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On the 5th of August our dear friend Babu died in a London hospital. In the following pages old friends and new pay tribute to a man who was, and is, an inspiration to us all. Our love goes out to Amrit and Babu’s family for the terrible loss they must be feeling at this time. And in the ‘spirit of Babu’ following a ‘celebration of his life’ in London on 22 September, we must take heed of Babu’s clenched fist farewell, as Taju so poignantly recalls in his tribute – a luta continua, it must continue.

Jan Burgess
Abdul Rahman Mohamed Babu

Lionel Cliffe

Babu will be especially missed by everyone associated with this Review. He had been a Contributing Editor since his exile from Tanzania, a regular at our conferences when we had them and at other events. But we were just one of the publishing ventures he was involved with in the last years when he was based in UK. Those of us who were lucky enough to enjoy Babu’s company – and one always did – also feel a great personal loss. But beyond the grief, his was a life that should be celebrated.

Everyone agrees he was a person with an exuberant zest for life, which was infectious. In part this came out in those stories that everyone recalls as an essential ingredient of being with him. Perhaps his own stories can be used to bring out why this was a man that deserves to go down in the collective memory of all those concerned with the continuing task of liberation in Africa. He was first a figure of some significance in Africa’s recent history: a leader in the nationalist struggle in Zanzibar and then in its Revolution, a minister in Tanzania. Then in the late 1970s and 1980s he became an important influence as an elder statesman of Africa, building on his experience at the highest levels of politics to influence struggles elsewhere on the continent and the pan-African discourse in the west. What also should go down in the record is that unlike so many politicians of his generation he had remained free of corruption, personal accumulation and self-aggrandisement and retained a commitment to the values of democracy, equality and socialism. That commitment gave him credibility in taking strong positions on human rights and the push for indigenous democracy throughout the continent in recent years.

His story telling was legendary, and would typically consist of a mixture of made-up jokes, of accounts of actual events, told to bring out the humour even in the gravest matters, but also of crucial moments in history he had seen from the inside. But he was more than just an absorbing raconteur. He used the stories as a weapon. Even the jokes were political - often pouring ridicule on the arrogant heads of leaders to bring them down to size. One that illustrates that democratic commitment was about Mengistu – but could be modified to be about any dictator:

A peasant saved Mengistu from drowning when his vehicle was swept away by a flash flood, but was most reluctant to take advantage of Mengistu’s offers of gifts to show his gratitude – until finally agreeing there was one boon that would be invaluable: would the great man keep it quiet about who had saved him.

He had in fact been present at so many key moments in Africa’s history of the last fifty years. One reminder of his early involvement in pan-African initiatives was the account he gave of how a group of leaders of the various movements that formed the old Pan-African Freedom Movement for East and Central Africa (PAFMECA) had had an enforced stopover in what was then Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) en route to the First All-African People’s Conference in newly-independent Ghana in 1959, and how they pooled their spending money to pay a fare for one of the young men they happened to meet at a tiny clandestine meeting they were taken to by the waiters in their hotel. The young man, who would not otherwise have known that there was such a meeting, was called Patrice Lumumba.

Another example of the insider’s account of events he had witnessed was his recollection, recounted with enormous significance in liberated Eritrea in the 1980s, of Emperor Haile Selassie sending a special instruction to a drafting committee Babu
was on — presumably as Foreign Minister of the revolutionary government of Zanzibar — for the drawing up of the Charter of the OAU. It was in fact the ‘Emperor’ who used the backstairs to press for a clause recognising the inviability of the boundaries inherited from colonial rule as they were then in force, an argument that was thereafter used to prevent any African debate about Eritrea. Babu’s was in fact one of very few African voices that was raised to support Eritrea’s bid for self-determination — an important example of his later elder statesman of Africa role. He thought nothing of the arduous journey overland to the ‘field’, the liberated area of Eritrea in the mid- and late-1980s, and held forth at meetings and conferences about what he had seen at first hand. His first words on the phone after returning from his first visit were: ‘I have seen the future of Africa — and it works’. Those comments are only now being taken seriously by people in Africa.

His own account of the crucial events of the Zanzibar Revolution and in the backstairs politicking to create the union with Tanganyika have appeared in his Introduction and in the text of Amrit Wilson’s book *US Foreign Policy and Revolution: the Creation of Tanzania*. His treatment at the hands of Nyerere during the detention ‘for his protection’ after Karume’s assassination has only been hinted at; his stories, like the one Paul Puritt tells, make light of his treatment but show his sympathy with the many others detained — throughout Africa, one of the great causes to which he devoted his later years.

One critical episode which illustrates well his Cabinet role in Tanzania — as ideological reference point rather than policy maker and administrator — is also still somewhat obscure. That was the proclamation of the party ‘Guidelines’ by TANU made in 1971. These included — which presaged much later pressures in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa — to make the leadership accountable. At that time there was still some lingering commitment of the values of ‘socialism and self-reliance’ espoused if in an idealistic way in the 1967 Arusha Declaration, but gaps between the stated goals and the bureaucratic practice were very evident. This document with its own echoes of a ‘cultural revolution’ was the only important policy statement not drafted by Nyerere, but, so the stories suggest, by a couple of the more radical members of the central committee, Babu and Ngombali Mweru.

In that period and in his later writing he also articulated a strong concern for national development in Africa, for a modern economic drive that was not dictated from outside, for the development of complementarity between African economies in place of the competition between underdeveloped mono-cultures. His ideas and practice in office did not go far beyond an old-fashioned commitment to heavy industry — surprisingly oblivious to the balanced growth pursued by China whose anti-stalinism he broadly supported in the debates of the 1960s. But that commitment to an alternative economy did allow him to relate to contemporary debates about structural adjustment.

His role as elder statesman and ideological lodestone to younger activists first emerged in Dar es Salaam, while he was still a Minister. Thus it is typical that he penned a long introduction to one of the most significant collections in the so-called Dar es Salaam campus debates, the book on ‘Imperialism’. In that he also gently takes the young ideologues to task for what was ‘a too vigorous debate’ and for their addressing the global issues but not the realities of local power — advice that might have dampened some of the internecine divisions in the left in East Africa which in turn made the antagonists blind to their own marginalisation.
His own style of discourse was so different. Never one to hide from debate behind the trappings of position he would willing argue his case with anyone, using humour rather than any put-down. I recall the occasions when young US volunteers would have the nature of imperialism earnestly but gleefully explained to them - while he insisted on treating them to drinks at his table. Or entering into the same discussion between equals with a man in the street at a club in Dar es Salaam, or in the 'field' in liberated Eritrea. And as I get older, I will carry with me the image of the man, then in his mid-60s and just out of hospital, sailing onto the dance floor at a crowded London jazz club and greeting the Afro-Cuban band with great shouts of patria ou muerte, and then changing from a Latin to an African anti-imperialist slogan: a luta continua. It is now up to us to see that it does.

A. M. Babu: The 'Outline'

For some time Abdul Rahman Babu had been thinking about writing his memoirs, a project which several friends had been urging him to undertake. Few 'elder statesmen' of Africa could look back at a political and intellectual life as rich and varied as Babu's. From the early 1960s until his death he has been a first-hand witness of and participant in numerous key events and developments on the continent, and had consistently voiced constructive alternative positions. A full retrospective on his political career and experience, including his own commentary and reinterpretation of past events, would have represented a valuable document for all those interested in these four formative decades of modern African history.

To facilitate this project, the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague invited him as a distinguished African Research Fellow to spend a year in The Hague funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Institute was in the last stage of finalising this project when Babu died. For this project Babu had written the following provisional synopsis outlining the way he intended to write up his political life history. It offers us a brief but tantalizing glimpse of what his political autobiography would have contained.

Martin Doornbos

A. M. Babu - Memoirs

The Epoch of Rebellion

My generation's political consciousness evolved out of the injustices of, and the intense struggle against, colonialism. This will be the first major theme of my memoir.

I lost my father when I was one and my mother when I was two. I was raised by my great-aunt who influenced my world outlook from childhood to adolescence. My mother was from Arab stock whose grandparents hailed from South Yemen, although her grandmother was an Oromo from Ethiopia. My father was a mixture of Arab and African ancestors comprising Swahili, Comoro Islands in the south, and northward up to Pate on the Kenya coast. My mother cam from a fairly well-to-do trading family in Zanzibar, while my father was a descendant of a family of Islamic scholars, tracing ancestry on his father's side to the renowned scholar, Sheikh Abubakar bin Salim in Hadhramout, South Yemen.

My great-aunt was not rich, but moderately well off, and I was raised in relative comfort. I started my school life with the Koranic school from the age of five, and
entered Primary School at the age of seven in 1931. I spent almost ten years in school to complete what can now be termed eighth grade. Although school bored me a lot, I made some of my best friends there. As a result of my boredom I was never a good scholar in those early days. I began to study seriously only when I left school in 1942. I had private tutors in English and mathematics which I enjoyed immensely. My English teacher was Archdeacon Clarabutt of Zanzibar's Universal Mission of Central Africa (UMCA). He acceded to my request to teach me and a cousin of mine (Syd. Omar Zahran) once a week. My mathematical teacher was Dr Abdul Rasul Peermohamed, a Zanzibari who later became a top ear, nose and throat specialist at the Manchester Hospital in England. I was also a voracious reader of English and Arabic literature. I also dabbled in philosophy and psychology, both of which I found exciting. This early background (I started at 17) made it easy for me to understand more complex political philosophies later in life.

In Britain and New Influences
When I was twenty I started earning my living as a ‘weighing clerk’ at the Clove Growers Association, a parastatal designed to advance the interests of the clove producers in the world market. In six years I became an assistant to the accountant, but my ambition was to save enough to go to England for further studies – in accountancy! In 1951 I travelled to Britain. Experiences in the UK led to my exposure to a variety of political philosophies, specifically anarchism, marxism and socialism. I became increasingly involved in the politics of pan-Africanism which was the dominant creed among African students in Europe. This led me to become secretary for the East and Central Africa Committee of the UK’s Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF), under the Labour party’s veteran left-winger, Fenner Brockway. Through the MCF I worked with Douglas Rogers who later became editor of the influential Africa World Review in Nkrumah’s Ghana; Joseph Murumbi of Kenya, Peter Abraham, the South African writer, Dr Hastings Banda, then my GP in London and later President of Malawi, George Padmore, Mbiu Koinange (external representative of Mau), Doris Lessing, the writer, then fresh from Southern Rhodesia, and many others whose contribution to the African struggle I will discuss. A Sierra Leonean, a Nigerian and myself launched probably one of the earliest pan-African monthlies, the African Outlook, in London in 1954 with the help of Canon Collins’ ‘Christian Fund’. I was also one of the editors of the Paris-based revolutionary magazine, the Afro-Asian Latin American Revolution, together with the lawyer Jaques Verges (currently defending ‘Carlos the Jackal’ in the Paris courts), Samir Amin and Frene Ginwala.

The Mass Party and the African Struggle
The most significant political influence on my generation was Nkrumah's victory in Ghana. Coming as it did after the Chinese revolution, the Viet Minh victory against the French at Dien Bien Phu (1954) and the Algerian revolution, Nkrumah’s victory reinvigorated Africa's liberation struggle, ushered in what came to be known as the ‘wind of change’ blowing across Africa. His organisational strategy that led to Ghana's victory introduced us in a concrete way to the importance and effectiveness of the ‘mass political party’ against colonialism. This is slightly different from the leninist concept of the ‘Vanguard Party’ as the spearhead of the revolution; or the Gramscian ‘Prince’. The mass party was ideally suited to Africa's anti-colonial struggle in which the primary concern was not social revolution, which required ideological purity, but simply emancipation from colonialism, which entailed mass protests and widespread agitation broad enough to make the colonial regime impossible to function effectively. Nkrumah developed the theory and practice of the
mass party to suit all anti-colonial work, and under different circumstances of Africa's struggles for independence. This will be discussed in some detail. The point here is to note that the mass party became the most effective weapon in the struggle against colonialism in Africa.

Organising the First Mass Party in Zanzibar

In 1957 I went back to Zanzibar to become Secretary General of the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP). The party had earlier arranged for me to train in party organisation at the British Labour Party office in London (Ali Muhsin's initiative with Pat Williams, then Labour MP). Until the advent of the ZNP there were no political parties, only 'associations' organised along racial groups. Thus, you had Arab Association, African Association, Indian Association and so on. Even within the 'Association', there were sub-groups: Arab (Omani/Hadhramaout/Yemen); African (mainland'/Shirazis); Asians (Indian/Muslim). With the formation of the ZNP the colonialists understood its political significance and its threat to their rule. They thus, typically, went out of their way to promote the formation of an 'African party' to oppose the ZNP which they described as an 'Arab' party in order to defuse the party's call for a 'non-racial' struggle for independence. The unfortunate consequences of this 'divide and rule' strategem will be analysed and discussed in full.

I became wholly involved in Zanzibar politics, organising the first political party in the country from scratch. I supplemented the party with the formation of the 'Youths Own Union' (YOU). With the energy of the youths we managed to establish a very strong political movement involving all sections and classes of the Zanzibaris. The British reaction to this development will be discussed, together with an analysis of the emerging political which, again for the first time, included the distinction between 'race and class'. The effectiveness and efficiency of its organisation helped to pull the party from the defeat of 1957 to the victory of 1961.

Forming Pan-African Alliances

The intensity of the liberation struggle in Zanzibar led to involvement in the political struggles of East and Central Africa, taking an active part in the creation of the Pan-African Movement for East and Central Africa (PAFMECA). This was followed by involvement in a wider pan-African movement, significantly with the first All African People's Conference (AAPC) in Accra, Ghana in 1958. The excitement of the epoch was intensified when, on our way to Ghana, we 'discovered' Patrice Lumumba in the Congo (Zaire). Meeting Nkrumah for the first time was a most exhilarating experience. This opened the way to meet Sekou Toure, the African hero at the time, fresh from voting 'no' to French arrogance and domination of West Africa. Franz Fanon was at his best and succeeded in changing the theme of the APPC Conference from 'non-violent' liberation struggle to struggle 'by any means'. Dr Moumie of UPC, Cameroon, ably chaired the political committee of the AAPC which devised an Africa-wide strategy for liberation and unity among liberation movements and planted the seeds for the fruition of the future Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

Looking back after three decades of independence and the humiliations of poverty and starvation to which Africa has been subjected, I'll discuss whether the ideals of pan-Africanism in themselves were enough to move the continent from its state of abject poverty. Has the OAU justified its existence? Is it still a vehicle for change as it was intended by its radical 'founding fathers' or has it been turned into a servant for the status quo? As soon as military coups and counter-coups became the political


order in the 1960s, all aspirations for a bright future became a painful joke. Corruption set in, effecting all strata of communities, from politicians to market vendors. Politicians became business entrepreneurs and business people turned into politics as the quickest passage to wealth and power. All this at the expense of the people who saw their living standards going from bad to worse. There will be a thorough analysis of the positive and negative aspects of pan-Africanism, and possible prospects for the future will be discussed. Is pan-Africanism relevant this epoch of 'global politics'?

What are the advantages, etc.

Meetings with Chairman Mao, Chou en Lai and other Chinese Revolutionaries

In the 1950s it was almost obligatory for young radicals to read as much as possible about the Chinese revolution and its success in 1949. This revolution had inspired many African and Asian youths who saw in it a promising way to alleviating the mass poverty in their respective continents. The Chinese revolution became more attractive the more the colonialists intensified their negative propaganda against it. The rationale was: if it was bad for the oppressors, it had to be good for the oppressed! I conscientiously studied all writings from China until I became a bit of an expert on the Chinese revolution. I studied the political philosophies that had inspired their revolution; the creative combination of Taoist dialectics with the marxian materialist-dialectics; the struggles within the Sin/Soviet alliance and their underlying causes; the ideological struggles within the Chinese Communist Party between the 'right' and 'left'; China's potential leadership role in 'third world' struggles; China's impressive diplomatic skill in persuading African and Asian leaders to successfully convene the 'Bandung Conference' of 1955 in Indonesia, the first of its kind which brought together the two continents as a bloc against the superpowers' global military bases; China as a development model in contrast to the western model. China, in short, was a symbol of a poor, humiliated country emerging, through their own effort and against all odds, into a contender for world leadership. It evoked all the emotions of joy and hope for the oppressed who were still struggling under very difficult circumstances. This enormous Chinese influence on young radicals will be discussed in all its dimensions.

Thus it is impossible to imagine the thrill with which I accepted the official invitation in late 1959 to visit China. First, because it was a great honour for me to receive such an invitation and, second, it was a great opportunity for me to see this great country and to meet its revered leaders; and third, it was an opportunity to deepen my knowledge of the Chinese revolution, especially its theoretical and practical foundations. The meetings with the Chinese leadership and the late night discussions with them on all questions of anti-imperialist struggle were most inspiring and helped to mould my world outlook. I was probably the first anti-colonial fighter from East and Central Africa to have been accorded this opportunity at the time. When we achieved our independence, this contact matured into a warm relation between China and Zanzibar when I became the Foreign Minister of Zanzibar, and later as Tanzania's Minister of Trade. The Chinese leaders freely discussed with me their views about the US, the Vietnam war, Japan's militarists' possible threat for world peace, about the motivation of China's foreign policy. Among the leaders I met included, of course, Chairman Mao, Chou en Lai, Marshal Chen Yi, Chu Teh, Deng Tsiao-Ping, and others. These were people of very strong character, well known for their resilience, perserverance and self-discipline who had liberated a quarter of the human race from repression and warlordism. I had an unbounded respect and admiration for these people and I wanted tot know more about their respective characters and what made them what they were. Coming as they did from different social and class
backgrounds, it was most intriguing to find out what united them in their most historic venture of not only liberating this vast country and its mass of humanity, but also of their resolute determination to reconstruct it in the midst of the vicious western hostility and economic sanctions. I therefore unhesitatingly took up their offer to make me the East and Central Africa correspondent of the China News Agency, Hsinhua. It was the least I could contribute to this most promising revolutionary enterprise. This job was also an opportunity for me to gain a deeper insight into Chinese politics, its leadership and, later, a clearer understanding of the underlying causes and significance of the Chinese 'cultural revolution'. I remained their correspondent until independence. I found the Chinese view of Africa quite interesting, which I'll discuss at some length. By my association with some senior policy-makers and their academies, gave me an opportunity to contribute to their understanding of our continent and its complex politics. This will include a discussion on the political motivation which moved the Chinese leadership to embark on the construction of their biggest overseas aid project, the historic Tanzania/Zambia Railway (TAZARA).

First Imprisonment by the British

The British colonialists in Zanzibar and East Africa were frightened by my involvement with China and the likely spread of the 'Chinese influence' in the region. This was echoed by what I considered as politically backward African leaders in the region, especially people like Tom Mboya, the Kenya trade unionist. In order to remove me temporarily from the political scene in 1962, the colonialists in Zanzibar concocted a plot which led to my detention and subsequently imprisonment for 'sedition' for almost two years (including pre-trial detention). It was my first prison experience. To be denied your personal freedom, restricted, confined, watched, humiliated - all this was a bitter and frustrating experience. However, compared to what I experienced ten years later in the Tanzanian prison, the Zanzibar one was like an impromptu picnic. The latter was a classic demonstration of the viciousness and damage that African leaders can afflict on erstwhile colleagues when circumstances change (see below for the Tanzanian detention). I'll discuss both experiences in detail.

The Creation of Tanzania

In December 1961 Tanganyika gained her independence under the leadership of Julius Nyerere. This had an electrifying effect throughout East and Central Africa. In December 1963 Zanzibar too gained its independence under ZNP/ZPPP leadership, and on 12 January 1964 there was the Zanzibar Revolution which led to my being appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the new People's Republic of Zanzibar. On 20 January there was a widespread mutiny in the Tanganyika army which almost overthrew Nyerere. The latter, while in hiding, asked for a British Army intervention which restored power. On 26 April 1964, the union of Zanzibar and Tanganyika was hurriedly and secretly formed between President Karume of Zanzibar and President Nyerere of Tanganyika which created Tanzania. I served in the Tanzania cabinet for eight years heading various ministries.

