to distributive justice was the surest way of guaranteeing an effective regime of collective security was needed. Mgbeoji alights too early from this terminal of thought. Given his evident judicial and political aptitudes it would have been interesting for him to propose the mechanisms necessary with which to ensure a more equitable distribution of global wealth. Also, I wanted to know more about how he proposes to increase governmental legitimacy in Africa. Although he alludes to the need for an autochthonous equivalent of the Berlin Conference in order to rearrange African borders according to ethnic/political loyalties, this is largely pie-in-the-sky thinking. Whether Mgbeoji likes it or not, for the most part solutions to problems of state legitimacy in Africa will have to take into account existing state borders. Moreover, African ethnic and political loyalties are not preserved in the stasis of pre-colonial times, but evolving and changing according to the modern-day challenges that they face. Political loyalty is ultimately instrumental in procuring tangible political and economic benefit. The challenge then for African states, is how they can bring meaningful benefits to their citizens in attempting to win their loyalty. I hope that Mgbeoji will assume this challenge and delve deeper into an issue that he has rightly identified as crucial to the future of human rights and governmental legitimacy in Africa, but also the world at large. Although his book deals
specifically with the Liberian civil war and its implications for collective security in Africa, his conclusions are pertinent to broader contexts, equally applicable to both regional and global spheres. Mgbeoji asserts his belief that, in the future, international law will be significantly influenced by the Third World. With scholarship like Mgbeoji’s, this prophecy might well become self-fulfilling.

Christopher Thompson, Journalist
Africa Confidential, London.


Zimbabwe’s violent and contested politics have dominated the coverage of Africa on our TV screens, newspapers and radio waves in the past few years. We have seen patient queues on election days and less patient ones in front of bakeries and banks. Political rallies and protest marches, all too often disrupted by violence. We have seen funerals and people proudly clearing new land. These four books all attempt to explain the recent crisis in Zimbabwe. Three of the authors (Meredith, Blair and Meldrum) are journalists who have reported Zimbabwe for UK newspapers. Chan has been both an international bureaucrat within the Commonwealth, and an academic; he is currently based at SOAS, University of London.

Blair, Chan and Meredith provide a markedly similar analysis of Zimbabwe’s politics, focussing on the role of President Robert G. Mugabe. His name figures in their titles, his picture is on their covers, and his biography structures much of their narratives. Meldrum’s book stands out from these, with a picture of a young Zimbabwean child at play on the front cover, instead of the aging autocrat. He also provides a more nuanced account of Zimbabwe’s crisis. Like Blair and Chan, his story is partially auto-biographical, weaving his own story with that of Zimbabwe. However, despite some similarities, the differing backgrounds of the authors, their different experiences of Zimbabwe, and very different styles of writing, make for very different books, with their own strengths and weaknesses.

Unsurprisingly, Chan’s book is the most academic of the four, but it is written in a personal, idiosyncratic, style. His book comes across as chatty, and occasionally unnecessarily verbose. The following sentence would win a prize for including the most confusing parenthetic phrase: ‘The majority population [in Matabeleland] are Ndebele, of Zulu ancestry (although this is debateable in its pure form, exact differentiations now being hard to make between those of Zulu blood descent and those of historical political affiliation to the Zulu regional ‘superpower’ of Shaka). And what does he mean by describing Chenjerai Hunzvi as ‘a violent footnote of a man”? (p. 161)
Chan knows Zimbabwe well, having observed its transition to independence and having visited every year since independence. Despite this personal experience though, he still manages to place the Italian Bakery on Second Street! Chan avoids academic references, and draws to a large extent on his memories and anecdotes to provide colour. Yet he pays fair tribute to the community of Zimbabwean scholars in an extended bibliographic essay at the end of the text. Chan also shows his familiarity with, and love for, Zimbabwe by drawing in examples from post-1980s fiction. He is also tolerably familiar with the intellectual debates that circulated in Harare, and their protagonists, providing nuanced interpretations of the opposition movements and intellectual trends.

Meredith writes with panache and style. His synthesis of the events of the 1980s and 1990s is readable and believable. He is particularly good on relations between the white community and ZANU in the 1980s. Yet, his failure to acknowledge sources, from whom he cites wholesale – stealing quotations, arguments and information, is irritating (if not insulting) to the academic reader. His tendency to attribute quotes to ‘an interview’, implying to readers that he conducted the interview himself, is patently dishonest.

Blair, ‘young journalist of the year 2001’, who covered Zimbabwe for the Daily Telegraph simply doesn’t have the experience that Chan and Meredith bring to the topic. While he also discusses Mugabe’s personal life before 1980, he does so from a less experienced vantage point. But he does so competently. He provides meticulous footnotes, especially of the period before he himself arrived in Harare. Blair’s great weakness is his account of pre-1997 land reform, which is riddled with inaccuracies and bias. Here, he has not done his homework well, but parroted the beliefs of white farmers: ‘the few beneficiaries of land reform found themselves trapped on Maoist collectives that served only to make them even worse off’ (p.178). While there were some reform schemes that involved collective farms, these were only a fraction of the total.