This period was the epic superpower confrontation, dominated by the fear of nuclear war. It was also the period of the 'zero-sum game', i.e. a gain for the Soviets meant a loss to the US and vice-versa. A country like Zanzibar was quite strategic in superpower manoeuvres because of its historic role in influencing events in the region. Both superpowers were struggling between themselves to establish their influence at the expense of the other. Consequently, as the Foreign Minister of
Zanzibar, I became a target of superpower intrigues of all kinds, up to and including attractive offers of bribery and other forms of corruptive temptations. Having resisted both the CIA and KGB respective enticements, I was targeted for a political, if not physical, destruction. Both superpower secret agencies worked behind my back, with the support of some of my corruptible colleagues, in their effort to frustrate the foreign policy objectives which the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar stood for and which were designed to accomplish Zanzibar's development strategy. I'll elaborate the ingenious trilateral trade arrangement which was about to be entered into between Zanzibar, Indonesia (a major importer of our cloves) and Germany (GDR) which could have led to a Hong Kong-like industrial/commercial development, and how it was sabotaged by one of the superpowers.

I'll also discuss how pushing Zanzibar into Tanzania meant poverty for the people and almost permanent stagnation. The misrule and atrocities of President Karume of Zanzibar under the protection of President Nyerere of Tanzania will be elaborated, supported with irrefutable evidence: the number of murders inflicted by the state, the names of the victims and the circumstances and the gory manner in which they were killed. I'll outline the vision we had of a prosperous future Zanzibar, and its potential for creating an area of economic prosperity in the entire region. I will discuss the opportunities that were lost because of narrow political motivations and utter lack of vision.

This strategy of frustrating our economic strategy for development continued even after being moved to the mainland as Minister of Planning following the creation of Tanzania. Although the manoeuvre to create Tanzania was intended to undermine what was considered as 'communist encroachment' in the region and to frustrate and weaken the radicals from Zanzibar, I refused to indulge in self-pity and instead, continued to put forward strategies which I believed would be of great benefit for Tanzania. Policy making in Tanzania, I found out to my utter amazement, was left entirely to the expatriates, and Tanzanians only obeyed what was laid out for them. Although I was officially Minister of State for Planning, I was put in a position where I could neither plan nor fulfil any of my ministerial functions. It was a deliberate move. I'll discuss this period as well, showing how Tanzania was put in a defensive position politically and strategically whose damaging effects continue to undermine any development effort to this day; This was the underlying cause of Tanzanian current poverty in the midst of vast and almost unlimited nature resources.

President Nyerere's declaration of 'socialism and self-reliance' arising out his own frustration with the system he was presiding over, were unworkable precisely because of the defensive position the country was put in. Apart from this strategic weakness by pushing for an alternative strategic outlook in the first place before any serious development plan could be launched. I discussed this point with many colleagues, most of whom were equally frustrated, but helpless to do anything about it. Every proposal I put forward, especially when I was made Minister of Trade, was frowned at and obstructed by politicians as well as civil servants. Expatriates dominated the system of government, starting from State House, via the Treasury, down to all departments of government. What they did not approve of they made sure would not be implemented. I'll discuss the alternative strategy I had in mind in some detail.

Nyerere's Arusha Declaration was taken seriously by the underprivileged who saw it as a radical break with foreign domination. Although it had many theoretical and even practical weaknesses, most of us tried our best to make it work. It turned out,
however, that our vision and Nyerere's vision on what the Declaration was about were divergent. He looked at it as a simple village effort for self-sufficiency, permanently reproducing itself on the same structure of production cycles, increasing the quantity of the cash crops which would bring in more money and gradually raise the standard of living of the villagers. In other words, his vision was improvement via quantity, not via qualitative change. I shared a different perspective, a perspective of improvement through structural change, of replacing the colonial economy by a national economy. Taken in the latter sense, the Declaration would have aimed at creating the material conditions for the rapid development of the productive forces, putting Tanzanians in charge of their own destiny, materially, socially, culturally and politically. ‘Self-reliance’ to me meant reliance on our own effort to provide, first of all, the basic needs of our society, and second, to make the economy less dependent on the ‘world market’ from a position of weakness in which we were then and still are. This aspect will be discussed extensively in the hope of giving some guidance to future activists engaged in the reconstruction of their country, not only in Tanzania, but elsewhere as well.

As Minister I visited the US for the first time, leading the Tanzania delegation to the UN during the 1964 Session. This put me in contact with many third world radical leaders like Che Guevara and others. It also gave me the opportunity to take part in and address Malcolm X's mass rallies in Harlem, New York. I had known Malcolm earlier in Africa and we became close friends. Five weeks before his assassination we had a crucial all night meeting at my hotel in New York attended by Amiri Baraka (then Le-Roy Jones), Shabaz (Malcolm’s aide), and two leaders of the Black student movement. The memoirs will discuss the burning question of the time, the question of race and class and, of the two, which was primary and which secondary. This discussion was essential at that critical moment when Malcolm was changing from a pure Black/Muslim nationalist to a fighter for the oppressed globally, irrespective of race. This was one of Malcolm's last meetings which I value enormously. Five weeks later when I was in Shanghai with President Nyerere on a state visit, I heard the announcement of Malcolm's assassination. It was the end of an exiting epoch in the Afro-American struggle for justice and equality. I'll discuss my experience with Black radicals of the time and their influence on the world view.

Dismissing and Detention: A Political Betrayal

Historians will probably locate the beginning of the regime's leadership disintegration at the February 1972 unprecedented Cabinet reshuffle which threw out some of the most experienced ministers, including myself (altogether, a total of about one hundred years of combined cabinet experience – a serious manpower loss to the country). In our place were appointed some very junior and inexperienced 'technocrats' whose only qualification for such senior appointments was their total and uncritical loyalty to President Nyerere personally. They were all 'yes-men', described by Nyerere as the 'believers', as in religion (waumini in Kiswahili).

This new cabinet was the beginning of Tanzania's decline. Nyerere was getting impatient with the slow movement of the people of the new Ujamaa villages, the core social and economic bases of his socialist policy. Without the restraints of the senior erstwhile colleagues, he immediately abandoned the previous principle of voluntary moves and embarked on a policy of forcefully evicting reluctant peasants from their old villages and moving them to new barren areas to establish new life in new villages. The evicted peasants were moved in military and prison trucks. In only a matter of months, the country experienced a serious shortage of food because the old
villages no longer produced and the new ones were not yet ready to produce – in part from the passive resistance by peasants who refused to cultivate in the new areas because of their resentment of the undignified manner in which they were moved. The country was then forced to spend millions of borrowed dollars to import food. This was aggravated by the effects of the nationalisation of wholesale trade which resulted in serious shortages in the shops of basic consumer needs, especially in the rural areas. The saga of trade nationalisation, which I had resisted as Minister of Trade, will be discussed at length, which I believe, contributed to the rapid decline of Tanzania's economy beginning in the early 1970s.

My dismissal from the cabinet was rather strange because I was out of the country, leading a Tanzanian delegation to the OAU Council of Ministers' meeting. It was embarrassing and humiliating, and the suspicion was that it was done deliberately to inflict the humiliation. Attendance to such meetings was usually done by the Foreign Minister (John Malecella, at that time), and it was strange that I, as Minister of Planning, should have been asked to deputise him, although from time to time I would do so if the Minister was out of the country or indisposed. In this particular instant, he was in the country and in robust health. What followed a few weeks later further deepens the mystery.

On 7 April 1972, two months after my dismissal, President Karume, the first Vice-president of Tanzania, was killed in Zanzibar. Exactly a week later I, together with more than forty members of the UMMA Party of Zanzibar, was arrested and detained in prison without explanation. I was only told, much, much later, that it was for my own good - which didn't make sense because if anybody was threatening my life then they should be in and not me. I will discuss this strange phenomenon in greater detail. Three years later, while we were still in detention in mainland prisons, we were tried, in absentia, for treason in Zanzibar. I, like some of my comrades, was sentenced to death by firing squad.

Our imprisonment and the death sentence aroused an international outcry and a demand for our immediate release, unconditionally. Amnesty International declared me a 'Prisoner of Conscience', and protest letters poured in from all corners of the world. It was a great embarrassment for Nyerere who liked to be portrayed as a humane leader with a respect for human rights. I'll show the lies and disinformation about our case which the government was dishing out internationally which made me think, while in prison, if this was the same government that I had loyally served for eight years.

Prison Experiences and Reflections
While in prison I met various groups of liberation fighters from Frelimo, MPLA, ZAPU, ANC, PAC, SWAPO, Lumumbaists and Muleleists from Zaire – all imprisoned at the behest of their leaders. They included Andreas Schipanga and his colleagues from SWAPO who were flown from Lusaka straight to Tanzania prisons and detained for 'threatening the security of Tanzania'; such was the abuse of law by respected leaders like Nyerere and Kaunda.

The memoirs will attempt to address the impact of surviving this period on my attitude to life and work thereafter. I did not allow imprisonment to undermine my self-esteem, in spite of the mental torture and humiliations which imprisonment entailed. On the contrary, prison experience had the effect of further strengthening my character; I understood myself better in a way that I never looked at myself before.
Those lonely hours in solitary confinement which were intended by the prison system to break you and even make you mad, were the longest hours in my life. But instead of getting made, I used the occasion as an opportunity to reflect on the BIG ISSUES like trust, loyalty and betrayal; I reflected on the dualism of moral strength and weakness, of happiness and sorrow, of right and wrong – their relative interpretation and the system of justice based on promoting one and suppressing the other. Reflection in solitude also helped to deepen my political consciousness. To keep myself free from useless introspection I organised political classes among political detainees as well as prisoners. There were about 119 political detainees in the Ukonga Prison where we were held, most of whom were not connected with the Zanzibar trials. I taught elementary political-economy and some political theory, mostly based on the radical tradition of Left politics – marxism, liberal philosophy and so on. These lectures and the discussion that they provoked, led to writing of *African Socialism, or Socialist Africa*. I had plenty of time to reflect on some major Tanzania initiatives, both domestic as well as international: *Ujamaa*, nationalisation, villagisation, education, which I will discuss in the memoirs. I will also discuss our international initiatives on UDI, Biafra, the 1964 OAU Cairo Summit, the ‘Mulgushi Club’, the Lusaka Manifesto, the overthrow of Obote and Tanzania’s response. I will try to show why, in my view, some of these domestic and international initiatives went drastically wrong. Also in prison we re-examined Tanzania’s approach to socialism, to economic and social development. We looked at the leadership material, and its competence to fulfil the tasks for which they were entrusted to deliver.

**Release from Imprisonment and on to US Academia**

In April 1978 I and my friends were finally released exactly six years since our arrest which was an equivalent of a ten year imprisonment after remission. I spent the first year after my release as a columnist for the London-based monthly, the *New African*. I was then invited for a lecture tour of the US, and later was appointed Visiting Professor at San Francisco State University and the University of California, Berkeley. In 1981 I went to teach at the elitist Amherst College in Massachusetts. Since I had never experienced academia before, this was an eye-opener to the complexities of life on the campus. I met many interesting people and made friends with some of them. I’ll discuss a bit of this experience in some detail.

**The Struggle for the Second Liberation of Africa**

The last section will look at the new struggles emerging from Africa today. Those struggles come out of the complex contradictions which, despite the years of independence, can be traced back to colonialism – those economies, for example, which have undergone cosmetic changes while retaining all the key aspects of colonial economic structures; or, on another level, the division of Africa into countries which suited the colonialists and had little to do with the historical, cultural, national, linguistic or ethnic identities of the people. While in earlier sections I would have looked at anti-colonial struggles and post-colonial states, in this section I will focus on the struggles against neo-colonial states.

I will discuss this first through reflections on encounters with the ‘giants of the third world’ – Mao, Chou en Lai, Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Nasser, Ben Bella, Sukarno, Tito, Che Guevara, Augustino Neto, Oliver Tambo, Mandela, Cabral, Franz Fanon – and their views on liberation. I will also discuss the newly emerging countries in Africa from the 1970s up to the end of apartheid in South Africa and the emergence of Nelson Mandela as president. Also, the hopes and fears evoked by the new South Africa!
Second, I will consider the struggles of Africa today through the post-post-colonial struggles I have been supporting and closely observing, like Uganda under Museveni’s NRM, and its triumph over the dominant ‘colonial army’, the first in post-colonial Africa: what are its implications for future struggles? I will discuss the significance of the Eritrean revolution, and the vision of its leaders, especially Isaias Afweki. There will be a discussion of all these experiences, including the historically significant, Ethiopian revolution which toppled the cruel regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam who masqueraded as ‘marxist-socialist’. The innovative constitution of the new Ethiopia and its implications for the rest of Africa will be examined. I will discuss the role of these new post-neo-colonial states – Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea and now Rwanda, their warm relations with the multilateral agencies, their world outlook and their potential influence for the rest of Africa.

Finally, the book will discuss the current African situation in the context of the post-cold war era – the myth of the so-called ‘new international economic order’; the need for a ‘liberation struggle’ against the IMF/World Bank and G7 world domination. I will attempt to highlight the preconditions for genuine South/South economic cooperation and trade. And above all, I will attempt to outline the preconditions for attaining our most cherished goal: The Union of African States.

Abdul Rahman Mohammed Babu:
Revolutionary Democrat, Journalist and Statesman

Bereket Habte Selassie

It always comes as a shock when a dear friend or relative passes away, and is hard to believe. It is doubly hard to believe that a man of Babu’s vitality and youthful spirit is dead. When I last saw him in London in early January of this year, Babu exuded these qualities. He was one of my guests at a special dinner party I organised for some old friends of our struggle, and was, as always, the soul of the party, cracking his favourite jokes and telling funny stories. I liked these stories and the infectious laughter with which he told them; I had heard some of them a few times before, but spurred him on to tell them, because I liked the way he told them and I knew he enjoyed telling them.

His well-known support of the Eritrean cause helped win for us many friends, particularly among his legion of admirers in African intellectual circles. He gave to the Eritrean cause, as to the cause of freedom and justice everywhere, a full measure of his renowned journalistic talents in writings and public lectures. He became an active supporter of our cause starting in the late 1970s, almost immediately after his release from prison in Tanzania, and visited the liberated areas in the mid- and late 1980s. His report, following his first visit was insightful and brilliant and left behind the memorable statement: In Eritrea, I saw the future, and it works. His writings are characterised by simplicity, clarity and conciseness.

I first met Babu in Accra, Ghana, in January 1959 at the All African Peoples Conference convened by Ghana’s great leader, Dr Kwame Nkrumah. It was a conference which was one of its kind, to which African political parties and movements, including trade unions, women and students and liberation fronts, such as FLN of Algeria, were invited. Leaders like Lumumba, Cabral, Fanon and Felix Moumие (of Cameroun), among many others, were there. To young Africans like
myself at the time, it was a moment at once defining and awe-inspiring. Babu came at the head of a Zanzibari progressive political party. He and Lumumba struck those of us who were young and inexperienced with their humility and attentiveness to our views as well as the vigour with which they put forward their views and shared their knowledge. This spirit of humility, combined with dedication and commitment stayed with Babu all the years I have known him and won him the love and admiration of young Africans.

In Babu’s own estimation his greatest achievement was the role he played in the overthrow of the Sultanate of Zanzibar in 1964. Babu’s commitment to freedom and social justice and his unswerving criticisms of errant leaders won him friends but also earned him the enmity of some African leaders. For he did not mine his words when it came to levelling criticisms at leaders who were corrupt and dishonest or even honest leaders like Nyerere who sometimes followed wrong policies. The story of his love-hate relationship with former president Nyerere and its causes and consequences has yet to be told. The years he spent in prison for alleged involvement in the assassination of the president of Zanzibar are controversial and caused a break in their relationship. Babu denied the unproven charge which was never tested in a court of law and he bitterly contested the decision which he considered a violation of his human right. Nyerere’s version, according to Babu, is that it was a protective custody aimed at saving Babu from a vendetta assassination. Alas! Babu passed away unreconciled with Nyerere, and the controversy surrounding his imprisonment unresolved. But he did, on occasions, speak of Nyerere’s generosity, honesty and magnanimity.

Now that he has passed away, whatever the reason for the fall-out with Julius Nyerere, whom he had served as cabinet Minister heading several ministries, one hopes that the good done by this great revolutionary fighter will not ‘be interred with his bones’, to paraphrase one of Nyerere’s favourite plays, Julius Caesar, but that, instead, it will live after him. In his death, let the good deeds shine forth and be a source of inspiration. Babu belonged to that hearty breed of men who put human brotherhood above the glory of the home and the state, who are neither tempted nor sullied by power and privilege. He was a universal man, but even this universal man was bound by Nature’s exclusive and particular claim, by one particular spot on Earth. In his last moments, at his death-bed, Babu asked to be buried in his native Zanzibar, beside the graves of his parents.

We have lost a dear friend. Tanzania, Eritrea, and indeed Africa, have lost a great man. May the inspiring example of his extraordinary life live after him, and may he rest in peace.

Babu: A Man of Continental Vision

Issa Shivji

Sitting hundreds of miles away from home on a short visit to Dakar, Senegal, my spontaneous feeling was that of helplessness when I heard of Babu’s death. And it made me wonder: ‘what would have Babu thought and said on hearing of his death!’ A contradiction in terms. Indeed, that was Babu.

My mind raced back to the days some 15 years ago when Babu and I were lecturing to Mexican students on a short course on African Studies at El Colegio de Mexico. Babu,
in his usual relaxed manner, was expounding on the seven great relationships to explain his great passion — the economic development of Africa. He charted out on a broad canvass seven dialectical relationships: between town and country; between agriculture and industry; between heavy and light industry; between producer goods and consumer goods; between food crops and industrial raw materials; between mass goods and luxury goods; and between internal and international markets.

He would then identify in each couple what he called the ‘key link’. Threading together the key links he would arrive at his favourite conclusion: building of an autonomous, nationally integrated economy. As my mind wandered off to that presentation I said to myself: ‘Babu, commenting on his death, would have probably added an eighth great relationship — that between life and death’. And I have no doubt in my mind that he would have identified LIFE meaning STRUGGLE as the key link in that couple. That was Babu’s life.

With the death of Babu we are witnessing the passing away of the first generation of Marxist-Nationalists in our part of the world. Babu fought prominently in the struggle for independence from colonialism and for economic independence from neo-colonialism. In this he stood steadfast. The vision of a great, developed, industrialised - and hopefully united — continent was his guiding star. We, as students, admired him for that great passion. One did not always agree with Babu’s political stances or ideological positions; one probably would have even had differences on strategies and his way of doing things. But — and this is a great ‘but’ as I will explain in a moment — young radicals then could not disagree with his vision, were indeed inspired by that vision. I say ‘young radicals then’ because in this day and age of ‘global village’ or globalisation (read unabashed imperialism) and liberalisation (meaning global pillage) it is rare to come by Babu-type continental vision of development, autonomy and self-reliance.

I described Babu as a Marxist-Nationalist. As a matter of fact, his passion for developmentalism and nationalism was so strong that it often over-powered his Marxism. With Deng Tsiao Ping, he probably believed that it did not matter whether the cat was red or black so long as it caught mice. ‘What does it matter whether it is socialism or capitalism so long as it brings development? ’ Like when he was lecturing about the seven great relationships to Mexican students, he had no problem expounding a similar thesis of development to Rotarians at Motel Agip a couple of years ago on his visit to Dar es Salaam. That reminded me of Babu’s column (under a pen-name because he was then a Minister) in the Nationalist then under the editorship of Ndugu Benjamin Mkapa. We, young ‘firebrands’ at the Hill, used to devour it and like the young Copperfield would ‘ask for more’. He wrote a piece on the Friendship Mill-type industrialisation calculating to the last decimal point the numbers employed, the boost to our cotton production, creation of local market, passing of skills to our ‘proletariat’ and so on. It was not simply another analysis. It was a vision, a vision of an alternative which would lift us from this stigma of permanent poverty and begging. Where is that type of vision today? We seem to be drowned in narrow insular nationalisms where development is identified with the success or otherwise of our petty quests as commission agents, junior partners or show-men in the so-called joint-ventures or consultants to global plunderers called ‘investors’. Babu’s nationalism was much broader and deeply profound, beyond the pigment of the skin or the shape of the nose. For him what was important was the birth, production, development and investment of capital, that is, the processes of production and accumulation rather than the birth certificate of the producer or the accumulator (uzawa). He came from the Islands but his vision was continental, not insular although
he often used to tease his comrades: The centre of the revolution in Africa, he would say, is southern Africa, with southern Africa it is East Africa and within East Africa it is Zanzibar!'

Babu was a very charming personality, an incorrigible youth who not only never accepted to be, but could not be perceived as a Mzee. When, during his brief 'association' with NCCR, there was a cartoon in the papers depicting Babu as a babu (grandfather); it took a while to sink in. It had never occurred to me until then to think of Babu as an old man (by age). He was not only youthful in spirit but lived it. When he dedicated his book *African Socialism or Socialist Africa?* to 'the youth of Africa', I never felt it was the second or third person 'youth'; it was probably the first person, 'we, the youth of Africa!'

Babu was disarmingly humble, not humble in the servile sense but humble in the human sense. I remember as a high school student we would line up in the streets to wave flags welcoming visiting dignitaries, there would be a big laughter and applause when Babu's car appeared in the motorcade. Usually, he would be in his own personal car; usually he would be driving it himself and, more often than not, it would be full of children all waving while Babu would be making faces. And he was a Minister then during those days of Wabenzi! Pomp could not sit with Babu and arrogance fled from him.

Difficult to picture the Minister Babu either in suit and tie or even haki-ya-mungu which was then the official dress. Open neck shirt, most of the time hanging out and sandals on his feet. One of Babu's pictures which appeared in a newspaper has stuck in my mind. Disembarking from a plane back from a foreign trip, rather unusually, he had a jacket on – but the tie was loosely hanging around his neck and the shirt was hanging out of this trousers. Appearances did not matter to him; life did, and he lived it fully.

Seventy-odd years of a passionate struggle for a vision without pomp or sense of self-importance and self-righteousness – that was Babu the person. Babu was led by a grand ideology, not petty prejudices. He was dipped in a continent-wide nationalism, not insular parochialism. His vision of a developed Africa – an autonomous Africa – an Africa that can truly 'stand up' and refuse to be a pawn on the imperialist chess-board, that is the vision that we need more than ever before.

We have lost Babu, but, 'we the youth of Africa', have a responsibility to nourish his vision and bring it to fruition.

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**Babu**

*Paul Puritt*

I think I first met him at his usual table in the courtyard of the Palm Beach Hotel in Dar es Salaam. I remember being fascinated by both his looks and his ideas. His face could not be ignored. He stared through large, gleaming eyes and spoke through more teeth than one usually sees and said the most amazing things for a minister in the Government of Tanzania at the time.

I was used to meeting ministers (who were much more accessible in those days), but they still said mostly what they thought we wanted to hear. Babu said what he
thought. And what thinking! He sounded like the only socialist in a self-proclaimed socialist government. And he had real ideas about how to make it work. But I was always even more impressed by the contexts in which we talked: over drinks at the Palm Beach with an attentive audience of VIP's and ordinary people, on his dhow during a spontaneous overnight jaunt from Dar harbour to just close enough to the Zanzibar coast to see it, but not close enough to land or be boarded, or in a livingroom where Moslem women threw off their black buibuis to reveal brightly coloured frocks and danced to the rhythms of taarab music.

After Sheik Karume was killed in Zanzibar, suspicion of responsibility focused on Babu, unfairly as far as I was concerned. But Julius Nyerere decided to ‘protect’ Babu from the Zanzibaris who judged him guilty without a trial. Babu was imprisoned in Dar es Salaam for six years. I saw Babu at his home just after he was released. He actually looked in good shape both physically and mentally. He told me the following story of one jailhouse experience:

Several prisoners were listening to the radio when they heard Mwalimu Nyerere being interviewed by a representative from Amnesty International. At one point, Mwalimu said that there were no political prisoners in Tanzania jails. The inmates looked at each other and one of them said, sisi nani, kuku? (what are we, chickens?).

A few years later I stayed with Babu for a few days in his London home. We pub-crawled through a nostalgic visit of his favourite watering holes. I regret that so many of my memories of this magnificent man have to be dredged up through an alcoholic haze. I’d rather remember him in the striking, colourful relief with which he presented himself to the world. He was a genuine original. His passing leaves a hole in the universe.

Remembering A M Babu

Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, General Secretary, Pan-African Movement

Abdul Rahman Mohammed Babu died at a Hackney hospital in the east of London in the early hours of Monday 5 August 1996. While he had been in poor health recently, this was generally unknown to many people largely because he did not want anybody to fuss about him too much and he was also most determined to live. His punishing schedule of lectures, articles, political meetings and endless travels continued largely unaffected by his advancing years and the protestations of close relatives, friends and immediate colleagues and comrades.

I last saw him conscious on 18 August when I, together with our Chairman, Col. Kahinda Otafiire and our Chief of Staff, Captain Noble Mayombo went to see him at the hospital on our way to a summit in El Salvador, a journey we were all supposed to undertake. He tried to speak but we asked him not to bother promising we would be back. He said goodbye to us with a raised clenched fist in his palm: a luta continua – his life long motto. That victory belongs to the masses, as an organised people he had no doubt. For him the music of life and struggle had to play on. He danced and played his role most remarkably and consistently in the shifting sands of African politics, from the heady and inspiring days of nationalist anti-colonial struggles and the betrayals of the hope of the masses by the neo-colonial elite (both military and civilian) and the rebirth of hope in the unfolding pro-democracy activities in Africa and the rest of the world. He was never out of step with the revolutionary developments of his time and
kept true to his convictions and principles to the very end, quite unwavering in his socialist commitment and belief in the masses but at the same time undogmatic. He was a bridge across generations and social and political divides. An evening or outing with Babu, be it social or political, was always full of happy surprises. There were all kinds of people: hard core politicos, young and old, conservatives and radical socialists, revolutionaries and the not-so-sure, Patels and refugees, academics, the ordinary folks and the not-so-ordinary. He was a human magnet around whom a lot happened and people coalesced.

Babu, as he was popularly known — a name first given to him by an Indian neighbour which became his *nom de guerre* and stuck, from the militant student activism of the early fifties — was born in Zanzibar on 22 September 1924, into a relatively privileged family of Islamic clergy, traders and bureaucrats in colonial Zanzibar. The family had the typical mix of traders and sheiks of pre-colonial Arab-African relations of which Zanzibar (the slave coast) was a by-product. His grandfather was a peripatetic Islamic scholar with many families and sub-families across the coast of east and southern Africa (Zanzibar, Mozambique, Comoros Island, Mauritius) while his father was for sometime a colonial officer in Mozambique and returned to Zanzibar as Portuguese consul. In his youth this mixed background prepared him consciously and unconsciously for his pan-Africanist and internationalist political commitment and activism. He was a truly cosmopolitan personality — at home with all cultures and strangers — always taking a keen interest in the connecting cords of a common humanity.

After early schooling in Zanzibar, Babu went to London as was typical of that generation ‘in search of the golden fleece’ by way of professional education in the ‘mother country’. But his political activism was already simmering in the growing anti-colonial struggles of the post-war years with the added Zanzibari deformation of mainly Arab feudalist sheiks lording it over native Africans and other non-African minorities like the Persian and Indian traders. Conservative family members thought that studying for a respectable professional degree in England would rid the young iconoclast of his growing radicalism and turn him into a ‘respectable’ member of the society able to take advantage of all the opportunities and privileges that a cooperative educated African could expect from a paternalistic colonial state and patrimonial sheiks. Babu came to London to study accountancy!

London of the early fifties was full of radicalism and progressive causes both by domestic radical, revolutionary and social democratic forces and immigrant colonial subjects fighting for independence. Soon Babu abandoned his commercial studies for journalism and politics. His life then revolved around the London School of Economics, then a bastion of intellectual and political radicalism. There he met other third world students (such as the Late Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan) and Africans with whom they shared goals of liberation from colonial tutelage. Instead of becoming more respectable, Babu became an icon of the rebel movement, organising with others underground newspapers, pamphleteering and public meetings in support of the liberation struggles. Babu was involved with the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF) in which great socialists like the late Labour Party peer, Lord Brockway was very active as well as the Dame of Labour politics and the most famous British female politician before Margaret Thatcher’s conservative revolution, Barbara Castle. Babu was the secretary for their East and Central Africa Committee. In the MCF and related activities he came into contact with other radical pan-Africanists and anti-colonial activists like George Padmore, Chango Machyo of Uganda, Peter Abrahams of South Africa, Aminu Kano and the Solanke brothers of Nigeria.
Babu's activities extended into other parts of Europe, especially France where he was joint editor with Frene Ginwala (now Speaker of the South African Parliament), Samir Amin and others with whom they managed the radical anti-colonial and socialist journal, *African, Asian and Latin American Revolution*. He came under the influence of pan-Africanism, anarchism, socialism, communism and marxism during this period— influences that changed his life and served as beacons of hope in the tumultuous politics both in Zanzibar and Tanzania in which he played a leading role soon after his return to Zanzibar in 1957.

Babu was the founding General Secretary of the Zanzibari Nationalist Party (ZNP) and built one of the first mass parties in Africa *from scratch*. He led the radical wing of the ZNP and allied groups to constitute the militant wings of the nationalist forces in the country with revolutionary, pan-Africanist and internationalist commitments. Babu as the leading intellectual and political leader of the movement naturally became a big enemy of the British colonial overlords. Systematic repression, harassment and persecution led eventually to his being convicted for sedition by the colonialists and imprisoned for two years. The 'incriminating' evidence produced by the colonial prosecutor was an article 'Police Terror' written by Babu in one of his many features for the Chinese Xinhua News services. Imprisonment did not diminish his stature with the masses; rather it turned him into a potent symbol of resistance and the indomitable spirit of the Zanzibaris for freedom from both internal feudalism and British colonialism.

The Mau Mau Land and Freedom Army guerilla activities against the British colonialists in neighbouring Kenya was a great influence on Babu and his revolutionary contemporaries, and Zanzibar, as a major seaport and trading post, was a vulnerable place to all kinds of influence through traders, seafarers, socially, ethnically and racially mixed population. Babu was a vortex for these mixes and it is not surprising that he became 'the Problem' for the British to solve or neutralise if their design to hand over neo-colonial power to the compliant sheiks was to be successful. The British encouraged the conservative wing of the Zanzibari elite and backed them as a counter-force against the radicals but still they could not control the militancy of the wider population for genuine freedom. These were the 'winds of change' times which even Harold Macmillan, the patrician conservative British Prime Minister recognised, but the colonialists still tried desperately to stand in the way of history—albeit to no avail. Out of prison, Babu's reputation and zeal was on the rise. Meanwhile, the African landscape—from Capetown to Cairo—was changing dramatically in the quest for freedom. Nkrumah and his CPP's victory in Ghana in March 1957 inspired other Africans to aspire for 'the political kingdom'. Africa was in a revolutionary flux, an unstoppable match of people's power. The masses and the elite were united in wanting the *wasungu* to get off their backs. Nkrumah's pan-Africanism beckoned the black stars of the African revolution and the All African People's Conference (APC) of 1958 was the culmination of this.

On their way to Ghana for the APC, Babu and Tom Mboya of Kenya had to pass through Kinshasha, the Belgian Congo, now Zaire. The famous British historian, A. J. P. Taylor described history as 'a series of coincidences and accidents'. One of those accidents was Babu and Mboya's 'discovery' of the leading figure in Congo's politics, Patrice Lumumba who, at that time, was unheard of internationally and especially in the Anglophone world. They liaised with KANU, and Kenyatta from prison authorised the party to provide a ticket for Lumumba to travel with them to Ghana. In Accra, Lumumba became one of the stars of the conference; the rest, as they say, is history. In Accra were all the leading liberation movements across Africa and all the
icons of the anti-colonial movements and personalities: Kenneth Kaunda, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Joshua Nkomo, Ahmed Ben Bella, Oliver Tambo, Hastings Banda, Robert Mugabe, Kanyama Chiume and Frantz Fanon. The conference endorsed the radical principle of total war against colonialism 'by any means necessary' including the armed struggle. Buoyed by Nkrumah's material, moral and politico-diplomatic support of Ghana and the collective resolve of all the forces, the different groups left Accra determined to wrestle power from the imperialists with astounding results across the continent.

Back in Zanzibar, Babu and his disciples were unstoppable. They converted initial defeat in self-government elections into a total victory in 1964 by the radical nationalists, Afro Shirazi Party and Babu's Umma Party defeating the conservative sheiks and chauvinists in the ZNP. From anti-colonialism, Zanzibar's crisis escalated into a popular revolution. Babu and the Umma Party were the most cohesive and revolutionary force in the coalition. Eventually he became the Foreign Minister for the People's Republic of Zanzibar. This post further exposed him to the world and the revolutionary tides of the time. He met Che Guevera, Malcolm X, Chou En Lai, Chairman Mao, and Deng Xiao Peng. This made him a dangerous 'red' menace (who had to be stopped) to the imperialist cold warriors. In declassified CIA files quoted by Babu's long time partner, Amrit Wilson in her book The Zanzibari Revolution, the CIA station chief at that time was Frank Carlucci, who later became President Reagan's Defence Secretary. He was one of the many cold warriors who wanted Babu assassinated. A leading British journalist, Colin Legum, was also asked by the British intelligence services to advise on what to do about the 'communist threat' in Zanzibar which had the capacity to disturb the strategic balance in east and central Africa and the Indian Ocean. His advice was brutally cold and callous: 'Eliminate Babu'. It is a remarkable demonstration of Babu's humanism and politics without bitterness that up to his death he could still count Legum as a friend, in spite of everything!

From revolution in Zanzibar came dramatic developments in the relationship between the Tanzanian mainland (then Tanganyika) and the island of Zanzibar. The two countries were united in the new United Republic of Tanzania. Contrary to pan-Africanist optimism welcoming this independent redrawing of Africa's colonial borders, Babu was ambiguous because he believed it was being manipulated by the British and the Americans in order to domesticate the militancy of the dominant Umma revolutionaries on the island through the more moderate big brother on the mainland led by Nyerere and TANU. This tension and clash between revolutionary direction and reformist pragmatism not only plagued Babu's ministerial career in which he held many senior posts including Trade and Economic Development but also his political relationship with the Mwalimu, Nyerere. Babu was a revolutionary through and through while Mwalimu was a gradualist reformer with social democratic and Christian ethics. Yet the mainland was calm under Mwalimu's leadership while post-revolutionary Zanzibar was still pregnant with contradictions needing resolution to establish who really held power. Ultimately this led to another putsch in which the president of the Island, Sheik Karume, was assassinated. Babu and the Umma Party and other revolutionary disciples were accused of organising the coup. With support from the mainland, the island government survived and thus began a counter-revolutionary campaign against its radical opponents. Babu and others were sentenced to death in absentia. However the Union government in Dar es Salaam did not recognise the authority of the island court and refused to send Babu back to be executed. Instead he and his colleagues were put in 'protective custody' in their own interests!
That was the beginning of a six-year detention without trial (1972-1978). But jail did not stop him from political activities. In prison he met detainees from liberation movements jailed on the orders of their movements to whom Tanzania was playing host as the base for the OAU's Africa Liberation Committee. The prison term made Babu even more familiar, and identify with, victims of human right's abuses and intolerant political cultures and values. In prison he was central to organising political education classes and discussion groups where the detainees and other inmates developed both ideologically and politically, keeping abreast of global events. As TANU/Nyerere's government transformed itself into a one-party state by outlawing all legitimate opposition and coercing all organised forces into its fold, Babu's opposition hardened. Amnesty international's international campaign adopted him as a prisoner of conscience effecting his release in 1978.

But Tanzania of 1978 was a changed and changing country; it was a one-party state that brooked no other voices outside the party framework. Through his writings and lectures Babu became an intellectual guerilla. In 1981 his highly influential book, *African Socialism or Socialist Africa*, written while he was in prison, was published. It offered a critique of the Tanzania experience and argued for a democratic mass-based, people-led scientific socialism based on Africa's reality of majority peasantry. In this he was closer to the Chinese experience and the Bukharin tendency in the Russian revolution. He was opposed both in and out of government to wholesale nationalisation, forced collectivisation and an over-centralised commandist economy. He was an advocate of a free market with a planned socialist development strategy based on key complementary industrialisation in a wider regional and pan-Africanist context. He argued for a creative market reform (in favour of the peasants and rural majority) long before neo-colonialism and recolonisation forced African countries to their knees in the current wholesale liberalisation and privatisation that is recolonising us through the IMF/World Bank and western NGO domination of our civil society.

Increasingly Babu's work and political activities shifted out of Tanzania and on to the global scene. In addition to lecturing, he was a contributor to many influential journals and magazines such as *Pacific Ocean News, African Concord, Africa Events, New African, Africa Now, Xinhua News Service*. He was also associated with leading journals like *Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE) and the Journal of African Marxists (JAM)*. I remember how an in-depth interview with Babu by Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe nearly led to the collapse of JAM earlier than it finally did. So deep was the disagreement that several unreconstructed stalinsts refused to allow their names to be printed as members of the Editorial Working Committee for that issue. Rereading that particular issue again showed Babu's vision and foresight. The offending section of his interview was where he criticised the role of the Soviet Union in Africa especially in Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, too much so for the Soviet apologists who were the old guard in JAM in those days. They demanded that the interview be pulped; however, to their credit, the majority view of the London committee refused this opportunistic censorship and carried the interview in full. In a way JAM never really recovered from that crisis. The antagonism towards Babu in those days was essentially because he refused the dogmatic pro-Soviet line of stalinst parties and movements (and their hatchet persons) and also the anti-soviet reactionism of Euro-Africanist leftists, Euro-communists and trotsyites. This independence made him a 'difficult' associate of many left academics (both African and Africanist) and their forums during those certain days of the cold war when the world was simply between the good guys and the bad ones. To refuse the blinkered vision was tantamount to
trea, lack of clarity, and accusations of being an agent of this or that. Through his very influential 'Babu Essays' in *Africa Now*, he commented on different untouchable topics in African and global politics and political economy; he assailed military regimes and one-party dictatorships and called for genuine pluralist democracy at the time when the west and the US were only interested in pro-western, anti-communist compliant states. As an undergraduate I remember how we used to devour copies of *Africa Now* just for the Babu essays. After its collapse, the essays were relaunched in the *Africa World Review*. It was one article that successive editors of that journal know they did not have to worry about – Babu always delivered on time. He wrote in a lucid, direct and non-jargonistic yet committed way that was inspiring to supporters and respected by opponents.

Eventually he made London his base where he was a bridge of steel between the various political and ideological tendencies in the pan-African movement – the connection between the past, the present, and the future. He was in tune with progressive developments even when their potential was not yet clear. For instance, he was an eminent proponent of the cause of Eritrea at the time when Eritrea was another Biafra to other Africans and at a time when to support Eritrea was to oppose the Soviets and by that definition, anti-socialism. He supported the NRA/M struggle in Uganda both in the bush and in office because he realised its progressive potential, its effect on the region and the struggle against military despotism in Africa in general. Similarly he was supportive of the Ethiopian struggle against Mengistu’s pre-dialectical deformed ‘marxism’ in that country. He was also principled in his support for pro-democracy forces as they unfolded in different parts of Africa before and after the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989. He was the first to use the term ‘Africa’s second liberation’ to describe the various struggles in Africa from the mid-1980s. He was a source of inspiration, support and intellectual and political leadership to the many refugees, exiles and pan-Africanist political activists in Europe, especially London, where he was patron to a number of their organisations and lectured in their many forums such as Africa Research and Information Bureau (ARIB), Africa World Review (AWR), Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (IDHR) which he co-founded with the then exiled king of Lesotho, Moshoeshoe II, Africa Centre, and many others including the New Nigeria Forum. His articles influenced an even wider audience just as his formal lectures in various colleges and study centres of the University of London won him a continuing supply of new recruits from all over the world.

His simplicity, originality and sheer force of principled commitment to justice, pan-Africanism, internationalism, socialism and humanity won him instant admirers and disciples and the respect of even those who did not share his revolutionary convictions. He was also a steadying influence on the array of different and differing pan-Africanist tendencies that coalesced into the organising committee for the 7th Pan-African Congress which was held in April 1994 in Kampala. Throughout his life he remained the most consistent member of the International Executive Committee guiding the secretariat in Kampala. Nobody involved in organising for the 7th PAC will contest the fact that Babu was the chief organiser and mobiliser, providing a bridge between the various forces involved in the Congress. At critical stages during heated debates and at the committee meetings he provided intellectual, political and personal leadership that ensured that principles prevailed over opportunism and egos. He gave the Congress its highly effective battle cry: Don't Agonise, Organise! From 1992 up to his death he never missed a single meeting no matter how urgently it was called. We can pay him no better tribute than to continue to build the movement
into the winning organisational force that can rid Africa of recolonisation and unite our peoples under the banner of socialism and pan-Africanism.