Blair, however, capitalises on his inexperience, assuming that his audience may be similarly uninformed and unprepared. He describes his first experiences in Harare, arriving in 1999 from Uganda, amazed at Zimbabwe’s ‘absolute calm and peace’ (p. 42). His accounts of encounters with the victims of political violence in 2000-2001 are poignant and personal. Here, his on-the-ground investigative reporting trumps both Meredith and Chan (although not Meldrum). But his account is also driven by a simple argument, that Mugabe was driven by an ambition for power that never waned: ‘what consumed Mugabe’s restless, ambitious mind as much as anything else, was his own political advancement’ (p. 22) or ‘from 1982 onwards his rule was dominated by a ruthless quest to crush his opponents and remain in office at whatever cost’ (p. 46). This account parallels Meredith, who says ‘power for Mugabe was not a means to an end, but an end itself. His over-riding ambition, he once admitted, was to achieve total control’ (pp. 225-6).

But does the ‘big man’ theory hold up? Does their focus on Mugabe blind them to much else that is going on? Or give them a framework through which to assess the broader narrative of Zimbabwe? None of these authors would suggest that
Mugabe’s story is the only one worth telling. None of them are simply political biographies. But they portray events in Zimbabwe as the result of one man’s ideas, dreams and obsessions. So for Meredith, the developmental failures of Mugabe’s government are because ‘Mugabe never displayed much concern for the welfare of the common people’ (p. 227).

Although Mugabe’s name and picture adorn the front cover of Chan’s book, his presence dominates the text much less obviously than in Blair or Meredith’s accounts. Chan does not re-hash the potted accounts of Mugabe’s childhood, years in prison, or family-life. There is no attempt at Eriksonian ‘psycho-history’. Instead, Chan uses his own diplomatic past and research to bring in accounts of Zimbabwe’s ventures into international diplomacy: the front-line states, the non-aligned movement, peace-negotiations in Mozambique, and the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting of 1991, which brought forward the now (in)famous Harare Declaration.

Chan’s familiarity with other players like Nkomo and Tekere, balances out the narrative; in Blair and Meredith’s accounts only Mugabe’s character is developed. He also captures something of the distinctively Zimbabwean attitude to politics when he speaks of a ‘curious Zimbabwean game of patience and silent memory’ (p. 40). He further delves into the local political culture and gossip, and captures something of the emphasis on cleansing and ritual healing. His immersion in Zimbabwean literature and culture enables him to move beyond journalistic clichés.

Similarly, Meldrum’s long stay in Zimbabwe, and obvious commitment to the country and its people, render his account meaningful and readable. In some ways, Meldrum’s book is the most personal of the four, beginning with his arrival in Zimbabwe, and ending with his being deported. He writes also about his family, and friends, in the country with conviction – they are real people. Despite not being a huge fan of Meldrum’s reporting, I found his book the most readable and the most plausible. It is truly a story of the country, and not just of one man.

For the armchair observer, a political biography like those of Chan, Blair and Meredith, is probably a good way to learn about a country. But for academics, these books are all bound to be disappointing in different ways, with Meldrum at the top of a disappointing pile. None of them are suitable for teaching from. And none of them provide any distinctively new analysis or material. For those interested in a thorough understanding of Zimbabwe’s political crisis, the focus on Mugabe obscures more than it clarifies, reducing the people to one man, and the structural crisis of the post-independence state to greed and violence. Yet, as the BBC correspondent Rageh Omar says on the dust-jacket of Meldrum’s book: ‘…amidst the repression and cruelty of Mugabe’s state, there is courage, dignity and above all real hope’.

Sara

Singer’s book is one of the most important and timely publications to be seen on the shelves this year. Important because it deals comprehensively with a still largely unacknowledged shift in the global balance of power from the public to the private sphere, and timely because it is published in the merits of the ongoing war in Iraq, one of the most heavily privatized conflicts seen in the modern world. The study of private military companies is not a new field – CDD has made its own contribution on the subject of mercenaries and African security – but Singer’s is the first study to take in the privatization of military power in all its breadth and significance. In doing so he reveals not just the almost-ubiquitous presence of PMFs in developing-world conflicts, but also the deep embeddedness of major multinationals in the military operations of the world’s superpower, which now finds itself effectively unable to deploy overseas without large-scale use of ‘civilian’ contractors. The tone of the book is morally neutral and the analysis is all the stringer for that, with the author highly attuned to both potential benefits and drawbacks of privatised security in all its manifestations. By examining existing examples and carefully teasing out their implications Singer, working at the heart of the US policymaking community, draws out a number of important themes. Among the most interesting of these are the foreign-policy implications of the wider world conflating the actions of a PMF based in a particular country with that country’s official policy (a conflation which is sometimes mistaken and sometimes not). Equally intriguing are Singer’s pointers towards the effects of PMFs as actors who can quickly and fundamentally change the balance of power between antagonistic states; their presence in the world thus requires a major rethink of classical International Relations theory – as the author points out, states and even non-state actors can turn ploughshares into swords (and back again) almost overnight, making theories based on concrete knowledge of military power somewhat redundant. The book also contains a raft of musings on how the PMF factor impinges on civil-military relations. Each of these pointers is worthy of a sustained enquiry in its own right but is dealt with capably within these pages.

The greatest strength of this work, however, is that the author deals with PMFs primarily as businesses, and with their increasing utilisation as just another aspect of the still-growing trend among both public bodies and large corporations to outsource their service and non-core functions to contractors. By adopting this analytical approach, which situates PMFs as basically a more lethal equivalent of caterers, courier services, or building management agencies, Singer makes it possible to understand the motives and actions of military contractors from an inside-out perspective. Just as in any other realm of business, firms range from small to large, and from those who aim at global brand recognition to those who thrive on the margins and in the riskiest niches. And crucially, like all other for-profit organisations, PMFs’ ultimate aim is to expand their operations and grow.