His last direct partisan political action was to throw his hat (against the advise, doubts and suspicions or to the chagrin of some friends and comrades) into the multi-party politics in the 1995 Tanzania elections by hoping to stand as vice-presidential candidate to Mr. Mrema of the NCCR-Maguezi. It is an indication of the potency of his potential support and the threat to the status quo that the state had to use a combination of electoral skulduggery by reinventing the treason charges of the 1970s to prevent him from standing. He stood down but did not back out of the ring. That was Babu, the principled political man. He believed that the CCM needed a credible challenge as much as the opposition itself needed credible people and programmes. The issue was not about winning straight away or becoming a vice-president but articulating the issues and waking up the masses to their responsibilities to liberate themselves. Wrongly, many saw it as a last ditch assault on Nyerere but those of us around him know that it was not true and he refused to be dragged into any Nyerere bashing.

He was a great man whose greatness was not forced on you. He proved in his words, deeds and active involvement that advancing years were never excuses for becoming reactionary. He was neither dogmatic nor opportunistic; his eyes were, to the very end, trained on the goals of pan-Africanism and socialist democracy. He was a sociable socialist, a real dialectician who lived by his principles. It was our privilege to have known him and our collective loss that he is no longer with us.

Babu was survived by four children: Salma, Mohammed, Umar and ano Tahir. Babu was divorced from their mother, Ashura, a few years ago but they remained good friends and comrades. He spent more than a decade of his last years with his beloved partner and comrade, Amrit. He is also survived by a large constituency of supporters, disciples, friends, comrades and above all, political sons and daughters.

Shakespeare did not know what he was talking about when he declared, with the certainty that can only come from the pen of a non-dialectical chronicler of feudal England that, 'The evils men did leave long after them' while the good they performed 'is interred with their bodies'. Dialectically both the good and the evil outlive us all but the enduring inspiration of a person like Babu is that his goodness overwhelms whatever human foibles he had and is therefore outlived by his goodness.

What a life? So rich and yet unchronicled in an autobiography or biography. He was too modest to have written an autobiography though he did sketch out an outline. However he was too busy with the immediate demands of struggle to get back to it. Honestly I do not think he could have written the book because he could not face up to lionising himself. The Biography must now be written both as a tribute to his memory and a celebration of his rich life that touched so much of our past, and present. But more for ourselves, to reclaim part our library, museum and encyclopaedia that we were robbed of when Babu’s life ceased.

We shall sorely miss him. However, A luta continua – victory is certain.
Babu: A Personal Tribute

Mahmood Mamdani

I first met Babu in April, 1978, just a week after he had been released from detention by Tanzanian authorities. It was a Saturday afternoon. A Zanzibari friend had promised to introduce me to Babu, and he led me to the bar of the Hotel Mawenzi in Upanga, Dar-es-Salaam. Babu was at the hub of a Zanzibari circle, chatting animatedly. I returned to Mawenzi a number of times over the next few weeks, each time to meet the same group and face the same ambiance. Each time, I was slightly puzzled, even a little disappointed.

By the time he was released from detention, Babu had attained the status of a living legend, a revolutionary hero. I must have expected a larger-than-life individual, at least an individual who would treat himself as larger than life: with at least a touch of self-importance. But not Babu. About the third time we met, I remember telling Babu of a column by Philip Ochieng in The Daily News, complaining that Dar was filling up with 'counter-revolutionaries': those who drink at the counter and talk about revolution. Babu smiled good-naturedly, but said nothing.

Over the next few months, I became a regular evening visitor to the Babu household in Upanga. You were welcome whenever you went: and you never went with any advance warning. Everyone knew that Babu was a man of modest means, and everyone brought something along for the evening. As one week followed another, I got to know Babu better, to enjoy his company more and more, and to seek him out more often. But the disappointment persisted, and it perplexed me: Why was there no systematic discussion of political issues around a man whose reputation was so totally that of a political activist and thinker?

I never put the question to Babu, either then or later. Then, because I did not know him well enough. Later, because the better I got to know Babu, the less I felt a need to ask: there were enough clues. 1978 was the year of what came to be known as the Dar Debate. The political intelligentsia in Dar, both within and outside the university, was bitterly divided over theoretical issues. As critiques and counter-critiques issued from virulent pens on the Hill, neither neutrality nor dispassionate distance were tolerated. Very much a partisan in the Debate, I was increasingly impatient with what I saw as Babu's aloofness. The only thing that kept me from reading more into it was my personal liking for Babu. Only later did I ask myself how we must have looked like from Babu's standpoint: intellectuals unrestrained by practical/political consideration, each giving full vent to his (there was no her!) individual point of view, clothed as a selfless 'commitment'? In such a context, there was every temptation for all sides to claim to speak on behalf of 'the people', and to highlight even the slightest disagreement as rooted in a major theoretical deviation that, translated into practice, was bound to have world-historical and 'anti-people' consequences! Babu instinctively steered clear of such posturing, always smiling good-naturedly, offering you another drink, inquiring about your family, your work, willing to discuss all issues, except those 'world-historical'. I often wondered how much the debate-driven intellectual climate of 1978 Dar contributed to his decision to leave Tanzania, at least for some years.

This disarmingly humble man, this man who took to neither pomp nor ceremony, who carried a trace of neither self-importance nor self-righteousness, this was a man who instinctively shunned what he saw as endless theoretical hair-splitting – the preoccupation of professional intellectuals – but never stopped thinking of the
practical side of life, of how to change life and society as it is lived. He personified and lived the wisdom captured in that phrase of Goethe that I had once read in a polemic of Lenin, and turned over and again in my mind, unable fully to grasp its meaning: ‘Grey is theory, but green is the tree of life!’

The last time I saw Babu was during a two-day stopover in London just a few weeks before his death. I had called up to say hello, unaware that Babu had just come out of hospital or was on steroids. Babu invited me home for dinner. Home was a small but charming flat in north London, where he and Amrit had just moved. Babu had met Amrit — a Bombay-originated activist/intellectual, like himself — almost in his first year in London. The two became constant companions for the next decade and a half; one thinks of them as husband and wife, except for the fact that their union was never state-sanctioned.

At that dinner, Babu talked of writing his memoirs. None of us had even an inkling that he would not live long enough to even begin that endeavour. When Amrit called me the day after he died, I asked her whether he had done any work on the memoirs. She said he had managed to draft a three page chapter-by-chapter outline of the memoir he had hoped to write. I requested that she fax it to me, for I was thinking of writing a tribute. And fax it she did. The first sentence outlined its ‘first major theme’: My generation's political consciousness evolved out of the injustices of, and the intense struggle against, colonialism.

But Babu was no ordinary member of that generation. He was, if anything, its standard-bearer, one who was to breach the common-sense of anti-colonial nationalism on at least three fronts, and would pay for it heavily each time. Babu's cosmopolitanism was nurtured by a double influence. Zanzibar island had been a confluence of trading and cultural influences for centuries; with the passage of time, it had become the hub of regional influences that seemed to expand in the fashion of larger and larger concentric circles. In this cosmopolitan island, Babu came from an urban minority (Arab) with a highly urbane (Swahili) culture. Like many a politicized individual from similar minorities in Africa — such as Mestizos (Coloureds), Indians, BaTutsi, and Afrikaaners — Babu was propelled to broader and more liberating influences as he fought the parochialism of the community of his birth. In the early 1950s, when he went to Britain to study journalism, these were both philosophical and political: as he wrote in the 'outline', the former were 'a variety of political philosophies, specifically anarchism, marxism and socialism' and the latter 'the politics of pan-Africanism which was the dominant creed among African students in Europe.' It is this melange, and Babu's continued regard for practice as the mother of theory, that was to make of his practical pursuit of pan-Africanism a creative and open-ended adventure and that would finally account for the critical break, at first with mainstream nationalism and then with its militant variant, the former open and public, the latter ambivalent.

Once in London, Babu bathed and flourished in the anti-colonial culture of the Afro-Asian-Caribbean student movement, given resourceful support by the left wing of the British Labour Party. He became secretary of the East and Central Africa Committee of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, chaired by Labour's veteran left-winger Fenner Brockway. With the help of a 'Christian Fund' of St. Paul's Cathedral, he (and a Nigerian and a Sierra Leonean) founded one of the earliest pan-African monthlies, the African Outlook, in 1954. With Samir Amin, Frene Ginwala (now Speaker of the South African Parliament) and the lawyer Jacques Verges (currently defending Carlos the 'jackal' in Paris courts), he edited the Afro-Asian Latin American Revolution. At the
same time, Babu was a member of the Zanzibar Nationalist Party, and the party had arranged for him to be trained in party organisation at the London headquarters of the British Labour Party.

When Babu returned to Zanzibar in 1957 to become Secretary General of the Zanzibar Nationalist Party, the stage was set for his rupture with mainstream nationalism. While he was remarkably successful as its Secretary General, turning the electoral defeat of 1957 to the victory of 1961, he was also a prisoner of the political limits that defined ZNP as an organized party. For the ZNP was not only a nationalist party with its pan-Africanist and marxist left wing, it was also the Arab party of the island. All the while the left wing, in particular Babu, built a mass party in Zanzibar and formed pan-African alliances through which to create the Pan-African Movement for East and Central Africa (PAFMECA) and hold the first All African People's Conference (AAPC) in Ghana in 1958, rubbing shoulders with Nkrumah, Lumumba, Sekou Toure and Frantz Fanon, the Arab face of the party continued to be identified internally as the face of local privilege. It was a contradiction that could not be sustained as Zanzibar moved to independence in the early 1960s.

It is to Babu’s great credit, and stands as testimony to his commitment to social justice, that he walked out of the ZNP in 1963 and established his own Umma Party, dedicated not only to a pan-Africanist programme continentally but also to a local programme which disavowed ZNP’s identification with Arab privilege and sought to transcend the Arab-African divide in Zanzibari politics. For this breach with mainstream nationalism, Babu paid with two years of his life: the British put him in jail for ‘sedition’. The establishment of the Umma Party and its active participation in the subsequent revolution was the first step in setting the Zanzibari Revolution of 1964 on a course different from the Rwandese ‘Social Revolution’ of 1959: whereas the divide between revolution and counter-revolution crystallized as a Hutu-Tutsi divide in 1959 Rwanda, matters stood a little differently in Zanzibar of 1964. It is because of Babu and the Umma Party that the Arab in Zanzibar, unlike the Tutsi in Rwanda, stood as an organized force, not just on the side of privilege, but also that of revolution. So that when the Zanzibari counterparts of Hutu Power’, led by Sheikh Abeid Karume, looked to blunt the radical potential of the revolution and cast it in an Africanist mould, they had to look for a union with the mainland to find the necessary allies to neutralize and even isolate Babu and the Umma Party. But that was not easily done, and by the time it was, not only was the edge of revolution blunted, but so was that of reaction.

Babu emerged from the revolution as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the People’s Republic of Zanzibar. But the People’s Republic was to be short-lived. The Zanzibar revolution took place on 12 January 1964. On 20 January, there was a mutiny in the Tanganyika army. In another three months, the Union between the mainland and the island took effect, with active US support, ‘hurriedly’ and secretly’ (Babu wrote in the ‘outline’). Babu was bitterly opposed to the union, seeing in it an attempt to nip in the bud the radical potential of the revolution. That it was, but it would take him longer to realize that the Union had also an important if unintended consequence. I remember asking him during that last supper in London whether, without the Union, post-revolutionary Zanzibar may still have followed the trajectory of post-1959 Rwanda, with the Arab minority cast as the Batutsi of Zanzibar, officially defined as an illegitimate minority that could be the but of endless pogroms which may one day be difficult to distinguish from a genocidal trajectory. He was silent; I thought his eyes conveyed an agreement.
Babu was the Minister of Economic Affairs and Development Planning in the new Union government. As Minister, he extended the scope of his solidarity activities outside of Tanzania: building on his 1959-60 visit to China during which he established personal links with Mao, Chou En Lai, Marshal Chen Yi and Deng Tsiao-Ping, he pioneered the friendship with the People's Republic of China that would eventually lead to the building of the Uhuru (Friendship) Zambia-Tanzania Railroad; at the same time, he led the Tanzanian delegation to the 1964 UN Session, spending most of his time meeting Malcolm X and addressing mass rallies in Harlem.

As Minister in the Union Government, Babu provided the most important intellectual alternative to President Julius Nyerere. It is difficult for me to locate precisely the circumstances of his break with Nyerere — that will have to be done by someone who knew political developments in Tanzania's first decade of independence more intimately — but there seems to be widespread agreement amongst students of the period that this break was not triggered by Babu's solidarity activities outside Tanzania. Neither was it a personal break. Most likely, it was located in a difference over domestic policy, particularly over nationalization, a crucial tenet of militant nationalism as it unravelled in the decade after the 1967 Arusha Declaration. A plausible explanation is offered by Lawrence Cockcroft in his obituary in *The Guardian* (6 August 1996): Babu 'opposed the nationalization of all wholesale trade (then largely in the hands of the Indian community) in 1971. It was to be the end of any effective working relationship with Nyerere.' Certainly, his 'Open Letter' to Mugabe after Zimbabwe's independence repeated the same lesson: you cannot translate a moral vision into a political agenda without the necessary socio-political resources to realize it. A decade later, Nelson Mandela would draw that very lesson from the quagmire that post-liberation Mozambique turned into in less than a decade.

Did Babu pay for this second rupture with nationalism with a second term in detention, this time for six instead of two years? It was, after all, only months after the above disagreement with Nyerere that Babu was, to use his own words in the 'outline', 'unceremoniously fired from the Cabinet while I was in Addis Ababa leading the Tanzania delegation to the OAU Council of Ministers' meeting'; only two months later he was detained (along with over 40 members of the Umma Party of Zanzibar) in the wake of Karume's assassination in Zanzibar. Or was it that, in Nyerere's words, oft-repeated but not always believed by Babu, he was arrested and detained to prevent his deportation and certain death in Zanzibar; in other words, 'for my own good!' ('outline')? These are issues that require a more intimate knowledge of events than I possess, and should wisely be left to Babu's future biographer.

Babu's third rupture with nationalism, and his second with militant nationalism, came while he was in detention. But it was never open, never explicit, never articulated — not even in the 'outline' to his memoirs — and yet to anyone familiar with the trajectory of his actions, it cannot be doubted. One observation in the 'outline' provides a clue:

*While in prison, I met various groups of liberation fighters from FRELIMO, MPLA, ZANU, ZAPU, ANC, PAC, SWAPO, Lumumbists and Mulelists from Zaire, all imprisoned at the behest of their leaders. The most senior of these was Andreas Schipanga and his friends from SWAPO, who were flown from Lusaka straight to Tanzania prisons and detained for 'threatening the security of Tanzania'!*

Babu discovered in practice how nationalism dealt with difference, with those who dare to have a different point of view. Through the touchstone of practice, he had put
his finger on the underbelly of nationalism, its problematic relationship with democracy.

As it conquered equatorial Africa in the wake of the late 19th century 'scramble', late colonialism brought to its final phase of alien rule every lesson it could muster from centuries of experience. The key lesson was to reify difference through a form of rule that would not only recognize but reproduce it. In some places, it salvaged differences from the previous era and built on these; in others, it invented differences where none had existed, and magnified these. That reification, called tribalism', was reproduced through tribalized 'native authorities' whose draconic powers and narrow boundaries were rationalized as 'customary'.

The great historical irony and tragedy is that anti-colonial nationalism - and particularly its militant variant - reified unity and criminality difference, as not only illegitimate but also illegal. Samora Machel argued that 'for the nation to live, the tribe must die'. Similarly, in the first flush of post-revolutionary enthusiasm, the National Resistance Movement in Uganda passed an Anti-Sectarian Bill that declared the pursuit of any 'sectarian' politics (defined broadly to include the pursuit of any political activity appealing to a difference that would undermine nationalist unity) as illegal. Babu was sometimes ambivalent about this, particularly when he focused on the silver lining on the nationalist cloud, but not always. After Babu, and standing on the shoulders of Babu, we must ask more pointed questions: faced with the colonial reification of difference, was the nationalist reification of unity adequate? Did it not reproduce and even magnify the problem of internal unity? In that case, should we not see the politics of national liberation ('nationalism') and that of internal conflict (tribalism') as two sides of the same coin, each feeding on the other? And so, faced with the reification of difference, is not a more adequate response one that recognizes difference and seeks to transcend it by historicizing it, rather than one that denies difference?

For one who knew Babu for nearly two decades, the ever-lasting impression one is left with is of an uncompromising zest for life, of an unending quest in every realm, personal as well as political. If his humility prevented him from making much of this quest publicly, we must not be goaded into seeing it as no more than a personal accomplishment. If his integrity prevented him from making a fetish of officialdom and the privileges it can confer, we must not confuse the lack of such privileges with the lack of public accomplishment. But while simplicity was to him a pre-requisite for integrity in public life, he never confused simplicity with self-denial. For this great man refused to accept life with anything but a full embrace. If he lacked self-importance in personal matters, he was also without a trace of self-righteousness in matters theoretical and political. The combination underlined a profoundly democratic commitment and bearing.

As I complete this tribute, there is a memory that lingers and that I feel compelled to record. I remember Babu coming to Kampala during Obote II, towards the mid-1980s. He came home, to my flat at the university, and found me down with a serious case of malaria. We must get you some antidote, he said. I assured him I had taken the requisite dosage of malariaquin. Not that queen, he said, and went out to get some from Wandegeya market, which he then proceeded to cook over the next few hours. The meal of fish and rice that I ate that evening must rank as the most delicious feast of my life. What part it played any part in driving away the malaria, I do not know. But I do know that it was wholly responsible for uplifting me at a low tide. Babu was not a man to accept defeat, whether in sickness or old age, in poverty or exile. His is a legacy worth celebrating.
The Social Construction of Labour in the Struggle for Democracy: The Case of Post-independence Nigeria

Franco Barchiesi

In this article the author attempts to provide a historical understanding of the nature, character and contradictions of the Nigerian labour movement in the struggle for democracy. The article shows the capacity of labour movements' radicalism to influence processes of political transition even in the absence of a meaningful impact on the part of labour organisations themselves. However, only a multi-faceted analysis of labour, concerned with shifting boundaries between institutions and militancy, centralised bargaining and localised conflict, commitment to democratic stability and to the defence of standards of living undermined by structural adjustment will provide an appropriate space for the study of radicalism and social transformative visions as components in building organised labour as an effective actor in democratisation. In the meantime, the absence of socially and strategically diversified organised labour in Nigeria today is what mostly makes the perpetuation of military power viable.

Beyond State and Civil Society: Locating African Labour

The nature of labour movements as significant actors in the struggle for the transition to democracy in Africa has been gaining increasing attention at various levels in the context of the continent's social and economic crisis. On the one hand, we can assume that the worsening social and economic conditions after the implementation of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) by many African countries since the second half of the 1980s is responsible, to a large extent, for processes of working class radicalisation. This conjuncture made unbearable the presence of authoritarian, single party or military regimes and the stark contrast between elite enrichment and imposed scarcity for the majority of the population. But this does not seem sufficient to explain the role played by labour inside broader social dynamics of resistance. It especially fails in doing so if one considers a history of weak trade union organisations, co-optation by the powers of the day and, generally, the little numerical weight of the wage-employed workforce. As Cohen, Gutkind and Copans (1978) noticed, African labour movements cannot be understood in terms of unitary consistent organisational strands acting along a clear political-economic divide. They responded to the unequal and fragmented penetration of capitalist domination by way of a 'situational' expression of consciousness, linked to the contingent and specific nature of African capitalism. In this sense, localised upsurges of worker militancy provided the focus for labour mobilisation to a far greater extent than the homogeneous spread of unionism across regions and countries.
The picture is further complicated if one analyses labour in the context of fragmentation and internal weaknesses characterising the African pro-democracy movements. While contributing to the definition of highly complex patterns of relationships between leadership and the grassroots, those elements should alert us to the problems of talking about an undifferentiated 'awakening' of civil society. This latter notion is deeply affected by unequal access to power and influence and by the existence, behind the formal adherence to democratic motifs, of informal patterns of subordination and resistance linked to ethnicity, religion, gender and language (Fatton, 1995). Conversely, these aspects are neglected by analyses which privilege the convergence around broad democratic aspirations on the part of what has been termed 'the African crowd' (Riley & Parfitt, 1994:167-170). While this latter argument takes into account the local variability in responses to authoritarianism and structural adjustment, it does not pay sufficient attention to internal contradictions, imbalances and legitimation gaps in the pro-democracy coalitions. As analyses focused on particular countries have shown (Holmquist, Weaver & Ford, 1994), opposition forces tend to represent mainly urban educated strata with little presence of the rural masses and the urban poor. This can significantly constrain the range of available alternatives, and 'codify' the discourse of democracy around the themes of probity and efficiency, neglecting issues of social transformation, justice, equality and solidarity. Moreover, among these sectors, divisions and quarrels can be facilitated by personalised styles of leadership. In so far as they reflect dominant political styles, these movements can be regarded as vehicles for personal and group promotion.