Singer attempts to impose some sense of order on to this fluid and chaotic world, and comes up with a rough classification of firms into three types; those who engage in combat operations (military providers), those which train and advise others (military consultants) and those which provide essential ‘back-office’ functions such as logistics (military support forms). While unsatisfactory in that
many PMFs change functions, bridge categories and are opaque about their actual
level of involvement in combat operations, this does at least allow for some closer
analysis. The reader is then treated to three highly illuminating case studies of
firms in each category. Considering the interior dynamism of such companies
opens up a range of scenarios for the future, and Singer is not slow to pick up on
the significance of these.

The case of Executive Outcomes, already familiar to those of us who work
in Africa, illustrates how a ‘provider’ PMF’s involvement can decisively tip the
scales in wars in developing nations. But more significantly, it also shows how a
company can continue to function even after it has stopped existing in any formal
legal sense. Even before its suppression in its home state of South Africa, it seems
that the highly (opaque) EO network had entrenched itself in areas of operation by
founding a variety of local companies, cell-like networks which allow the
organisation-as-network to maintain itself even when officially no longer in
existence. The recent Zimbabwe – Equatorial Guinea incident shows the organic
way in which the constituent elements, including the core of apartheid-era South
African security forces, continue to resurface in new situations and guises.

The military consultant MPRI is a very different beast. Composed largely
of ex-US military personnel, close (both physically and emotionally) to the
Pentagon, and now deeply involved in many aspects of US national security policy,
MPRI (now part of the L3 Communications Services Group) represents the almost-
total blurring of the line between state policy and private operations. The company
has been deeply involved in a variety of sensitive overseas operations in which the
US has wanted to exert influence without official involvement. Singer specifically
picks out MPRI’s role in training the Croat army prior to the 1995 operation to
retake Serb-held Krajina, but we might also cite the firm’s continuing involvement
with the Nigerian army, which caused such disagreement among the officers of that
country’s military.

Such privatisation of overseas security functions gives US administrations
a cloak of plausible deniability when accused of meddling in the security affairs of
other sovereign states – one which is, however, becoming less plausible each time
it is used. When public authorities work so closely with private actors to achieve
foreign policy goals, it is inevitable that in the eyes of others, what US firms do
will be taken to be what the US government is doing. Against such a background, it
is problematic to say the least to describe US employees of Blackhawk Security
recently killed in Fallujah, Iraq as civilians – the status of such actors in a war-zone
is extremely ambiguous.

Perhaps the most noteworthy chapter is that on the oilfield-services-turned-
military-logistics group Kellogg, Brown and Root, part of the Halliburton group
closely associated with current US Vice-President Dick Cheney. So deeply reliant
has the US military become of KBRs services in logistics, transport, setting up
camps and barracks, maintaining infrastructure, etc., that ‘In effect, (in Kosovo) the
firm was the US force’s supply and engineering corps wrapped into one corporate
element’. Readers familiar with the controversy surrounding the firms ‘no-bid’
multi-million dollar oilfield services contract with the US forces in Iraq, the
US$5m tax dodge case in Nigeria, and other such scandals may be shocked but
unsurprised to learn that the firm (then Brown and Root) was implicated in
backhanders given to future US President Lyndon Johnson when he was Governor
of Texas back in 1937 over the construction of the Mansfield Dam. In a very
tangible way, this Texas-based conglomerate embodies the intersections of private interests in the energy and military fields at the heart of the US’s invasion and continuing occupation of Iraq.

The current conflict in Iraq has in fact fast become the biggest single gravy train so far for the private military industry, with a plethora of new US, European, British and even Indian firms joining the established players to take advantage of this unstable, risky and highly lucrative environment. Some estimations have it that PMFs are the third largest contributor of armed forces to Iraq, after the US and UK militaries. The question then becomes, does the presence of more than 15,000 armed private contractors, many of whom, as employees of the Coalition Provisional Authority, are not subject to the writ of Iraqi law, make such a situation more or less stable.

In fact the legal and regulatory aspect of the PMF industry is the one which Singer highlights as the most in need of urgent attention from policymakers and the public. Shocking examples are given of huge damage done to national security considerations and the wider public interest in an industry which is in most cases subject to little specific regulation and in many jurisdictions, to none at all. The chapter on ‘Contractual Dilemmas’ abounds with many conflicts of interest which pass under the radar of state bodies equipped with little capacity to properly monitor the services provided by the firms to whom they outsource. Most notably, one major US-based military consulting business was employed to write the US army guidelines on hiring private military companies. Elsewhere in the pages we find more mundane but no less damaging transgressions borne simply of the natural desire of private companies to cut costs and increase profits, be they cases where helicopter crashes have been linked to the use of unqualified personnel by companies hired to perform maintenance, or where intelligence companies have sent key military information over open commercial satellite channels to save money in wartime.

Further issues emanate from the incomplete control state agencies have over the employees of the companies they hire – witness the extensive negative effects of the scandal over certain DynCorp employees’ involvement with the sex trade in the Balkans. And in the US context, even larger-scale damage could result from what the author calls such ‘negative externalities’. In the US context, it is technically possible for firms to work for whichever foreign power they like without the need for Congressional approval as long as the contract amount is less than US$50m. Larger contracts than this are obviously easy to split into smaller units in order to clear the threshold, thus, it is easily possible for the US government to find itself at the centre of dilemmas where substantial US-based military power is deployed in direct opposition to the country’s foreign policy goals.

Looking forward, it is satisfying that readers are given some suggestion for tightening up such loose regulatory regimes. Self-regulation, the industry’s favourite option, is considered and discarded, in favour of international standards which would preclude the jurisdiction-hopping now used by many PMFs who wish to avoid a particularly inconvenient regime of rules. At a smaller scale, Singer suggest that those trained as career soldiers need to be given wider exposure to the world of business if they are to efficiently oversee the activities of contractors who all too often dance very profitable circles around them. In particular, PMFs as businesses exhibit a distinct tendency to solve problems in such a way that their
further involvement and employment proves indispensable. In such a way, the doctrine – perhaps more a – of outsourcing can often end up costing the public purse more than alternative public-sector solution.

In sum, while this book deals impressively with the international-political ramifications of the booming private military industry, perhaps the lasting impression the reader is left with is that outsourcing such key functions all too often represents a lack of value for money while at the same time sidelining and permanently weakening core state institutions.

Olly Owen, Research Analyst (Africa)
Global Insight Ltd., London


Developed from the 2004 BBC Radio 4 Reith Lectures, Soyinka explores the dialecticism of the relationship between power and freedom and the consequential emotion of fear, which results from the use of that power and all of its aberrations. He examines the motivations behind horrific acts of violence and the role of human dignity; inviting comparison between the attitudes of world leaders and the fanaticism of terrorists – often drawing frightening parallels.

According to Soyinka, we are currently all living amidst a climate of fear. However, whereas this collective fear had a readily identifiable face in the past – totalitarian governments, the nuclear bomb and so on – nowadays, it is more complex.

During the Cold War, particularly in the Brezhnev era of the 1970’s, there was a constant and real fear of nuclear confrontation between the two superpowers. Today, this constituency of fear is much broader. Having slain the dragon of communist totalitarianism in the past, humanity is now confronted with the hydra-headed ‘quasi-state’ of the present. Soyinka argues that it is not just states and their governments that control and direct the lives of citizens. Indeed, there are extra-territorial forces which can alter the perception of control and direction. When the rule of law has collapsed, furtive, secretive forces establish themselves as ‘quasi-states’. This ‘quasi-state’ is one whose physical borders are not constrained by the sovereign state. It is unstructured and unpredictable; a refusal to be bound by the code of formalised states. It is this repudiation of the norm that instils the greatest fear.

Often these quasi-states have been given succour by states themselves. In proxy wars of the Cold War era, quasi-states constituted a virtually autonomous auxiliary of state policy, whether the US-sponsored Contras in Nicaragua or the Soviet Union-backed Frelimo in Mozambique. Sometimes, these organisations can return to bite the hand that once fed them. The Taliban, once a US-ancillary against the USSR in Afghanistan, provides the most instructive example of this in recent history.

However, Soyinka cautions that the quasi-states to which he refers are not to be confused with genuinely progressive social movements of dissent, whose actions similarly transcend traditional Westphalian boundaries. Such clarity of distinction is a welcome contribution amidst the emotive hysteria that characterises
much of the current political discourse ‘War on Terror’. Similarly welcome is the rational acknowledgment that some quasi-states, including terrorist groups, are perceived as genuine and – judging by their widespread support in certain areas of the globe – legitimate revolutionary movements by some populations. Soyinka presents us with the example of Algeria in the 1992 elections where the populace voted to replace the incumbent government with a radical Islamist movement. However, the Islamists were openly opposed to any continuation of the very democratic process that had swept it to government. Consequently, the military decided to intervene. They vetoed the election result, dismissing the Islamists as ‘terrorists’ who were unsuitable for government. This decision turned out to be costly, precipitating a virtual civil war in which 150,000 people perished. Meanwhile the West was only too happy in offering diplomatic, economic and military assistance to aid Algeria’s military rulers in their own ‘war on terror’.

In the late 1970s, Wole Soyinka delivered a series of lectures entitled *Climates of Art*. Soyinka’s aim was to highlight the fate of the arts – and artists – under a burgeoning trend of dictatorship and governance that was sustained through a forced diet of fear, especially on the African continent. Soyinka’s concern has proved eerily prescient not only for the artistic community in particular, but in reference to its logical corollary: mankind. Soyinka identifies its origin not with 9/11 in New York, but rather with a deliberate act of sabotage which brought down a UTA passenger flight killing all 171 passengers over the Republic of Niger in 1989. 9/11 was merely the culmination of it and other atrocities that had its genesis on the bloodstained sands of the Sahara.

The scope of Soyinka’s new study corresponds to the diffuse nature of our current climate of fear. Indeed, for Soyinka, fear does not have uniformly bad consequences. There can be bearable, or even ‘good’, consequences arising from fear. For example, on the one hand, fear can bring a community together to fight against a forest fire. On the other hand, other types of fear are downright degrading.

Soyinka defines this fear by way of historical comparison. He employs the example of the North Vietnamese who managed to defeat both France and the US respectively in quick succession without ever declaring the wider field of humanity, guilty and innocents alike, legitimate targets in their struggle against Western imperialism. United Nations and other humanitarian agencies appeared to enjoy the respect accorded neutrals in the conflict. Not a single incident of hijacking took place during those wars, and neither was there any incident of kidnapping of hostages nor the random detonation of bombs in places of religious worship or tourist attraction. For this reason, Soyinka concludes that the world was never living in a climate of fear during that period. Or, at least, not one that is comparable to the present. The implication is clear: today’s climate of fear is not circumscribed by either physical or moral limitations. In today’s conflicts, humanity itself has been declared wholly expendable in the quest for victory. It is a situation of utter precariousness. One where civilian contractors in Iraq are seen as legitimate bargaining chips in trying to repeal French law banning headscarves in schools, or where a bomb in an Indonesian nightclub is seen as having some broader resonance in a global struggle which pits ‘believers’ against ‘infidel’.