In a recent contribution in this journal which investigated interest group formation in Nigeria, Bjorn Beckman and Attahiru Jega (1995) argue that two conditions seem to be required for organised interest groups to effectively promote a democratic opening of the political space. The first is that the organised interests' struggle for autonomy from the state is combined with the defence of organisational rights. In this way, dynamics arising in particular spheres (civic organisations, students, labour) can 'overlap' with broader demands for citizenship and for the recognition of civil and political rights. The second condition depends on the internal democratic constitution of the interest groups themselves. Finally, only in so far as relationships among interest groups, and between these and the state, are 'constitutionalised', that is, granted legal representation subject to the 'rule of law', these dynamics will have marked a decisive shift in power relations in favour of pro-democracy forces. In any case, constitutionalisation at a political level does not exclude continuing characterisation of social relationships by asymmetrical access to power and resources, and it does not shelter social actors from state intervention in civil society in a 'non-neutral' fashion. But this will now take place on agreed sets of rules and procedures providing for constraints to the exercise of power. In Beckman's view, while a 'civil society' can be properly constituted only in the presence of laws regulating its internal power relations, these laws will at the same time legitimise the state itself as a particular actor inside civil society, concerned with regulation of relationships and allocation of resources (Beckman, 1993). However, these perspectives leave various questions open. In fact, the authors here recognise the success of organised interests in Nigeria (particularly students and labour) in maintaining their autonomy in the face of the state's attempt at co-optation and/or repression (Beckman & Jega, 1995:179-180). But it is equally undeniable that a determined resilience on the part of the Nigerian state exists towards the constitutionalisation of interest group relationships. In this case, how can autonomy be maintained in a context of enduring state repression? What is the effective capacity of interest groups' autonomy and internal democracy to influence processes of 'constitutionalisation from below'? And, last but not least, in
which ways, in the absence of constitutionalisation, can organised interests continue to play a democratising role, instead of degenerating into authoritarianism, bureaucratism and internal faction fighting?

Beckman’s and Jega’s analysis of the issue of constitutionalisation seems rather prescriptive. In general, they do not address the above questions, though they recognise in passing that the ability of the Nigerian students’ and lecturers’ movement to withstand state repression and gain legitimacy among their constituencies could have depended less on the strength of the internal democratic processes and more on the ability of the leadership to pursue an agenda which attracted wide support (Beckman & Jega, 1995:179). In this case, the complementary relationship between autonomy and internal democracy, previously asserted by the same authors in defining interest groups as genuinely democratic forces, seems contradicted to some extent. Another variable enters the equation which can be defined as the organised interests’ capacity to focus on broad issues of social, economic and political transformation and to articulate them through effective alliance politics. In the Nigerian case, the viability of a sustained democratic role for organised labour in the context of a non-democratic, non-constitutionalist political system heavily depends on this variable.

Moreover, this line of reasoning sheds light on a crucial question affecting unions in Africa: how could movements representing wage labour in historically underdeveloped capitalist societies, affected only by partial processes of class formation, play a substantial role in the broad dynamics of social and political change? A mere explanation focusing on the classical divide between ‘economic’ and ‘political’ struggle, which legitimised the existence of labour organisations in major capitalist countries and in both liberal and radical/marxist theories, does not seem sufficient. It could be easily argued that a movement representing only a tiny fraction of a wage-employed minority on issues of economic advancement and social upliftment can hardly escape from the constraints of a narrow sectional kind of representation, in constant danger of co-optation or repression by state and employers’ power. A deeper explanation is required: the political role of the labour movement in the 1980s and 1990s cannot be understood without taking into account the political nature of democratisation processes and the capacity of labour as a social movement to politicise labour relations in Africa, making them a terrain of resistance and anti-authoritarian mobilisation.

If we look at the record of democratisation over the continent, in only a few cases (Zambia, Malawi, Mali, Benin) have democratic institutional dispensations been precariously stabilised. In one case (Niger) where the transition from the opening of the political space to democratic consolidation seemed to have some chance of success, the whole process has been reversed by military intervention. In many cases, the regime actually prevented democratisation. From one side (Nigeria, Togo, Zaire), it could stop an own-initiated process; from another, it could clamp down on civil society, either through overt manipulation (Kenya, Ghana), or through repression (Zimbabwe) or, finally, by succeeding in taking control of the modalities of transition (Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon). Other cases have not been affected by democratisation at all (Cameroon, Guinea), or are still along an uncertain and extremely slow path (Tanzania). The impact of labour on these processes has been quite ambivalent. If we look at the political outcome, it seems more appropriate to talk about a generalised lack of impact on the part of labour organisations. Various factors can be held accountable for labour’s incapacity in setting agendas for a real regime change beyond the alternation of ruling coalitions. Among these are divisions inside civil
society, the tendency among its leaders to replicate regimes' patrimonial and personal conceptions of power, the lack of rural masses' effective participation, the undifferentiated nature of party politics and the absence of strong labour parties, the ambiguities of democratic discourse itself caught between egalitarian participation and technocratic rhetoric of efficiency and honesty.

In all the situations where organisation and political representation mattered, labour failed to give a meaningful contribution to the political democratisation process. But this is in sharp contrast to the impact that labour as a social movement had in accelerating the crisis, if not always the collapse, of authoritarian governments, and in putting democratisation firmly on the political agenda. When a capacity for mass mobilisation, and links with civic, rural organisations, the unemployed and the informal sector could make a difference, labour was a fundamental resource for pro-democracy movements. But when this had to be translated into programmes and institutional arrangements, labour turned out to be a missing link. It generally proved unable to overcome entrenched social divides and to shape alternative political coalitions. This was decisive in its failure in putting transition on a firmer ground, capable of shifting the balance of forces in such a way as to make authoritarian reversals exceedingly costly.

Beckman and Jega fail to deal with the democratic potential of organised interests, to recognise the difference between their capacity as vehicles for mobilisation to create spaces for democratic debate and contestation, or even to constrain the state's options, and their relative organisational ineffectiveness in constitutionalising those spaces. Indeed, when mobilisation was required, SAPs and repression facilitated it. But when the need emerged for labour to translate mobilisation into political influence, the necessary organisational framework had been eroded and the chances for labour-led political representation were prevented by sectional elite competition. The gap between labour's nature as a movement and as an organisational framework is responsible for labour's different impacts in the various phases of transition. This ambivalence is useful not only in criticising 'optimistic' views about the role of labour in the awakening of civil society; it also indicates an unresolvable antinomy for many 'pessimistic' accounts of a functionalist nature on labour's transition to democracy (see O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986). Common to these perspectives is the primacy of 'responsible' and de-radicalised organised labour's behaviour during negotiations as one of the factors leading to the success of democratisation. Dealing exclusively with labour's supportive role in institutional negotiations, they miss the complexity of its multiple impacts at various levels of mobilisation, identity and militancy formation.

Conversely, this article will show the capacity of labour movements' radicalism to influence processes of political transition even in the absence of a meaningful impact on the part of labour organisations. Various methodological and conceptual suggestions can be helpful in enriching the framework in this regard. The danger of underestimating of 'hidden forms of consciousness' (Cohen, 1987) in the explanation of labour movements in underdeveloped countries has been gradually finding some analogies, in the case of core capitalist countries themselves, in studies about the role of consciousness and subjectivity as unpredictable factors in shifting the uncertain frontiers between conflict and compliance in the labour process (Fantasia, 1988; Knights & Willmott, 1990). Equally relevant from this point of view seems to be the growing body of literature on organised labour's social alliance politics (Waterman, 1993), with the associated shifts in relationships between class- and non-class-based movements as actors capable of unified strategies for transition. In other authors, an
emphasis on the social and economic bases of social movements has led to a new evaluation of 'reproductive labour' as the repository of a communitarian public space irreconcilable with capitalist domination (Benjamin & Turner, 1992). This emphasises a new broad strategic perspective on gender and women's work based on its peculiar role as producer of labour power itself (Von Werlhof, 1988). Methodologically, this has been echoed by a renewed attention to ethnographic and localised studies of resistance focusing on a dynamic interpretation of the changing role of labour in the context of the crisis of the social institutions of modernity, such as the metropolis (Burawoy et al., 1991).

All seems to point to a reading of labour's role in transition to democracy which addresses a multiplicity of factors often underestimated by the institutional determinism of functionalist perspectives or by voluntarist views of civil society. The construction of labour as an actor of political change is a process taking place alongside a history of contradictory relations involving post-independence African states and societies, internal and international capital, union organisations and workplace struggles, political mobilisation and informal resistance. Ultimately it is this highly complex scenario which creates difficulties in analysing African labour's impact in processes of transition by unilaterally focusing either on its position inside 'civil society' and interest group formation (as in the 'optimistic' view) or on its organised behaviour in relation to political bargaining (as in the 'pessimistic' view). A multi-faceted analysis of labour, concerned with shifting boundaries between institutions and militancy, centralised bargaining and localised conflict, the political and the social nature of alliances, its commitments to democratic stability and to the defence of standards of living undermined by structural adjustment, can be much more promising for the purpose of studying labour's nature in this regard. Of course, the concept of 'nature' here can lack the kind of consistency implicit in functionalist notions of the 'role' of labour. But it surely leaves a broader space open for the study of radicalism and social transformative visions as components in building organised labour as an effective actor in democratisation.

Moreover, African labour must be located in broader processes of accumulation and class formation. The attempt by the emerging national states to build a base of endogenous accumulation in manufacturing was a decisive element through which political elites could define patterns of control over the territories based on clientelist exchanges at sectional level between loyalty and access to resources. The legacy of colonial authoritarianism, and the insertion of these states in the international division of labour mainly as suppliers of raw materials, provided constraints on the accumulation framework. Dominant interests in the professions, in the bureaucracy and the commercialisation of minerals and agricultural export crops came to acquire a prominent position inside ruling coalitions. This, and the strictures of the internal markets, placed obstacles to any sustained expansionary process in manufacturing based on the investment of accumulated profits. Capitalist domination over these countries acquired the aspect of a mainly non-productive private accumulation. Import-substitution manufacturing itself came to depend upon imported technology, machinery and know-how. Manufactured output did not produce a meaningful extension or diversification of the industrial base, and it often enlarged the circuits of financial speculation and political corruption.

To transcend the limited nature of post-colonial elite-pacting processes, and to broaden the scope of state legitimation, private accumulation processes had to be disguised under the cover of a development which relieved an undifferentiated
'people' from the political, economic and cultural subordination of colonialism. The existence of an, albeit limited, 'modern' economic sector, based on wage labour, constituted a significant resource in this process. As Robin Cohen (1974:249) writes:

Workers not only have to be convinced of the genuineness of the developmental and modernizing values of the elite in their own right, but they also act as communicators and opinion leaders in the villages of their origins which they influence by visit, through family relations, and through the activities of tribal organisations ... The wage-earners become, as it were, the cybernetic link or transmission belts in the system of communication.

In the context of dependent industrialisation, wage labour was involved in many African states as a junior partner in various developmentalist coalitions. The caveat was implicit that, under the dominant discourse, its social position as a 'modernised' minority could always be portrayed as a privilege, compared to the fate of the rural masses and the urban poor. This would come into play if labour refused to make its political and economic contribution to growth and 'nation building'.

The ways in which working classes have been recruited in post-independence Africa as actors in the political transition to modernity, and the disillusionment generated by the unfulfilled promises of modernity in the context of social and political decay, greatly help to understand the political role of labour in these situations. It seems advisable to avoid talking about the vanguard role of a very limited formal proletariat. Rather, its role was a result of a process whereby differentiated elites, with very weak foundations in processes of economic accumulation and political legitimation (that is to say a weak hegemony) had to integrate labour in an inherently contradictory developmental project. The fact that the same very weak economic base of these elites did not allow rewards for labour in this process in the form of enlarged social income, services and citizenship, is what made political integration ultimately unviable; this left a broad scope for repression in the occurrence of economic crisis.

Yet, given the same weakness of these polities, repression could not play the role, as in the Asian NICs' development discourse (Deyo, 1989), of a system of social control mobilising labour for development while at the same time excluding it from political influence. Instead, in the African case, attempts to functionalise labour with respect to growth goals had the important side effect of increasingly including it in the political confrontation. These unintended consequences reinforced labour's political orientation and its animosity towards a leadership that had betrayed its own promises of development and equality. But this also had an important impact on the relations between the labour movement as a complex pattern of identity and action and its formal organised expressions. In fact, the dynamic of integration-repression illustrated the structural weaknesses of the trade unions in these countries as sectional structures of interest representation.

While the strength of a labour movement lies in its strategic location in relation to broader trends of social change, where formal organisation is only one of the relevant variables, the strength of a union movement lies in its membership structure, in its recognition, in its coverage of formally employed wage-labour and in its resources. This, facilitated by the unions' dependence on state regulation, often put them in a vulnerable position, subject to co-optation or outright repression, even if this did not necessarily lessen the radicalism of the labour movement as such. Indeed, processes of trade union radicalisation as a result of pressures from below are quite common in Nigerian labour history.
State and Class Composition in Post-independence Nigeria

Hollowness of development plans, resort to violence to contain popular pressures, inefficiency of state institutions, massive wastefulness and corruption have been the elements of instability and lack of hegemony in the case of the Nigerian state (Ihonvbere & Shaw, 1988:50). Nigeria stands as a significant example of the debate on ‘prebendal politics’ in Africa. Modernisation, in this case, cannot but be associated with a process through which sectional interests, competing for scarce resources, found in the state the most effective way to accumulate power and status. The state could establish a regulatory function for itself in the political and economic sphere on the basis of patron-client relationships constructed in this way. State interventionism in the economy came to the fore not only as a legacy of the authoritarian colonial bureaucracy, required to raise internally the resources for its own maintenance, but also as a consequence of the meaning of the state as a vehicle for political self-promotion of non-productive economic elites. The politicisation of labour relations themselves can be regarded as an aspect of the politicisation of the broader social relations, premised upon the distributional role of the state through governmental projects. This made state structures the object of pressures for access to public expenditure in order to convert them into private wealth. According to this view (Joseph, 1984), in the Nigerian case we see the rise of a ‘political class’ without class politics. This dynamic of accumulation, by discouraging direct productive investment, is held responsible for the failed emergence of an industrial bourgeois class, substituted by the proliferation of vertical networks of patronage struggling for the allocation of resources from above. The construction of ethnicity as a vehicle to mobilise these networks gave them a distinctively ‘ethno-clientelist’ overtone. Their interplay with processes of class formation is made possible by the opportunity to disguise private accumulation under the aim of ‘communal advancement’.

It is unsatisfactory, in this perspective, that the determination of class position by access to political power limits the understanding of class-ethnicity relations. In fact, the process of formation of a ‘political class’ is substantially a product of capitalist modernisation, and of the socialisation of the elites to the values of social differentiation produced by a capitalist society. The fact that classes can be formed by virtue of their access to political power does not prevent them from developing specific economic interests in competition with other groups. While ethnicity can provide a defensive tool to preserve access to resources, the expansion of these resources can also require the definition of cross-ethnic and cross-regional alliances, whose actions can be motivated by more markedly class aims as opposed to those of other classes. This requires a renewed interest in industrialisation and in indigenisation of ownership as strategies opposed to expatriate interests, as in Nigeria. A similar dynamic of class definition was at work in post-independence Nigeria with the establishment in 1959 of a compromise between the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) – representing respectively the Northern, Islamic Hausa and the South-Eastern, Christian Ibo ‘ethnic’ constituencies – against the radicalism of the Action Group (AG) in the South-Western Yoruba region. When, in the immediate pre-civil war period, a realignment took place with the formation of a Southern alliance between NCNC and a newly moderated AG against the dominance of the NPC, a sectional divide re-emerged, but the motif of Southern modernising progressivism against Northern feudalism was an essential component of that divide. In general, the access to state power does not seem sufficient to differentiate the processes of Nigerian class formation from an allegedly ‘pure’ model of class since, even in major capitalist societies, ownership of the means of production did not define in itself a stable class position without also obtaining the
legal sanction of the state and the predominance over its apparatus. It is not by chance that the first massive example of labour mobilisation in Nigeria after independence, the 1964 general strike, took the shape of a broad inter-ethnic uprising for socio-economic improvements. A deep disaffection with the political class, notwithstanding the ethnic origin of this latter, deeply marked that episode (Diamond, 1983).

In general, the concept of ‘political class’ tends to obscure the internal differentiation of the elites themselves, and the emergence of a more genuine class politics amongst them. As William Graf (1986:109) notices, a distinction, if not an incompatibility as he says, exists between traditional elites and new elites, with the latter attempting to create a modern economic and political system. While the former aim to retain large portions of scarce resources, primarily land, the latter is more linked, albeit in a substantially speculative vein, to an expansionary developmental discourse. If the fragile post-independence systems depended on traditional constituencies for mass support, and they enacted for this purpose the powers of traditional rulers in the national institutions, a gradual, not always successful shift towards ‘rationalisation’ and reduction of the powers of intermediate authorities can be already envisaged in Nigeria after the first 1966 coup. These considerations have a great importance for labour because they can explain the extent to which a plurality of conflicting sectors composing a political class could coalesce around a vision of class opposition based on shared economic assumptions (such as the exclusionary character of the access to state resources and to capitalist status symbols) against other class forces. This was the case in 1959, in the 1964 general strike and in the anti-SAP worker mobilisation in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Formation of the Nigerian Labour Movement

The history of the Nigerian labour movement presents a number of traits in common with other African cases. I have already mentioned the limited extent of proletarianisation in Nigeria. The obstacles this provided to the organised strength of unions can be coupled with the fact that a particularly high share of this proletarianised labour force was employed by the state sector and the parastatals. For these workers, the ideological appeal of development, with all its connotations of containment of labour militancy, was reinforced, as an instrument of subordination, by the nature of the state as a direct employer. This character of the state in Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa, is essential in understanding the politicisation of the labour scene; wages and working conditions established in the public sector were to provide the guidelines. Hence, workers’ demands to raise minimum standards were easily catalysed into a direct confrontation with the state.

The second half of the 1970s was riddled with disunity, factional struggles, and inter-union competition with consequences up to the present. A number of competing federations merged and splintered in a continuous oscillation of acronyms. Reinforcing these divisive tendencies was the regionalisation of the colonial and post-colonial political scene and the general instability of the ruling coalitions, which made any stable alliance between nationalist parties and union federations organised on a national basis unfeasible. Nationalism in Nigeria could not play a significant unifying role for the union movement. Also, Nigerian business, initially operating largely as distributor and agent of foreign firms, and competing for favour and patronage inside the main nationalist parties, regarded organised labour with diffidence, as an unnecessary interference (Otobo, 1992:80).
In cases such as Tanzania (Shivji, 1976) or Ghana (Crisp, 1984), the absence of a tradition of one-party rule hampered the strengthening of a single union structure. It was only with the more decided intervention of the military state following the post-1970 oil boom and the subsequent industrialisation period that ‘rationalisation’ in the form of a single union federation was achieved. In the previous phase of nascent industrialisation, with the state in the position of major employer, and no substantial priority in ensuring ‘industrial peace’ through representative unions in the small private sector, civil and military regimes maintained an interest in the fragmentation of the union movement. This increased a general sense of distance and distrust between union activists and professional politicians (Cohen, 1974:100). Conflicts between union centres were also spurred by dissenting views on international affiliation, overlapping with ideological squabbles between ‘marxists’ and ‘moderates’ (Cohen, 1974:78-90). Many of these conflicts had to do with an accentuated personalisation of union politics, and with the transmission to the union leaderships of a mentality which regarded official position as a vehicle for personal empowerment. Personalisation of conflicts not only underpinned ideological rivalries, but it proved to be by itself a major cause of division. As a result, a diffidence by the grassroots towards union leaders paralleled the general disenchantment of organised labour towards the political elites. As surveys testify (Cohen, 1974:141), Nigerian worker's manifested a highly self-conscious identity and a heightened political perception of industrial conflict, but this did not translate into continuous participation in union affairs. A gap emerged after the first post-independence period between oppositional dynamics at the workplace and union organisation. This was reflected in the relations between union centres and the hundreds of highly dispersed and substantially autonomous affiliates organised along industrial lines.