Soyinka excels on the subject of fundamentalism. He dryly alludes to a disturbing similarity between the ‘You’re-either-with-us-or-against-us’ rhetoric of President Bush and the Manichaeism of Osama Bin Laden. Indeed, we would
imperil ourselves if we failed to realise the twin strain of the same fanatic virus that threatens the world. Soyinka is not the first to make this observation – it is memorably explored in Tariq Ali’s *Clash of Fundamentalisms* – but Soyinka alone locates the crude dichotomisation of humanity within a wider arena of social relationships. It inherently negates any idea of tolerance whilst simultaneously reducing the place for dissent in social interaction.

Soyinka believes that it is high time to deal with this heightened reality. In doing so, he chooses to examine power – that universal quotient which has forever governed social and national relationships. The attribute of power has been extended beyond its traditional confines of the outstanding individual. Nowadays, it is accessible to even the most nondescript person, whose claim to power lies solely in his/her membership of an organisation tasked with facilitating the will of the Chosen. It is the pursuit of power for its own sake that is the most promiscuous instigator of fear. ‘Power’, asserts Soyinka, ‘takes away the freedom of others and replaces it with fear’. Thus, fear of this nature involves a twin loss of dignity and freedom of action.

At the root of the climate of fear is religion – the main source of the fanatic mind. Amongst the most interesting passages of Soyinka’s book are his sharply barbed arrows aimed at sections of the Islamic community. Criticism of Islam, although it nowadays constitutes a *modus operandi* for many right-wing commentators, has been largely avoided by the Left, who have argued that a few bad apples should not be allowed to defame the entire Muslim community. Nevertheless, casting political correctness aside Soyinka proposes some searching questions for adherents of that faith: ‘Just what is it that turns the mantra of a beatific chant of faith, such as *Allah Akbar*, into a summons to an orgy of death?’ This question voices the concerns of a number of liberals who have trouble reconciling what they see as two faces of Islam. On the one hand, we are presented with the incredible fraternal solidarity of the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca which all Muslims are obliged to undertake at least once in their lifetimes. And on the other, we are presented with the spectacle of young ‘martyrs’ who have pursued their role to its grotesque conclusion on the streets of Jerusalem. Naturally, every religion has its extremes. But extremist Islam is practised on a far wider and deeper scale than say, fundamentalist Christianity. How then has radical Islam harvested such support?

Soyinka only makes a passing reference to ‘poverty’ as a fundamental catalyst for radical Islam. However, it is within the material conditions in parts of the globe from which that trend of Islam grew. Mike Davis (see *New Left Review*, No. 24, March-April 2004) notes that, in the slums of Morocco, it is the Islamist movements that offer any salvation from a wretched existence. The Islamist movements often function as the real government of the slums: organising night schools, providing legal aid to victims of state abuse, buying medicine for the sick, subsidising pilgrimages and paying for funerals. For these slum dwellers, Islam has become synonymous with humanism. Indeed we can draw a historical parallel, where populist Islam today inhabits a social space that is broadly analogous to that occupied by twentieth-century socialism and anarchism. For its part, the Left has become ‘embourgeoisified’ – cut off from its natural constituency. The slum population has been seduced with the material and spiritual benefits radical Islam offers; in short, opportunities for a dignified existence.
Dignity – and communal dignity in particular – lies at the heart of our dilemma. Soyinka bears witness to the ritual humiliation of the Palestinian people under military occupation. Referring to the Israeli/Palestinian crisis, Soyinka seems to suggest that, when a dignified peace is impossible, violence becomes inevitable. He refers to a Yoruba proverb: *Iku ya j’esin lo* – ‘Sooner death than indignity’. Such is the symbolism of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, both for the Muslim world and the globe at large, that it forms the centrepiece of Soyinka’s remedy. The termination of the current climate of fear is fundamentally dependent upon the attainment of a just solution between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

Much as symbolism may deserve its own respect, Soyinka’s emphasis on an Israeli/Palestinian peace presents us with a half-baked solution at best. Soyinka avoids the philosophical conundrum he admits in his early pages: How can we regain dignity if so many ‘realize their existence either individually or collectively only through the domination of others?’ Soyinka waxes eloquently about the ‘growing republic of the dispossessed’ but fails to grapple fully with the roots of that dispossession. Some would argue that dignity is only attained through the comparative humiliation of others. Subordinated peoples provide a collective definition of ‘us’ as opposed to ‘them’. The late Edward Sa’id explored this relationship memorably in an Orientalist context. It begs the question: doesn’t each new massacre in Baghdad confirm that Orientalist chestnut of Muslim barbarity in throes with Western civilisation? This confrontation between East and West constitutes an integral part of the West’s preferred self-image, as it did during the Cold War and before then.

Soyinka has written a fine exposition on what constitutes the climate of fear. However, he does not go far enough at times with his own train of thought. He alights too early, shying away from more rigorous analysis of his subject matter. The Climate of Fear is not so much flawed as it is lacking. The book constitutes an important signpost on a longer journey to fully comprehending our present climate of fear. Humanity must start acting in concert to ensure ‘that the dispossessed shall enjoy restitution, and the humiliated are restored to dignity’. The Climate of Fear is a significant clarion call for a more holistic approach to world crises within the International Relations tradition.

G. Thompson, London

Common Law and Sharia in Nigeria: An Unresolved Problem of Coexistence

Since the re-introduction of civil rule in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed a severe religious crisis, which has resulted in violent conflicts between Christians and Moslems with massive loss of lives and property. Several commentators have argued that the conflicts stem from poor understanding among adherents of both religions of the tenets of the other religion. Thus, several initiatives, both at state and civil society levels such as the formation of the Inter-faith Consultative Forum and establishment of a religious body called ‘ChrisIslam’, have sought to make Nigerians understand what their neighbours believe in. This is the spirit behind
Belewa’s book, which, though written in 1989 as a result of the uproar in the 1989 Constituent Assembly over Sharia, was published at the height of the Sharia controversies in 2002. The reader would obviously be disappointed that there is no postscript or epilogue to address the current developments that make the book so topical.

The basic premise of the ten-chapter book is that law has always been influenced by religion in all human societies. This premise leads the author to pooh-poo the supposed secular character of common law by exposing its Christian origins and the active role of the predominantly Christian Roman and British empires in advancing it. The argument is made that successive governments in Nigeria, both colonial and post-colonial, have assiduously demonised and reduced the sphere of influence of Sharia Law. Like the Common Law, which the author argues is based on Christian religion, the sources of Sharia are traced to the teachings of the Prophet and other leading Islamic teachers and clerics. The conclusion from this is that it would amount to injustice to allow Christians to be ruled under Christian laws, while Moslems are denied the same rights.

The author also highlights some of the criticisms that have been levelled against Sharia and suggests that such misgivings are based on a misunderstanding of Islam. For example, he dismisses the fear that Sharia is an instrument of Islamisation by noting that Islam does not tolerate forceful conversion, being a religion of peace. He also argues that the fear that the law would apply to non-Moslems is unfounded because Islam does not allow for that. The panacea for stability in multi-religious Nigeria is ‘equality of the Nigerian legal systems, with each system (Sharia, Common and Customary Laws) being represented up to the highest level’ (p.87).

The book is a good documentary on the sources of Common Law and Sharia Law. Its basic position that human societies have always based their laws on ideas of good and evil that spring from religion is also incontrovertible. Still, the relation between religion and the state needs to be historicised. The author’s polemical approach sabotages his objective of putting the issues in the right perspective. Much space is used up in discussing the history of common law in Britain while the history of Sharia Law in Nigeria is selectively summarised in the appendix. It is hardly surprising that the author concludes that the Sharia issue is a legal structural problem even though most Nigerians, as the author acknowledges, believe it is political. There is also a major factual error in the assertion that the bone of contention is the objection of Christians to have the Sharia in the constitution. The fact is that Sharia has also been in successive Nigerian Constitutions. Disagreements have centred on what should be the jurisdiction of Sharia courts – whether they should go beyond the penal code to adjudicate in criminal matters.

The attempt of the author to enumerate instances where judgments by the Sharia courts were overturned by higher courts tells one side of the story as it fails to point to cases where judgments delivered by customary courts were quashed by higher courts. The reader also wonders if there are no instances where higher courts sustained the ruling of the Sharia courts. The author’s bias also comes out clearly when he applauds the decision to change the constitutional provision that allowed Christian judges to sit on the Sharia court, which he regards as an anomaly (p. 99). The reader will wonder why the author is comfortable with the idea of Moslem judges sitting on the Courts that he asserts are based on Christian law. His
insistence that fears of Christians are not genuine will hardly promote inter-religious understanding.

The peoples of North central Nigeria where resistance to Sharia has been strongest have advanced the historical precedents of the Fulani Jihads and British backed annexation of ‘acephalous’ societies into the emirate system. Unfortunately, the author does not discuss the Jihad, which is so central to the history of Islam in Nigeria. Moreover, historians have suggested that the relation between the British and the Emirates was complicated than Belewa would have us believe. It is evident that the author takes the Sharia discourse out of its political context. Opponents of Nigeria’s membership of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) did so in a context where there was poor representation of Christians in the military regime. This points to the fact that the Sharia imbroglio needs to be understood in its political and historical context. This is why the issue has always reared its head at moments of transition —where power is at stake. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the desire to extend the jurisdiction of Sharia has been more feverish since the election of a President who is a Christian. The author also misses the point when he asserts that those Nigerians who accept the Common Law have done so because it is a Christian law (p. 53). The idea of secularity is also trivialised as Belewa dismisses it because of the Hobbesian need to curb the egoistic excesses of man (p. 61-62). It becomes difficult to separate analysis from homily.

The work will clearly benefit from more editorial work. Apart from numerous ‘typos’, the chapters would need some restructuring. For instance, most of the materials in Chapter three naturally belong to the three-page chapter on the case against Sharia. The one-page chapter on Canon law should have been expanded or merged with that on Common law. The author should, however, be commended for the effort to promote justice, peace and stability in a troubled country. The book is a good reference material to all who need to understand the basic teachings of Islam and the sources of Sharia law.

Ukoha Ukiwo
Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE)
Oxford University, UK.