The entire framework is further complicated by the fact that, until the first half of the 1970s, the highest levels of class identification in the workplace, based on a significant opposition over the control of the production process, were recognisable inside the ‘estates’ owned by expatriate capitalists. While the estates can be regarded as the most advanced forms of capitalist manufacturing in Nigeria, labour militancy here assumed the form of the ‘house unions’ (Peace, 1979). These structures were organised along the lines of the various establishments comprised in an estate and they did not fit the model of industrial unionism. Generally, they were not affiliated to any national centre. The dispersal and fragmentation proper to this model of organisation was also derived from the close personal identification between ordinary members and union officials, an identification produced by their closeness in the production process. Officials jealously guarded their power against any interference from industrial unions and federations. This prevented the unification of these organisations into mainstream union tradition, insulating the militancy of their members. Conversely, these can be regarded as the more militant fractions of the Nigerian workforce, with a collective pattern of identification extending from the workplace to the residential location. Moreover, in these unions conservative leadership could be ousted by radical pressures from below in the context of the vast upheaval surrounding the 1964 general strike. In order to maintain their power in a context of close day-to-day relationships with the grassroots, the new leaders had to accede to the highly radical demands of their constituencies, and to activate new channels of participation and consultation (Peace, 1979:115,120).

The action of the house unions in the expatriate estates contributed to a further separation of the workplace as a site of grassroots militancy from the established workers’ organisations. But it also had adverse consequences on the house unions'
side. It became a strong recipe for antipathy towards the discredited political class and towards the concept of a separate political representation for labour, involving a heightened sense of political powerlessness on their part. The separation of the workplace was, thus, confirmed also in this negative way. While they proved to be highly effective in negotiations with employers, it became more and more difficult for them to maintain high rates of wage increases in the face of the post-civil war spiralling inflation and of the more direct government intervention in the unions' affairs. This latter culminated in Decree 53 of 1970 which, amongst other provisions, severely restricted the right to strike (Peace, 1979:124-126). Indeed, a result of increased intervention during the 1970s was the incorporation of the house unions into the industrial unions, resulting from the amalgamation of the widely dispersed existing organisations.

According to Berg and Butler (1966), a high level of union autonomy in relation to African political systems, coupled with labour's substantial ineffectiveness in influencing politics, and given the limited impact on party politics, is particularly weak in the Nigerian case. Here, in fact, a real separation of the unions from party politics, their subordination in various phases to military regimes, a general organisational weakness at a national level, and contradictory relations with the grassroots, did not prevent workplace and local struggles from having a highly significant political impact. The high level of political consciousness displayed by Nigerian workers, notwithstanding their unions' ineffectiveness and/or subordination, proved decisive in explaining shifts in Nigerian political life. The 1966 coup, that put an end to the pluralist experiment of the First Republic, was an authoritarian outcome of the general disaffection with the abuses and corruption of the political class, catalysed in part by the 1964 general strike. In 1970-1971 grassroots pressures for indexing wage increases to the cost of living culminated in massive uprisings for the implementation of the Adebo Commission recommendations. This forced the various union federations themselves to find a unitary programme of action out of factional fighting (Cohen, 1974:230-238). This period constituted a fundamental precedent for the direct intervention of the state in union affairs culminating in the 1975-1978 'rationalisation' and the birth of the Nigeria Labour Congress, and in the more pronounced authoritarian regulation of industrial relations. Finally, the modalities of the adoption and the shortcomings of the IMF-World Bank line in the 1980s, and the whole process – as yet unfinished – of transition to democracy, was deeply influenced by labour mobilisation. Moreover, in all these cases, reluctant union centres often adjusted their agendas to pressures from below.

However, the politicisation of labour was not without side effects for Nigerian workers. The political influence of African labour, in general out of proportion to its numerical strength, was also an indication of economic weakness (Cohen, 1974:147). The limited nature of proletarianisation, the existence of vast reserves of unemployed labour, the role of the authoritarian state as the sole repository of the ideology of development and as the major employer is what makes a fair and equal system of collective bargaining in these cases unviable. The only chance left is to politicise bargaining itself. Furthermore, the absence in the Nigerian case of a workers' party, together with the strength of ethnic and sectional appeals, prevent this politicisation from taking the form of electoral participation. The limited number of wage labourers and the absence of alternative political channels is what compels the unions themselves to politicise their goals by presenting them as part of a broader set of popular grievances (Cohen, 1974:149-150). This can generate contradictions with the unions' role advocated by the government, as partners in economic development,
whose imperatives would require translating labour’s political non-alignment into cooperation in enforcing industrial discipline. While this can prove to be a major weakness for the unions, the politicisation of their aspirations is in fact a major stimulus for workplace activism.

The weakness of Nigerian organised labour became all the more evident after the direct intervention of the military on the political scene. The corruption of the First Republic combined with the vaguely populist outlook of the military programmes on issues such as equality and public morality, the rhetoric of the collective effort in the 1967 to 1970 Biafra war, and a renewed interest in economic development inaugurated a new trend that will prove to be recurrent in Nigerian history. It consisted of the establishment of a culture of trade union subordination and dependence from bureaucratic and technocratic authorities (Cohen, 1974:216-232). The military came to be seen as a moralising force acting for the interests of the deprived classes against the machinations of the ‘politicians’. Similarly, after the war, in the face of escalating inflation and a reduction of living standards, when the continuity with the past and the failure in the military’s economic policy became all the more evident, the Adebo Commission’s review of wages and salaries came to be seen as the honest and concerned counterparts of the degenerated elements in the military government. The extent to which such identifications were internalised by grassroots members themselves, even in a period of intense political confrontation between state and labour, is the most evident demonstration of the unions’ failure to develop an autonomous programme for social and economic change.

As Adrian Peace (1979:168) recognised, between the 1960s and 1970s although there was a remarkable readiness on the part of Nigerian workers in the private sector to trace their declining living standards to the alliance between employers and the state, collective mobilisation remains predominantly articulated against the employers themselves. The culture of dependence upon bureaucrats and technicians left a legacy well into the 1990s, reinforcing the isolation of the union structures from the grassroots. Perhaps the absence in the established unions of the model of responsible leadership that emerged in the house unions in the expatriates’ firms can be regarded as a further element of dependence. During the 1970s a significant shift occurred; workplace militancy came to be spurred by the unfulfilled promises of development, by the economic consequences of the civil war, and by the more authoritarian interventions of the military regime on the internal unions’ affairs as part of an attempt to manage the transformation in the wake of the oil boom. This proved to be a decisive factor for the radicalisation of the established unions themselves.

Labour and the Struggle for Democracy after the Oil Boom

The massive revenues from oil exports after 1970 ignited a highly contradictory dynamic in state-union relations. On the one hand, dependence on foreign exchange seemed lessened by a new source of internal accumulation, with the government trying to channel its resources towards the promotion of an indigenous manufacturing, mercantile and professional bourgeois class aimed at providing an enlarged base for political patronage. On the other hand, control of the oil sector remained firmly in the hands of foreign companies and, in Nigeria, only intermediaries of these companies benefited from the boom. Contradicting the aims of promoting a local manufacturing base, no attempt was made at developing an indigenous technology or technical cadres, and oil revenues were generally not channelled into the formation of modern infrastructures for capitalist development (Turner, 1979).
While new investment programmes were approved in manufacturing and to diversify the industrial base of the country, these were essentially consumer oriented in nature, based mainly on imported capital and raw materials. This renewed dependence, coupled with the enrichment of a strata of *nouveau riches* which provoked a marked increase in luxury consumption items, contributed to an escalation of foreign indebtedness. The apparent relaxation of the foreign exchange constraints as a consequence of the short-lived oil boom seemed confirmed by the greater availability of ‘petro-dollars’ on the world market as a result of a parallel boom in the Arab countries. The composition of total output and export shifted from its agricultural base to a higher mining and industrial share. Industrialisation plans were launched with little regard for integrated planning or compatibility with local infrastructures and technology. At the same time, mechanisation and concentration of agricultural land in the hands of the farmer elite was actively promoted by the state. As a way of personal enrichment for the new bourgeoisie, they combined with other, more traditional channels, such as the corruption associated with the issue of import licenses and links to over-priced sale of goods bought by the marketing boards. The resulting inflation seriously affected the wages of the growing urban working class. Its ranks were also engulfed by the waves of migrants escaping the neglect of agriculture resulting from the new industrial policy. Most found employment in the networks of the informal sector (Ihonvbere and Shaw, 1988:54-65; Otobo, 1992:82-83; Okolie, 1995). Workers’ resentment was reinforced by a sense of deprivation and powerlessness in the face of degrading social services and the abuses of the political class.

Under the slogan of the ‘indigenisation’ of the economy, a more ambivalent or conflictual attitude, especially under General Obasanjo’s (1975-79) government, was adopted towards expatriate employers in order to encourage greater competition in their sectors. This translated into some attention to workers’ grievances as testified, for example, by the Adebo Commission on wages and salaries. At the same time, the government was increasingly interested in restructuring the labour movement by taking decisive steps to resolve the issue of the re-unification of the various union centres. In industrial relations, the military government decisively modified the role of the Minister of Labour as overseer of employer-employee relations in a system, inherited from British colonial labour policies, that was based on the recognition of trade unions’ rights and voluntary bargaining. Instead, under the new system of ‘limited intervention and guided democracy’, the government asserted its prerogative to intervene in internal union affairs and in union-management relations, ultimately by legally enforcing any provision of a collective agreement that it would deem suitable (Trade Disputes Decree, 1976; see Fashoyin, 1980:97-102).

Interventionism involved new measures to contain resurgent workers’ militancy, such as constraints on the right to strike and a more decided resort to repression. In general, as a result of the industrial transition following the oil boom, workers in the private sector came to the forefront of industrial struggle, as the demonstrations for the extension of the Adebo Commission’s recommendations to the whole economy had demonstrated (Peace, 1979:148-153).

The restructuring of the labour organisations was an important measure of government interventionism. In the regime’s view, a direct intervention in the organisation of the union movement was an integral part of a system encouraging industry-wide collective bargaining in a planned mixed-economy system (Etukudo, 1977:110). At the end of 1977, more than 1,000 existing labour organisations were regrouped and condensed into 42 industrial unions which came to incorporate the old
house unions. Some of these latter tried to resist incorporation, regarded as a potential ‘sell-out’ of their historic gains. Conflicts and unauthorised strikes took place among the members of the house unions (Fashoyin, 1980:35-36). At the end of 1975, the four existing labour centres agreed to merge in a new federation – the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC). At the root of the new unity drive was an appreciation amongst union leaders of the tide of workplace militancy and of the disaffection towards union officials, in the context of the socio-economic problems caused by industrial transformation. However, the government disbanded the federation, according to the line of ‘guided democracy’ announced few months before the planned launch of the NLC. After the process of reorganisation of the industrial unions had terminated, the regime re-inaugurated the NLC in 1978 with the legal provision that it was to act as the only recognised central labour organisation (Otobo, 1992:94-95). The origins of this new experiment of unitary labour organisation were thus marked by continuity in its being dependent on state sanctions.

The state arrogated to itself the task of writing the unions’ constitutions, ensuring their compliance and protecting the interests of their members, even against the organisation itself. Stating that the unions’ role would have to be the defence of the ‘true’ interests of the workers, the state implicitly assumed the definition of that interest as its own prerogative. This new weapon in the state’s hand proved useful in demobilising workers’ militancy with the shift in economic policies during the 1980s towards neo-liberalism and the implementation of World Bank and IMF’s policies. Assuming these latter as merely technical and non-ideological exercises, and hence by definition excluded from the unions’ agenda, the state could act against opposition to the SAP in NLC circles on the ground that it did not amount to protection of the ‘true’ interests of the workers. In the context of heightened workers’ militancy against the harsh social consequences of the IMF-inspired measures, the regime could turn to unprecedented levels of repression (Otobo, 1992:119).

While nominally committed to a programme emphasising the provision of public services, especially in housing (Shagari, 1981:235-239), the civilian administration of Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari (1979-83) inaugurated the implementation of a neo-liberal path with its 1982 Economic Stabilisation Act, in a situation of spiralling foreign debt and balance of payments crisis following the exhaustion of the oil boom. In this context, the difficulty in finding continuous sources of international financing and the deepening crisis favoured by escalating corruption, ultimately led to the ousting of the Second Republic civilian government in 1983. Shagari had brought the patrimonial system in Nigeria to a high level of sophistication through a ‘federal’ policy of allocation of privileges to the various ethno-linguistic groups, which initially succeeded in creating a vast consensus for the new administration. But the plundering of foreign reserves and the decline of oil revenues alienated some sectors of the ruling class (such as the ‘Kaduna mafia’; see Othman, 1984), particularly connected with international business.

It was only in 1986 that the country adopted a comprehensive SAP, aligning itself along the lines of IMF orthodoxy. Before then, the government had still maintained some points of departure, such as resistance to the devaluation of the national currency, the Naira, to the removal of the subsidy on the oil price and to the requested scale of privatisation (Otobo, 1992:86-87). On these issues, in particular, the rejection by the military regime of General Buhari (1983-85) of the recommendations by the IMF eventually led negotiations for an ‘extended fund facility’ loan and the rescheduling of debt to a standstill. This would have happened even if Buhari had shown a substantial commitment to other points of the IMF agenda such as reduction
of public expenditure, retrenchments and wage containment. The new regime of General Babangida installed after the 27 August 1985 coup, while maintaining a nominal commitment to the restoration of democracy, implemented more consistently the IMF recommendations, culminating in the adoption of the 1986 SAP. This outcome was the result of open dissatisfaction on the part of the regime with the previous administration's inability to reach an agreement with the IMF. The 1986 SAP inverted Buhari's line by accepting IMF recommendations on currency devaluation, large scale privatisation of state enterprises and reduction of petroleum subsidies (Olukoshi, 1989).

The resulting aggravated deterioration in the quality of life provided a powerful incentive for worker militancy. The government, on the other hand, did not hesitate to make use of its new legal tools. The structural weakness entrenched in the NLC became evident when, in 1988, the government temporarily banned the organisation under the pretext of internal fighting, a move probably calculated to prevent popular opposition against the withdrawal of the oil subsidy the same year (Otobo, 1992:92-123). The state's widespread interference in the unions' internal life has made some authors (Fashoyin, 1990) write about a gradual shift away from the corporatist perspectives upon which the restructuring of the NLC in 1978 had been premised, towards a more exclusionary and authoritarian regulation coincident with the advent of SAP.

In Nigeria as elsewhere in Africa, the implementation of the SAP revealed the weak and contradictory nature of the developmentalist discourse. An industrialisation process guided by the clientelist interlocking between the state and sectional vested interests had increased the dependence of the country on imported capital goods and raw materials. If SAP was an attempt to manage the social contradictions ignited, among other factors by the militancy of a new industrial working class, it substantially heightened the effects of those contradictions. We can recognise a common pattern of the SAP's consequences in Africa in the weakening of the union organisations. This was the outcome of privatisation, massive retrenchments, industrial decline resulting from the downscaling of subsidies and from the removal of barriers to international competition. In Nigeria, an industrial strategy designed to allocate projects regardless of any rational planning, and on the basis of local predatory interests, had given shape to a productive structure unintegrated in the surrounding socio-economic environment and totally dependent on imported capital and semi-assemblies. The consequences of the economic austerity, the worsening of terms of trade and currency devaluation put these industries in a particularly weak position and their workers easily succumbed to the pressures for restructuring and retrenchments (Bangura, 1987). On one hand, the state, as an employer, contributed with massive dismissals in the public sector. Increasing numbers of unemployed, or employed workers whose salaries proved insufficient as a source of maintenance, had to look for strategies of survival in the informal sector. Here, they encountered the plight of the urban poor who faced deteriorating living standards and the breakdown of public services. These grievances were increased among those who still had to complement the income of relatives in the rural areas. Thus, notwithstanding the weakness of the union movement, new links of solidarity could be defined transcending the sphere of the economic claims. Opposition to the SAP became a catalyst for the rejection of an authoritarian and corrupt political regime. As in the 1970s, workplaces provided a testing ground for a new movement for democracy, with important effects of radicalisation on the unions themselves.
On the other hand, the combined effect on workplaces and households of changes in the labour market (increased unemployment and formal-informal overlapping) and of policy making (implementation of SAP), even if it gave shape to new patterns of mass militancy, did not help by itself to translate these into a sense of radicalism based on alternative political perspectives on the transition to democracy. The first level encounter with this new protagonism of the masses is what has been defined as 'militant economism' (Adesina, 1992:14), often translating into merely defensive and rearguard contents.

At the shop-floor level itself, response to the SAP was varied, and often contradictory. The unions were engaged in substantially defensive battles to retain existing levels of employment. However, strategies of individual escape from wage labour towards, for example, farming, or forms of more or less legal self-employment, weakened those organised efforts (Bangura & Beckman, 1991:150). These responses testify to the persistence of an option of 'exit', whereby 'voice' in the form of meaningful bargaining over SAP was increasingly difficult. But the resort to hidden strategies of resistance, based on informal activities and identifications aimed at restoring a violated communitarian ethos, could also result from an entrenched diffidence towards the leaderships (Lemarchand, 1992), both of the state and of the unions.

The Nigerian case seems to reinforce these impressions. Here, a gradual democratic opening on the part of the regime was ruthlessly interrupted with the annulment of the elections of 12 June 1993, an act followed by the ousting of the interim civilian government by General Sani Abacha on 17 November 1993. In this way, the army suppressed a transition process that it itself initiated in 1989 by designing an electoral competition based on the existence of two approved parties. The ensuing widespread protests, while marking an all-time low for the credibility of the political system, provoked initiatives from a number of actors arising from the diversification of grievances generated by authoritarianism and SAP. Students, professionals, public and private workers, and human rights associations took to the streets. But in this process, various shortcomings emerged. The movement was to some extent divided along ethnic and religious lines, while no mass support could be built by the two parties competing in the annulled election, given their nature as the regime's creatures, and given the general disaffection with the political class. The winner of the elections, Moshood Abiola, a wealthy businessman with a history of close relations with the Shagari regime, could hardly be a catalyst for popular mobilisation. The elites of the two parties either substantially accepted the 1993 coup, or chose to bargain with the regime or, as Abiola did, appealed to foreign condemnation instead of trying to mobilise an internal mass opposition (Lewis, 1994).

In July 1994 an upsurge of grassroots worker militancy revitalised the democratic movement. The strike in the oil sector declared by the two unions NUPENG and PENGASSAN, followed by the NLC, seriously affected the economy. Their demands concerned the release of Abiola who had been arrested earlier in the year, the release of the results of the 1993 elections, and an end to economic mismanagement by the military regime. The Abacha government responded by banning the leadership of the two unions and of the NLC and putting them under military control (Isaacs, 1995). At the end of 1995, the military regime still held the initiative in the process.

Compared to the ambiguities of civil society, at the workplace level a set of differentiated conflictual dynamics emerged. In general, and once again, workers at that level showed a proactive approach in countering the effects of SAP, sometimes
without direct involvement of the unions. However, the results of these responses were largely dependent on highly diverse factors such as the level of consciousness, or the quality of the leadership and of the organisation. Moreover, the enduring separation from the political sphere greatly weakened the unions’ capacity to fight retrenchments on the shop floor (Bangura, 1991:185). Negotiations over retrenchment and restructuring and the attempt to make managers stick to contracts were aimed at preventing employers from taking advantage of the situation to violate the agreed factory balance of forces (Bangura & Beckman, 1991:150-151). The NLC tried to complement these dynamics at the central level, defending past gains through an active involvement in the debate around SAP, and while at the same time mobilising workers to discredit the reform package, while coping with severe repression.

However, the general undermining of collective bargaining often left little alternative to strike action. This quite often assumed a disruptive character, with prolonged occupations, sit-ins and acts of sabotage. In other cases, the sense of insecurity and the weakness of local union organisation led workers to adopt strategies of individual adjustment and survival, rather than outright confrontation. This, in some observer’s view (Oloyede, 1992) undermined workplace solidarity.

This variability of response was influenced not only by factors such as organisation and consciousness, but by a complex interplay between lived experiences and the ideological mediation of state and capital agencies. According to Adesina (1989), two processes of identity construction were at work. The first involved an autonomous definition of subjectivity on the basis of conditions vis-à-vis the labour process; the second was the construction of a symbolic social community beyond the workplace. These two converged in defining ‘lateral communities’ extending to the communitarian ethos of the workers’ residential location in a clearly oppositional sense towards capitalist individualism. However, although it provided a repository of alternative moralities and of worker resistance, this communitarian self was at the same time permeated by the dominant developmental discourse. In this sense, while it privileged the themes of human dignity and resistance against unjust treatment, it crucially missed an understanding of capital-labour relations. Paradoxically, it was the reinterpretation of the same developmental ideology that made the claim to equality of treatment all the more legitimate. But this can also act as a self-imposed constraint when issues of conflict and control of production come to the fore. In fact, the points of contact between working class ethos and developmental discourse, with its associated image of the workers as a privileged stratum, can generate doubts on the morality of allegedly ‘self-centred’ strategies of struggle aimed at a greater worker control over production. Here, the presence of an entrenched organisation in the shop-floor becomes a crucial variable in solving these dilemmas.