This is not a book about civil society. It is, in fact, a book about the run-down history of complex political emergencies in Sudan, which mirrors how Sudanese society has been fragmented and tormented by the civil war precipitated mainly by the military and political leaders for their own vested interests in the name of ethnicity, regionalism and religious belief. ‘When Peace Comes’ draws on the proceedings of the second Kampala conference on human rights, democracy and development in the transition in Sudan so the book evinces neither academic rigour nor a theoretical approach to the topic. It primarily deals with the different facets of socio-economic and cultural and political rights in Sudan in the light of civil war.
The essays in the volume argue that there is no hope of building a viable civil society in Sudan, especially in the foreseeable future, if the current political ambiguities and anomalies are not addressed. The book as a whole also recommends some policy options to the transitional government as how to confront post-war traumas in a country that has been embroiled in war for nearly thirty years. It also takes on the issues of internally and externally displaced persons (invisible citizens), land rights, land reform and natural resources – which have been instrumental in the outbreak of war, and the issue of widespread famine due to mistaken economic policies, all of which pose a great threat to the survival of any sort of peace agreement. It also attempts to change the public notion that famine is an act of god (p.153).

The authors in successive chapters enthuse on the importance and temporality of the civil society’s role in the multi-causal crisis and attempt to posit solutions as to what should be done when peace finally comes for it not to recur again. Paradoxically, however, they fail to establish a distinct link between the gravity of the problem that Sudan is facing and the role civil society could play. Some of the chapters are very basic and generalist in nature and do not offer much on the subject matter as set out in the introduction. They therefore fail to advance intellectual debate in terms of the magnitude of the Sudanese political crisis and the issues raised in the book. For example, the chapters on economic and social rights, the rights of children and Sudan’s economic plight merely give an overview of the current situation in Sudan. Chapter four discusses the different ways of tackling both urban and rural poverty through decentralisation and fair distribution of natural resources such as water and oil within Sudan; increasing food security, curtailing bureaucratic corruption; minimising the gender gap, and dismantling military-commercial linkages. It recognises market economy, a private sector and foreign investment as tools of boosting national economy in a globalised world. Although these are paramount issues to alleviate poverty and uplift Sudanese economy, it remains doubtful if any of these would ever be achieved unless democracy and peace are installed in the country. Therefore, contributors rightly emphasise on addressing poverty and extreme inequality a long term political project as well as economic project (p.62). What is also clear from these chapters is that they do recognise the sense of urgency in the society to address the issue of socio-economic inequality based on religious and ethnographic lines, which are inextricably bound up to the search for sustainable peace in post-conflict Sudan.

Chol Gidion Gakmar’s essay on disarmament and demobilisation is an eye opener as it rightly depicts how ex-combatants can restart conflict even after the peace agreement is signed by giving the example of Anya-nya demobilisation of 1972 and how it caused resentment among some Anya-nya members who refused to disarm, thus breaching the agreement of absorbing them into armies and civilian jobs by the government. He therefore emphasises the need for rightful reintegration of ex-combatants and militias specially NIF (National Islamic Front) and SPLA (Sudan People’s Liberation Army) in the society by including special rights and just policies for their permanent and secure integration into the civilian life. In his own words, one of the commonest causes of war in Africa in recent years has been mutiny or insurrection by soldiers who feel betrayed or frustrated by the deal they have in a post-war settlement (p.91).

Moreover, the chapter on women’s movement concedes to the role of women as natural peacemakers in society and explains the eagerness of Sudanese women
to stop war. The classic example in this regard is how Sudanese women collectively withheld sex from their menfolk to try to compel them to stop war (p.192) nevertheless; the existence of extreme Islamic laws prevents them from playing any significant role in the society. The authors elucidate the tribulations women are going through in Sudan such as female circumcision, discrimination in every respect and treatment of women as an object but fail to come out with any clear policies in the post-war Sudan for the transitional government. The question of self-determination and related issues of devolution of power, cultural and community rights and race relations is another complex and controversial issue that has rocked Sudanese society over the years. This is covered under the chapter on nationalism, federalism and self-determination. The authors elaborate on the different thoughts of school with regard to the issue of self-determination in Sudan but offer no future policy guidelines.

When Peace Comes also debates the issue of Islam and politics – arguably the most divisive issue in contemporary Sudan. Authors debate two key points. The first is whether or not religious belief and experience is an intrinsic part of human life and whether the separation of religion from the politics can be achieved only by force. A second point is whether Islam or any religion can be the basis of politics or the state and whether religion should be confined to the private sphere and public life governed by a secular ethos. Overall, the book addresses socio-economic and political problems that Sudan is grappling with and considers some policy implications for a transitional government.

Chandra D. Bhatta, PhD Student
Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science


The increasing concern over the coming scarcity of natural resources as a result of depletion and the build up of toxicity in the environment has found expression in the debate on environment and development. The result has been a voluminous literature anchored in different ideological lines, outlining various frames of reference and sets of solutions. The edited volume under review is an addition to the said literature, but unique in the sense that it is probably the first that is solely devoted to Africa using a political ecology approach more broadly. Contributors demonstrate that environmental conservation problems in Africa are linked to unstable livelihood systems, which are rooted in power dynamics connected intimately to national, regional and global political economies. To articulate this thesis that is well presented in the introductory chapter, the editors have organised the volume into three sections on global environmental discourses; livelihood security and poverty alleviation; and contemporary environmental management.

The first section of the book has three chapters. In Chapter two, B. Ikubolajeh Logan focuses on the ideology of sustainable development to question the logic of global conservation meta-narratives with regard to environmental policy and livelihood outcomes in Africa. He argues that sustainable development is couched in a neo-liberal agenda of extending Western hegemony and, therefore,
integral to the globalisation of environmental policy rather than conservation and poverty alleviation in Africa. He suggests that poverty alleviation can be better approached through environmental security that seeks to minimise conflicts over resources.