**Conclusion**

In this article I have attempted to provide a historical understanding of the nature, characters and contradictions of the Nigerian labour movement in the struggle for democracy. A number of influences can be summarised as significant in this regard. The developmentalist discourse propped up by both civilian and military regimes in the post-independence period found a constant motif in the appeal to the working classes for assuming their share of responsibilities and sacrifices. This was partly made possible by the incomplete nature of class formation in Nigeria, the relations between national elites and their local following mediated by the patronisation of the state, and the absence of a productive dominant class capable of a comprehensive design based on political inclusion and social integration.
The attempt by competing regional power blocs, divided along ethnic and religious lines, to gain stable access to state power by enlarging their consensus beyond traditional constituencies in the context of industrial development, gave the labour movement a weight well beyond its numerical strength. Even if it did not translate into co-optation of unions in party machines, this weight reinforced worker militancy against the same foundations of an elitist, exclusionary and increasingly discredited political class. This can be regarded as a manifestation of a more general paradox confronted by African elites having to deal with significant labour movements whose support was needed for their consolidation. Moreover, the politically supportive role required for the working class inside an authoritarian and corrupt political system had the further effect of politicising bargaining relations and worker antagonism towards employers.

At the same time, the historical exclusion of the union movement from mainstream nationalist party politics and from direct political representation, its attempted effective subordination by the military after 1970, and various internal weaknesses led to a situation where organised labour could only partially represent grassroots mobilisation. Disillusion with party politics had, indeed, historically brought large sections of organised labour to rely on technocrats and on the military for solutions to the country’s political, economic and moral crises. I agree, in this sense, with O'Donnell and Schmitter’s (1989:31) argument: demilitarisation of public life is not only a problem of the military, it also concerns the removal of the messianic image of military interventions that is spread across civilian interests. However, I also think that the question runs much deeper, since the current disillusionment with the military regime in Nigeria did not prevent it from setting the agenda of political transition and eventually provoking its collapse.

In particular, the existence of a mass actor capable of building a coalition of interests for social change is a variable in democratisation processes whose significance has been underestimated by O'Donnell and Schmitter. Their focus on the logical and chronological link between what has elsewhere been called ‘abertura’ (opening-up of a political space for transition) and ‘reforma’ (establishment of the institutional framework for democratisation) substantially neglects questions pertaining to the nature and role of mass radicalism in the process. This would require an analysis of the multiple and complex determinants of working-class militancy, and of the often unintended consequences of relationships between organisation-building and subjectivity-construction in the labour movement. Instead, the outlook of labour studies influenced by mainstream political science ‘transition theory’ (see Valenzuela, 1989) seems to privilege for organised labour a kind of prescriptive model of behaviour. Strong and centralised organisations, effective control over the grassroots, structured relationships with the reformist partners in the transitional deal are here regarded as essential components. Yet the danger of an over-simplification based on unidimensional interpretations of the role of labour constantly re-emerges in such perspectives. They are effectively of little help in explaining troubles encountered in the passage from the first to the second phase of democratisation in most African countries, even where the convocation of conferences souveraines was aimed at ‘organically’ institutionalising bargaining between actors in ‘civil society’ at large.

The incapacity of such views to make sense of the role of African labour in transition can be related to ambiguities and ambivalences within organised labour. If the unions’ political role in catalysing a general discontent can be a manifestation of the labour movements’ strength, it can also be an expression of union weakness on the economic front. That is to say, it can reflect constraints facing African unions in their
proper role as defender of workers' interests. The conjunction of structural adjustment with the absence of a historical tradition of collective bargaining and union rights is probably responsible for these institutional shortcomings. In many countries, structural adjustment provided both opportunities and constraints for labour (a good example in the Zambian case is provided by Rakner, 1992). Opportunities were related to grassroots, workplace or local agitation against the hardships imposed by SAP in the form of wage cuts, retrenchments, and authoritarianism at the point of production. Links could be established with a broader resentment arising in communities hit by increased prices for essential goods, degradation of services, corruption and political class enrichment. The fact that the state is in most African countries a major employer further politicised this dissent, while the dislocation of many waged workers into the informal sector, smuggling, or starvation on the land reinforced labour-community ties and support networks. On another side, constraints on organised labour also grew out of this situation: wage increases bargain at a decentralised level failed to facilitate new wage policies at national level, SAPs brought harsh consequences in terms of de-industrialisation and reduction in wage-labour complements. These decisively jeopardised the case for organised labour in a political scenario dominated by alternating elites charged with the implementation of the SAPs (a good Zimbabwean illustration of this point is in Raftopoulos, 1992).

The question of the relationships between a labour movement based on workplace and community struggles and central labour organisations has become common concern in a number of African countries, even with different histories and traditions, in the context of the last twenty years of crisis. Here it is sufficient to notice the ways in which this problem resurfaced in two very different countries such as Tanzania and Zimbabwe. In the former (see Shivji, 1976:130-138), workers' grassroots militancy exploded during the 1970s in the form of an open revolt against a union centre totally integrated in the one-party state. Interestingly, this revolt instrumentalised the same ideological manifestos of the party, which predicated, among other things, workers' control of production. In the case of Zimbabwe, theoretically more proximate to Nigeria, the attempt of the state at directly restructuring the central labour organisation in order to provide it with the legitimation required for a vehicle of industrial stabilisation, created instead new autonomous channels of influence for a grassroots workplace mobilisation against SAP (Sachikonye, 1986, 1993).

Conversely, the absence of socially and strategically diversified organised labour in Nigeria today is what mostly makes the perpetuation of military power viable. This issue is connected to that of the role of the working classes in the democratisation processes. The argument advanced by Rueschemeyer et al. (1992:140-143) on the fundamental role of the working class as a protagonist of democratisation, and their emphasis on organisation and on broad-based alliance politics, is quite convincing in its stated aim of criticising modernisation perspectives based on the role of the middle classes. But I am not equally convinced about their postulate that that role requires, as a precondition, moderation on the part of the working class itself in the form of a necessary commitment to capitalism. A question can be raised whether, in the context of African countries whose capitalist development has been epitomised by SAP and sponsored by political authoritarianism, the democratic function of the working class could be asserted more effectively in a radical orientation towards social transformation.

In the context of SAP, and of its adverse social consequences, workplace mobilisation came to be related to a broader range of social grievances, becoming an essential
component in the struggle for democratisation. The distance established between workplace mobilisation on the one hand and unions and parties on the other has become a decisive feature of the role of labour in Nigerian transition. This makes, in my view, the position of labour inside social movements for democracy quite uncertain. Is it merely a supportive role for the return of Abiola to power, thereby reproducing the subalternity of labour from ‘morally grounded’ politicians, or is the labour movement capable of influencing the contents of the political agenda for transition? As Franz Schuurman (1993:197) writes, in the absence of ‘a political ideology as an articulating mechanism’ the chances for social movements to give shape to a common political project are substantially reduced, and what he calls ‘disjunctive discourses’ take the place of this project. The question is whether labour can provide such an ‘articulating mechanism’.

Even when union positions had been radicalised and made more receptive to workplace issues, this took place mainly in partial and localised forms. Otherwise, differentiated and often contradictory dynamics remained at the workplace level, or in single union affiliates. The importance of an articulated and stratified view of labour in transitions to democracy, as opposed to visions centred on elite-pacting, has been stressed from various quarters (see Adler & Webster, 1995). In a case such as Nigeria, with a significant discrepancy between dynamics at the central and at the affiliate and workplace level, it is particularly urgent to complement such a picture with a multi-layered conceptual model capable not only of taking into account the role of the union organisations, but to relate it to complex grassroots pressures. In particular, how can diffuse, ambivalent, informal kinds of resistance be integrated in an understanding of the role of labour in transition?

The question of the absence of an effective system of collective bargaining and of influential political structures is a decisive challenge confronting not only workplace struggles, but the entire democratic movement in Nigeria. The solution to this challenge will depend on the capacity of the labour movement to articulate a programme for social change capable of raising participation while addressing basic needs of the broad sectors affected by structural adjustment and authoritarianism.

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Corruption in Nigeria: Historical Perspectives

S. O. Osoba

With this essay by Segun Osoba we begin an occasional series of guest essays by distinguished African scholars in which they reflect on key political, social and developmental issues. This essay is based on a paper presented to the August 1995 conference on Ethics in Government, organised by the Civil Liberties Organisation, at Ijebu-Ode.

Corruption is a global phenomenon, intelligible only in its social context. It can be defined as anti-social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermines the authorities' capacity to secure the welfare of all citizens. In Nigeria it became the principal means of private accumulation during the decolonisation period, in the absence of other means, and came to shape political activity and competition after independence.

All subsequent regimes, military and civilian, have been pervaded by corruption. Aided and enhanced by oil revenues, this has created a deepening crisis of kleptocracy, shown in its most extreme form since 1984. It results in a combination of scandalous wealth among the ruling class with growing poverty, misery and degradation among the mass of Nigerians. Political life has become dominated by winner-take-all factional struggles, political cynicism and violence, while the economy and social institutions have been driven into decay.

Corruption has thus become a way of life in Nigeria, one which existing governments neither wish to, nor can, control. Combating corruption requires a popular participatory democracy able to monitor and hold to account those in charge of the state and the treasury.

Theoretical and Moral Presuppositions

Contrary to the prevailing practice among most social scientists and other students of society (like lawyers, historians and philosophers), who claim, or make a pretence at objective, value-free analysis and explanation of any social phenomenon, I openly acknowledge that all attempts to explain social reality, or any aspect of it, are necessarily informed by philosophical and moral presuppositions, explicitly or implicitly made by the scholars concerned. Consequently, no valid distinction can be made among students of society on the basis alone of their objectivity or lack of objectivity, since they are all carriers of prejudices and predilections of a philosophical or moral nature, or both. The proper distinction that can be made is between scholars who explicitly state their prejudices and predilections and those
who hide theirs behind the smokescreen of value-free and objective analysis. Stating
one’s presuppositions enables one’s readers and audience to establish one’s
prejudices and predilections and assess the extent to which such prejudices have
affected one’s choice and use of evidence in the construction of any analysis and
explanation of a social phenomenon. Consequently, the ability by the reader or
listener to establish the author’s peculiar prejudices and assess the extent of their
influence on the author’s construction of social reality makes it possible for the reader
or listener to make allowance for the author’s bias(es) in arriving at his or her own
independent judgment on the author’s representation of social reality. Such active
participation by the reader or listener, alongside the author, in reconstructing and
explaining social reality becomes well-nigh impossible when an author hides the
philosophical and moral presuppositions informing his or her analysis and
explanation of social reality behind the shibboleth of objective and value-free
analysis.

Given the notoriously recurring character of corruption as a social phenomenon in the
Nigerian polity from colonial times to the present, it is my humble opinion that the
enterprise for the study, analysis, explanation and solution of this persistent and
progressively worsening problem is too serious and important to be left to social
scientists, historians, philosophers and lawyers alone. Hence the need for these
scholars to involve their readers and listeners in the process of analysis and
explanation by making their presuppositions and, therefore, their prejudices and
predilections explicit in their works.

Hence, I start this discussion of corruption in Nigerian society by offering a definition
of corruption informed by philosophical and moral presuppositions which I uphold,
but which other people may find unacceptable. Corruption in my view is a form of
anti-social behaviour by an individual or social group which confers unjust or
fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is inconsistent with the established legal
norms and prevailing moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the
capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual
wellbeing of all members of society in a just and equitable manner. I attempt to list
below all the presuppositions that I can explicitly identify as informing the definition
stated above and my whole analytical, explanatory and prescriptive approach to the
issue of corruption in our society:

1) Corruption was not invented by, nor is it peculiar to Nigerians. On the contrary, it
is a global phenomenon with deep historical roots, although it manifests itself with
significant similarities and differences in different societies, depending on the
peculiar systems of power distribution and the legal and moral norms operating
therein.

2) Corruption, like all social phenomena, is intelligible only in its total social context:
its peculiar form, dynamics and degree of social and cultural acceptability or
tolerance being critically related to the dominant mode of capital accumulation;
income, wealth and poverty distribution; power configuration; and the underpinning
moral and ethical values operating in a given society.

3) Corruption in Nigeria is a kind of social virus which is a hybrid of traits of
fraudulent anti-social behaviour derived from British colonial rule and those derived
from, and nurtured in the indigenous Nigerian context.
Corruption in Nigeria: Historical Perspectives

From Petty Thievery to Army Robbery

Colonial Period

Classical colonial rule that lasted until the end of the Second World War was essentially the unrestrained autocratic and authoritarian rule of a small band of British colonial officials aided and abetted by their compatriots among the European Christian missions and monopoly trading firms operating in Nigeria. This international bourgeoisie of usurpers of the Nigerian people's sovereign power and authority established a kind of praetorian or military rule (Dudley, 1973:21-39) underpinned by a mode of capital production, appropriation and accumulation that was dominated by the monopolistic and oligopolistic practices of major European trading firms. Thus the colonial authorities and their collaborators presided over a fraudulent and corrupt accumulation system, which facilitated the appropriation of huge surpluses for shipment to the metropolis from Nigerian peasant farmers and other petty producers via unequal terms of trade; Nigerian workers via meagre, often below subsistence, wages; all adults via primitive and exorbitant taxation; and the entire population (including unborn generations) via exclusive monopoly rights of exploitation granted to British and other European firms over Nigeria's mineral and other natural resources.

This mode of colonial authoritarianism generated a crisis of accumulation whereby, in the Fanonian sense, 'to be white was to be rich and to be black was to be poor', since the only roles available to most Nigerians in the colonial economy were menial ones like peasant farming, petty trading, petty clerical and subordinate jobs in the bureaucracy and the trading firms. By the end of the Second World War this crisis of accumulation had resulted in such sharpening of the contradiction between the British colonial rulers and the ambitious up-and-coming Nigerian bourgeoisie or foster elite as to enable the latter to challenge the power monopoly of the former, thus forcing a change in the colonial project. This, however, resulted only in the cosmetic transformation both of the mode of capital accumulation and the structure of governance, dubbed by historians as the policy of decolonisation during the last decade or so of British colonial rule in Nigeria.

Period of Decolonisation (1952-60)

The most striking feature of the politics of decolonisation was the deftness with which the British colonialists arranged to perpetuate themselves in a dominant position over the wealth of Nigeria and its accumulation process by putting in place a spurious power-sharing arrangement or partnership between themselves and their monopoly enterprises on the one hand, and the fledgling Nigerian bourgeoisie on the other. Care was, however, taken to ensure, through a series of cleverly stage-managed constitutional projects from the Richards Constitution of 1946 to the Independence Constitution of 1960, that the British international bourgeoisie remained the senior partner and their Nigerian counterparts were no more than a junior or subordinate partner in this power-sharing arrangement.

By progressively transferring formal legal authority to rule to their Nigerian surrogate bourgeoisie under decolonisation the departing British colonialists succeeded in securing their acquiescence in the retaining, even consolidating and enhancing of the existing structures of accumulation under which foreign monopoly capital dominated all the key sectors of the economy – export-import trade, extractive and manufacturing industries, banking, insurance, shipping etc. The sweetener in this
The pact of unequal partnership was the admission of several key and politically influential members of the Nigerian ruling bourgeoisie from the three regions and Lagos into lucrative but honorific and powerless partnerships and directorships (and as agents, distributors and representatives) in the major foreign enterprises. This was in addition to the new opportunities of private accumulation which became open to politically influential members of the Nigerian bourgeoisie who became ministers, chairmen and members of public corporations or parastatals with powers limited only by the veto of the ultimate colonial authority to award contracts for public projects, issue commodity buying agents’ licenses, award scholarships to students, grant government loans to cash-strapped indigenous contractors and businessmen. All these new roles as political and economic decision-makers in the public domain opened the doors to new forms of corrupt and substantial capital accumulation to major members of the Nigerian ruling class, as opposed to the pre-decolonisation era when, because of their marginal position in the scheme of things, they had severely limited access to corrupt accumulation. It is to this period of decolonisation that the pervasive phenomenon of ‘ten per cent’ kickbacks dates, as executors of a whole array of public policies insisted on a prepayment to themselves of at least 10 per cent of the value of the favour being sought by members of the public (contract, licence, scholarship, employment etc.) before performing the duty for which they were already being paid generous salaries and allowances from the public treasury.

Independence and its Immediate Aftermath (1960-66)

Since the dominant character of the colonial state and economy in Nigeria was the marginalisation of the African population and the virtual monopoly of political and economic power by the white agents of British rule, scarcity of capital, for investment in commerce, industry and agriculture and also in personal and social development, like higher and professional education, was a pervasive phenomenon throughout the country. The problems confronted by the two latter-day financial giants of the First Republic in their attempts to raise capital in the closing decades of colonial rule amply illustrate the phenomenon of capital famine among all sections of the indigenous population. Neither Azikiwe in the 1920s nor Awolowo in 1944 was able to raise substantial capital to fund his higher education overseas. Azikiwe had to work and study initially in the US before he accumulated enough credits to win scholarships and fellowships which enabled him to complete his university education. As for Awolowo, because of the limited borrowed resources at his command, he was not able to register with London University as an internal student of law, but rather as an external student relying on private study during his three-year sojourn in England from 1944 to 1947. Both men also confronted the crisis of capital formation in their respective ventures to set up newspaper organisations in the 1930s and 1940s (the West African Pilot and others by Zik and Nigerian Tribune by Awolowo) as instruments for promoting their political ambitions. Both organisations operated at a low level of capitalisation and excellence before the introduction of majority African governments in 1952 when the new political dispensation opened new avenues of capital formation to the two leaders.

The point of this illustration with the cases of Awolowo and Azikiwe is first to underscore the fact that dearth of capital was not peculiar to the two men, but rather that their plight was typical among Nigerians under colonial conditions. Secondly, this experience of capital famine by the up-and-coming Nigerian elite who entered into the power-sharing partnership with the British colonial authorities in 1952 and ultimately took over from them at independence in 1960, profoundly affected their attitude to the use of state power and the state treasury when they acceded to supreme
political power just before and at independence. Even before independence, Zik as premier of Eastern Nigeria had been exposed by the Foster Sutton Tribunal of Enquiry of 1956 into the African Continental Bank (ACB) to have abused his position as head of government to divert huge sums of Eastern Nigerian government funds into his own bank, the ACB, thus solving the bank’s problem of chronic shortage of operating capital and in the process substantially enriching himself. In the same way the G. B. A. Coker Commission of Inquiry of 1962 into six Western Nigerian public corporations revealed several ingenious and brazen devices by which Awolowo and his colleagues in the leadership of the Action Group Government of Western Nigeria enriched themselves and their party fabulously at the expense of the accumulated funds of the Cocoa Marketing Board, property of the whole people of Western Nigeria.

These two cases of judicially investigated corruption in Eastern and Western Nigeria were not unique. On the contrary they were only two dramatic examples of a phenomenon that was pervasive all over the country during the first Republic. The only difference between the North and South at this time was that in view of the monolithic solidarity of the Nigerian People’s Congress (NPC) government of the North, with the emirate authorities of the Sokoto Caliphate system serving as a cementing factor, there was no split in the NPC akin to that between Zik and E. O. Eyo in the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) government in the East in 1955-56 and that between Awolowo and Akintola in the Action Group in 1961-62. Consequently there was no insider revelation of the goings-on in the Northern Nigerian government, as the Eyo faction of the NCNC made before Foster-Sutton and the Akintola faction of the Action Group made before Coker.