In Chapter three, William G. Moseley interrogates the development, influence and voracity of the poverty induced environmental degradation thesis. He demonstrates that whereas the state and foreign donors have often used mainstream environmental discourse to attribute regional environmental degradation to the practices of poor, local-scale, peasant cotton producers in Mali, it is indeed the rich local farmers who are likely to engage in environmentally deleterious practices to the same extent or more so than their poor counterparts. He argues that the alliance between the local rich, the state and international capital is particularly responsible for introducing new technologies that are unfriendly to the local environment and, therefore, pernicious to the livelihoods of the local poor.

Paul Laris argues in Chapter four that environmental narratives may have little ground level impact if those implementing the policy have limited operational support. He argues that the Malian Forestry Service had long sought to implement an anti-burning policy, but was largely ineffective until the 1980s when it received increased support from international donors in response to the Sahelian drought. He, therefore, submits that the perpetuation of grand environmental narratives in policy has to do more with maintaining the hegemony of global capital than African environmental conservation.

Thus, contributors in this section are of the view that global environmental narrative has been responsible for legitimising certain policies and practices that undermine local wisdom and livelihood systems and, therefore, injure the African environment.

Emmanuel Krieke, in Chapter five, opens debate on the second section's broad goal of exploring the impacts of state and supra-state policies and actions on local environments and livelihoods. Linking apartheid wars in Southern Africa to local environmental problems, he demonstrates clearly how state power was used to destroy the livelihood of local communities. He shows that the ‘hearts and mind campaign’ in which the South African forces provided social welfare services for local communities had a negative effect of creating dependency. The latter was worsened by the creation of ‘Killing zones’ or buffer zones from which local communities were barred. Then, the terrorism of local communities to prevent them from rendering assistance to liberation forces only served to aggravate pressure on scarce resources and, therefore, exacerbated environmental degradation.

Jim Bingen in Chapter six explores the power of international chemical companies on local livelihoods among cotton producers in West and Central Africa. He argues that the ‘pesticide treadmill’ problem is due to the fact that decision-making power has been taken away from the local level by the state and international companies, both of which encourage (if not require) farmers to overuse pesticides, leading to pesticide resistance among cotton pests and the poisoning of wildlife. The end result has been the destruction of the livelihoods of local farmers.

In Chapter seven, Stephen R. Wooten uses livelihood diversification discourse to study horticultural production by a rural Banaman community in Mali. In response to the demands of urban consumers in Bamako, a group of farmers
employ the plant technique of grafting to successfully modify its livelihood options by adding specialised horticultural production to its traditional agricultural activities. Thus, the exercise of power by local people to exploit regional political economy is responsible for economic success in this case, but it would have been useful to also show the impact on the environment.

Mirjam de Bruijn and Han van Dijk examine the influence of power on livelihoods at the very local level among the Fulbe of central Mali in Chapter eight. They argue that local power determines the distribution of land, which has led to the rise of ecological risks that have marginalised Fulbe pastoralists. They conclude that local power has become a very important factor in determining access to and control of resources, especially under the current policy of decentralisation in Mali.

In Chapter nine of section three, Jennifer E. Coffman examines wildlife conservation and livelihood enhancement in Kenya. She argues that community-based wildlife management (CBWM) has not succeeded in overcoming poverty because the programmes are based on a grand narrative that constructs nature, the environment and natural resources in ways that do not conform to local interpretations of these phenomena. This has contributed to increased contestation over these concepts by various stakeholders, including foreign scholars, foreign donors and NGOs, the state, local entrepreneurs and local communities at the expense of conservation.

In Chapter ten, Rachel DeMotts contrasts community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in Namibia and South Africa. Whereas Namibia is shown to have involved the local community in the programme at the early stages, South Africa implemented a regional policy that explicitly excluded local aspirations. Although both countries now pursue trans-frontier conservation initiatives, they continue to differ significantly in the degree to which they involve local communities in programme planning and implementation. The Namibia case is portrayed as a model for the inclusion of local communities in conservation initiatives and a lens through which to examine ways to integrate conservation in local contexts.

Chapter eleven explores that environmental impact of oil politics in Nigeria's Ogoniland. Phia Steyn's central argument is that the Ogoni struggle played a Key role in bringing about radical changes in the way in which Shell International viewed the environment and the rights of ethnic minority groups in oil producing regions, which in turn has led to improved environmental management practices within this multinational oil company in the late 1990s. She submits that local communities are not entirely powerless in the face of global environmental concerns, for they have the ability to engage and employ related discourses in their favour.

In the last chapter of the book, William G. Moseley reviews conclusions related to the main themes of the book. He concludes that local people in Africa must play a Key role in securing their livelihoods and meeting resource challenges to enhance environmental conservation. However, it is unfortunate that local input often is disjointed and inadequate. The poor, disenfranchised people tend to succumb to environmental discourses that are biased against them. Though the authors suggest the use of alternative discourses such as Environmental Security to promote empowerment at the local level and challenge broader Western narratives, it is uncertain whether the increasing power of global neo-liberal discourses will
give local people a seat at the negotiating table, especially at the national, regional and international levels.

Overall, this is an invaluable book that convincingly articulates a sophisticated theoretical framework to lay bare African concerns in the debate on environment and development. Those concerned with environmental policy and development in Africa must read it to enhance their understanding of the intricacies embedded in the nexus of the debate.

Dr. Fredrick O. Wanyama, Senior Lecturer in Political Science
Maseno University, Kenya
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