In effect, therefore, the succession of the Nigerian political elite at independence to the sovereign political authority meant that they could now attempt to solve their central problem of dearth of private capital by broadening their accumulative base through exploiting maximally the public wealth of the state which was previously unavailable to them. They were thus able to diversify their activities into new, often dubious and fraudulent forms of primitive private accumulation at public expense. These forms included the fraudulent award (including outright sale) of unsecured government loans, produce buying and import-licenses to their cronies, the inflation of government contract values (and the consequential enlargement of payable kickbacks to themselves), and the straightforward looting of the treasury by its very custodians. The attempt by each of the three major political groupings that dominated the politics of the First Republic to monopolise, or at least have the lion’s share of, the loot from this systematic plundering of the wealth of the nation was a major factor in intensifying and embittering the contest for political power along ethno-regional lines – a process whose high points were the action group crisis (1962), census crisis (1962-63), federal election crisis (1964), Tiv rebellion (1964-65), and Western Nigeria election crisis (1965), making the country more or less ungovernable and culminating in the Kaduna Nzeogwu military coup d'état of January 1966 and the tragic and disastrous intrusion of the Nigerian armed forces into the political life of the country.

**Military Rule and the Foundation of Kleptocracy (1966-75)**

The abortive Nzeogwu-led coup d'état of 15 January 1966 lasted for only a couple of days in its futile attempt to end the misrule, ineptitude and corruption of the preceding five years plus. In spite of its failure it set the agenda of military rule in Nigeria as a ‘corrective’ form of governance committed against corruption and indiscipline and in favour of restoration of democracy and justice. This agenda set by Nzeogwu in his broadcast on Radio Kaduna on 16 January 1966 has been
opportunistically and fraudulently adopted by all subsequent military regimes, including the Aguiyi-Ironsi government of January to July 1966 and the current Abacha government. The truth of the matter, however, is that this original, supposedly revolutionary and patriotic, agenda of Nzeogwu has been observed mainly in its breach by all the successor military regimes.

The Gowon regime resulting from the Northern-sponsored counter-coup of 29 July 1966 was the first substantive military regime that had ample opportunity over a period of nine years to fashion the Nigerian state in the image of the military. Apart from the initial effort of continuing and extending the work of the Ironsi regime in exposing the corrupt activities of the First Republic politicians through various investigating panels into government parastatals and assets of public officers, the Gowon regime quickly settled down to its own project of stripping the state through different forms of primitive and fraudulent accumulation. In addition to all the pre-existing forms of unlawful enrichment for public officers in the civilian and armed services, the Nigerian Civil War (June 1967 to January 1970) provided sensational opportunities for unlawful enrichment: for example, the misappropriation of the salaries and allowances of soldiers killed in action for several months by their commanders; the gross inflation of military procurement contracts; the payment of inflated contract fees several times for the same goods or services, or none at all; the looting of public and private properties in occupied territories by both the Nigerian and Biafran armies. The classic case was the looting of millions of pounds sterling from the Central Bank Benin in 1968, a crime which both armies blamed on each other.

The immediate post-civil war period coincided with the era of petroleum boom when Nigeria's petroleum production grew phenomenally and the revenue from petroleum sales grew even more dramatically especially after the Yom Kippur War of 1973 when there was a fourfold increase in international petroleum prices. This was the time when the Nigerian treasury was so awash with petro-dollars that Gowon's Governor of the Central Bank declared publicly that money was not Nigeria's problem, but how to spend it. Given this apparent over-abundance of cash in the national till, it was not surprising that there was dramatic escalation in the incidence of corruption and unlawful enrichment. Witness the sensational public charges of corruption made in sworn affidavits against J. S. Tarka, Gowon's Federal Commissioner for Communication, by Godwin Daboh and against Joseph Gomwalk, Gowon's Benue-Plateau State Military Governor by a school teacher Aper Aku.

An important factor in the phenomenon of corruption during the Gowon regime, and in all subsequent military regimes, attaining its apogee in the Babangida-Abacha regimes, was the total lack of budgetary discipline and financial accountability. For instance, there was no year in Gowon's nine-year dictatorship when the Ministry of Defence (translate to 'the armed forces') did not overshoot its approved estimates of expenditure by several million pounds sterling or naira, without going through the inconvenient process of passing through the Executive Council and/or Supreme Military Council a supplementary appropriation decree. The Ministry of Defence with the connivance, if not the active encouragement of the Government, also consistently ignored the Auditor-General's queries concerning these vast unauthorised and illegal expenditures every year.

From the foregoing, it would seem that the phenomenon of corruption attained a distinct and higher stage of development during the nine years of Gowon's administration. For one thing the governments of the First Republic had to observe a minimum level of formal accountability to their elected legislatures, their larger
public and electorate, if they hoped even to be able to rig the next election, as they usually did, with a modicum of credibility. This meant that they had to pay formal attention at least to the institutional arrangements for ensuring accountability, notably: (a) keeping strictly to the provisions of the budget and raising a supplementary appropriation bill in the legislature before overspending the original budgetary appropriations; (b) passing all government accounts of expenditure through the scrutiny, sometimes hostile, of the Public Accounts Committee of the legislature; and (c) observing, as a matter of public policy, the fundamental civic right to freedom of expression, including press freedom, whereby it was legitimate for any member of the public to express critical judgment on any act or policy of government, including the way and manner in which the government managed or mismanaged the wealth of the nation.

By freeing the rulers from these restraints imposed on them under the principle of accountability, military rule transformed itself, as it did in many Latin American countries in the 1960s and subsequently, into a 'kleptocracy', or 'thievery as a system of government', or what Stanislav Andreski (1966) terms 'institutionalised robbery of the state by its very custodians'. Andreski's list of the variety of graft sustaining a Latin American Kleptocracy of the 1960s or 1970s corresponds almost on a one-to-one basis with observable facts in Nigeria at the end of the Gowon era: the widespread speculation and bribery indulged in by petty state officials, the ruthless and heavy financial exactions of the police from the ordinary people, the racketeering surrounding the collection of customs duties, the fraud appertaining to the award of government contracts and licenses of various kinds, the fraudulent transactions involved in government sales and purchases and, of course, 'the simplest form of graft [which] is the straightforward transfer of funds from state treasury to the private accounts of the principal members of the ruling clique' (Ibid:62-67).

In view of the ramified nature of corruption and its great profitability to the members of the ruling cabal, it was hardly surprising that, from 1973 to 1975, corruption was the single most significant issue on which the Gowon regime became seriously embattled with the Nigerian public. It was also hardly surprising that Gowon and his cronies reneged in 1974 on their promise, made in 1970, to hand over power to an elected civilian government by 1976, declaring that 1976 was 'no longer realistic'. In effect this declaration by Gowon sealed the fate of his regime and provoked the Murtala Mohammed-Obasanjo palace coup against him on 29 July 1975 on the grounds of the unacceptable level of corruption in the government and the grave dishonour done to the armed forces by Gowon's setting aside of the 1976 handing-over date.

The Murtala-Obasanjo regime that succeeded Gowon on 29 July 1975 learnt some lessons from the circumstances of Gowon's fall from power. In the first instance, it waged a very noisy war against corruption and indiscipline. A whole rash of assets probes of top public officers were set up by the regime at the federal and state levels which revealed many scandalous cases of fraudulent and unlawful enrichment on the part of many high-ranking officers, and resulted in the dismissal from office of ten out of twelve state governors, many federal and state permanent secretaries, chairmen and board members of federal and state public corporations, and hundreds of lesser functionaries. As a consequence of these asset probes those found guilty of unlawful enrichment (like state governors, federal and state commissioners, permanent secretaries, board members of public corporations, and other top public functionaries) were made to forfeit to the state monies, landed properties, stocks and shares and other assets adjudged by the assets probes and the government to have been acquired
in excess of their legitimate earnings during the relevant period. The regime also promptly promulgated a four-year transition to civil rule programme, which it kept to meticulously, in spite of the abortive Dimka-led military coup resulting in Murtala Mohammed's death six months after the regime came to power. The war against the twin vices of corruption and indiscipline was more noisy than effective and there are quite a few knowledgeable people who considered it a phoney war, drummed up more for the regime’s self-promotion than out of concern for the public morality and morale of the Nigerian state. Among the factors contributing to this dim view of the regime’s war against corruption and indiscipline were the following:

1) About a month before Murtala’s assassination on 13 February 1976, one Obarogie Ohanbamu, former Senior Lecturer in law at the University of Lagos and, at that time, Editor-in-Chief and publisher of a monthly news magazine, The African Spark, published a story concerning a rumour in circulation about the row of houses owned by Murtala Mohammed in Kano. Ohanbamu wondered whether Murtala could confirm or refute the rumour, and, if it was true, whether he could explain how a public servant could mobilise the capital for such an acquisition. Ohanbamu was promptly arrested thereafter and detained incommunicado until a few days after Murtala’s death when he was produced in a Lagos court by the Attorney-General of the Federation who accused him in the open court of slandering the late Head of State, but requested the court to caution and discharge him since he had seen the error of his judgement and had apologised for it. The error, according to the Attorney-General arose because he was unaware that Murtala had declared his assets to him (the AG) on his accession to office and had deposed that he had made over all his houses in Kano to the state. However, I have not seen, nor do I know anybody who has seen, the document with which this deed of transfer was consummated.

2) By M. K. O. Abiola’s testimony, he and Mohammed became friends in the early 1970s after a stormy meeting between them when he went on behalf of ITT to collect a multi-million naira debt owed to his company by Nigerian Army Signals under Murtala’s leadership. As a result of that friendship Abiola was able to reap a rich harvest of government contracts for his company and himself worth many hundreds of millions of US dollars while Murtala was Inspector of Army Signals, later Federal Commissioner for Communication and then Head of State, and for a long time after Murtala had been removed from the scene. It is also significant that the Director-General of the Post and Telegraph Department in the Ministry of Communication, who was opposed to the initial Government-ITT contract on technical and professional grounds as a telecommunications engineer, was suspended from his post during Murtala’s short tenure as Commissioner and was top of the list of about 10,000 public servants compulsorily retired by Murtala’s regime for any and no reasons within its first three months.

3) The Murtala-Obasanjo government appointed a judicial commission of enquiry headed by Justice Belgore to investigate the circumstances that caused, under Gowon’s rulership, the cement ships armada that was choking off the free passage of other ships into and out of the Lagos port at Apapa, thus strangulating Nigeria’s external trade and threatening to bankrupt the Nigerian economy as a result of the huge demurrage fees which the cement ships queuing to be unloaded were accumulating against Nigeria with each passing day. It is interesting that the report of the Commission was printed but never made available to the public. The only evidence made available to the public was the Government’s white paper on the report in which it was sanctimoniously stated that the Commission had cleared Obasanjo of any wrongdoing. This was in spite of the fact that not only was Obasanjo
Murtala’s second-in-command at the time, but he was also the Director of Army Engineering Corps and later Federal Commissioner for Works throughout the cement armada scandal – caused by the Ministry of Defence’s grossly inflated order for cement meant for implementing the country-wide military barracks project with which Obasanjo must have been concerned in both positions. The white paper did not reveal the evidence on the basis of which he was cleared by the panel of inquiry of any wrongdoing.

4) In 1978, when it was revealed that the US-based Lockheed Corporation had bribed political and military decision-makers worldwide in order to induce them to buy its planes, Nigeria (where the culprit was never apprehended, let alone punished) was about the only country named as a victim by the US Congress. In a cover-up inquiry conducted by the government, one faceless Greek businessman, allegedly formerly resident in Nigeria, was fingered as the culprit, but nobody could locate him. This was in spite of the fact that Lockheed’s target was the Nigerian government through the Nigerian Air Force as possible end-user.

5) Soon after 1 October 1979, following the handing over of power to the civilian government of Shehu Shagari, many of the regime’s generals retired into multi-million naira farms, industries, commercial enterprises and real estate businesses at home and abroad. Nobody has been able to explain satisfactorily how that generation of army officers many of whom served for twenty years or less came by such gargantuan fortunes.

6) For no explicable reason from 1977 the Obasanjo government started borrowing heavily on the Euro-dollar market at exorbitant interest rates and at a time when Nigeria’s crude petroleum production was in excess of 2 million barrels per day and petroleum sales revenue was more than US$20 billion per annum. In this way the Obasanjo government succeeded in inflating Nigeria’s external debt stock from the modest level of US$560 million in 1975 when Gowon was overthrown (CBN, 1975:89) to $6.8 billion in 1979 ‘prior to the change of government’ (Okigbo, 1986:12). Even though, on leaving office, Obasanjo claimed that he left over 5 billion naira in the nation’s reserve, he kept mum about the over 5 billion naira debt owed by the Federal and state governments to domestic and foreign contractors, a contingency that rendered the governments of the Second Republic extremely cash-strapped from the beginning of their tenure in 1979 and pushed them into heavy foreign borrowing which they in turn abused for dubious and selfish purposes.

The Deepening Crisis of the Nigerian Kleptocracy (1979-83)
The circumstances and conditions under which the politicians of the Second Republic acceded to power on 1 October 1979 ensured that they would put corrupt enrichment at the very top of their political agenda. Among these circumstances and conditions was the peculiar constitutional order, mid-wived by the Murtala-Obasanjo regime, and governing such aspects of political life as registration of national political parties and election to various offices at all levels of government. The constitutional provisions governing the formation and registration of political parties, and election to public offices on the platform of the registered parties were such that nobody could hope to be elected to any public office without a huge financial outlay, which was often several times larger than the total legitimate remuneration which a successful candidate could reasonably expect to earn in his or her four-year tenure in office. Since most members of the Nigerian political elite were not known to be motivated by anything but the crudest business considerations of how to maximise their profit from
holding public offices, it became a matter of urgent necessity for them rapidly to recoup the capital outlay on their elections and show substantial profit on their investment. The strategy used by the politicians of the Second Republic to recoup their losses, while extending and consolidating their accumulative base, amounted to the refurbishing, combining and enlarging of all the known techniques of primitive accumulation previously practised in Nigeria. These ranged from spurious and grossly inflated contracts and consultancies, import licence racketeering, the presidential task force on rice importation, a multi-billion pound sterling commodity scam with the Johnson-Mathey Bank (JMB) of London, and the huge National Youth Service (NYSC) rip-off, to the unabashed looting by National and State Assemblymen in the form of grossly inflated salaries and allowances for maintaining non-existent aides and constituency offices, or irrelevant and irresponsible travelling expenses to exotic and far-flung parts of the globe.

A brand new addition to the politician’s formidable arsenal for looting the resources of Nigeria was the pervasive practice whereby the executive arm of government at the state or federal level appointed liaison officers specifically to lobby members of the legislative arm, irrespective of party affiliation, to support legislative projects sponsored by the executive arm in the legislative assembly. Each legislative project was negotiated in turn between the executive’s lobbyists and the legislators and the latter’s consent for supporting the project was secured either with the payment of a substantial cash settlement to the legislator concerned or the award of a substantial government contract, including contracts to lift crude petroleum. As a consequence of this squandermania of epic proportions, which coincided with a sharp decline in Nigeria’s oil revenue from 1981, the governments of the Second Republic found the somewhat reduced national income inadequate for their own private accumulative project. Consequently, they borrowed a leaf from their immediate predecessor, the Obasanjo government, and proceeded to boost the external debt stock of Nigeria from the 1979 level of $6.8 billion, to about $15 billion when the military under Buhari, Idiagbon and Babangida seized power again on 31 December 1983 (CBN, 1983:81-2).

This heavy borrowing on the Euro-dollar market facilitated the spending extravaganza for which the governments of the Second Republic became notorious. This in turn boosted dramatically the capacity of influential individual politicians to embark on corrupt, even criminal enrichment. Witness the rise of an unprecedented large number of emergency Nigerian millionaires with their profusion of private jet planes, stately homes at home, in Britain, Europe and North America, extremely expensive limousines and regular lavish and bacchanalian parties. The essential corruption of Second Republic politicians could be gauged by the fact that, while all this was going on, some of the state governments claimed that they had no money to pay salaries and wages to civil servants, teachers and other public service workers for months on end.

In view of the foregoing, it was not surprising that the governments of the Second Republic rapidly lost public credibility and support, or that the Nigerian people received with relief, even joy, news of the Buhari-Idiagbon-Babangida coup that toppled the Second Republic on 31 December 1983. No less a person than Sani Abacha, acting on that occasion as the ‘public orator of the Nigerian Armed Forces’, justified the military intervention on several grounds of acts of omission and commission, including the fact that

our leaders revel in squandermania, corruption and indiscipline; and, continue to proliferate public appointments in complete disregard of our stark economic realities (Falola & Ihonvbere, 1985:229-30).
The Second Coming of the Military and the Development of Corruption to its Highest Possible Level (1984 to the Present)

The twenty-month Buhari-Idiagbon-Babangida regime which succeeded the Second Republic was distinguished by its stern, even harsh response to the twin ills of corruption and indiscipline among the public officers of the Second Republic. Several top functionaries at Federal and State levels were incarcerated for almost the whole tenure of the regime without being charged or tried for any offence, while some were tried secretly by special military tribunals and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, including life, for crimes ranging from ‘unlawful enrichment’ to ‘contributing to the economic adversity of the country’. Furthermore, the regime mounted a public propaganda war against corruption and indiscipline (WAI) complete with a special paramilitary squad for its execution known as the WAI brigade.

Initially, the regime seemed to have raised the moral tone of the country, partly because its anti-corruption campaign coincided with the inner wishes of most Nigerians and partly because the minority agents of corruption were intimidated into lying low by the regime’s reputation for exacting harsh and exemplary penalties. By the end of its first year, however, the Buhari administration’s anti-corruption campaign seemed to have run out of steam, partly because of the subversive activities of ‘fifth columnists’ within the regime – I. B. Babangida (IBB), the number three man in the regime being the leading ‘fifth columnist’. For the twenty months of the regime’s stay in power, and for his own subsequent eight years of unmitigated autocratic rule, Babangida never took a public stand against corruption. On the contrary, IBB’s primary target of verbal and physical attack was what he identified early in 1984 as ‘undue radicalism’ or ‘extremism’. But the main reason for the loss of steam of the Buhari regime’s campaign against corruption and indiscipline was the regime’s inability to deal effectively with the problem of economic and social decline inherited from the preceding regime. The regime also shot itself in the foot by trying to arrest the country’s economic and social decline by doctrinaire and anti-people policies like massive retrenchment of workers in the public service, the introduction of many new taxes, levies and fees on citizens, drastic reduction in public expenditure, especially on social welfare and agricultural subsidies, and the widespread destruction of the means of livelihood of small privately employed persons like motor mechanics, food vendors and petty traders by pulling down their makeshift sheds, kiosks and bukas in the name of urban environmental sanitation.

Consequently, no eyebrows were raised when the Buhari regime was toppled on 27 August 1985 in a palace coup led and masterminded by Babangida who by all accounts was about to be indicted by his toppled colleagues of multititudinous acts of corruption and indiscipline. It is a measure of the extent to which the Buhari regime had failed to fulfil its own self-declared objectives that Abacha who, in his 31 December 1983 broadcast to the nation on behalf of Buhari, had accused the Shagari regime of reducing our hospitals to ‘mere consulting clinics’, was able to say on 27 August 1985 in justification of Babangida’s coup that ‘our hospitals are still mere consulting clinics’.

The Babangida coup d’etat was received with a marked indifference and the regime was cold-shouldered by the public when it announced itself on the 27 August 1985, in spite of the widespread disappointment with the Buhari regime’s hair-brained economic and social policies and its deplorable human rights record. However, Babangida, having set the record as the first military dictator in Nigeria to declare himself ‘President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces’, proceeded to insinuate himself into the people’s sympathy by pushing a liberal human rights agenda in the first days of his regime: he released most of the Second Republic
politicians incarcerated by Buhari-Idiagbon, set up two judicial panels to review the
cases of the detainees, both tried and yet to be tried, abrogated the notorious anti-
press freedom Decree No. 4 of 1984, and threw open the National Security
Organisation's detention centres, styled 'Rafindadi's chambers of horror', after its
Director, Alhaji Rafindadi.

Behind this smoke-screen of promoting the people's human rights and the rule of law,
Babangida and his acolytes, drawn from all sectors of the Nigerian elite (the armed
forces, civil service, academia, the professions, the business community etc.), were
able to establish an original kind of military autocracy, grounded on cronyism
(Osoba, 1993), blatant corruption of high-profile individuals and groups in society
and ruthless and systematic suppression of so-called 'radicals', 'extremists' and other
real or imagined opponents of the regime. It would appear that the widespread and
systematic use of corrupt means by IBB to 'settle' many actual and potential critics
rested on the impeccable presupposition that if he corrupted enough Nigerians there
would be nobody to speak out on the issue of corruption or public accountability and
so the matter would disappear conveniently from the national agenda. To some extent
the strategy worked as many university professors and other academics, leaders of
the main professions, leading trade unionists, top clerics and evangelists and the
shakers and movers of the 'organised private sector' of the national economy
scrambled to jump on the Babangida regime's gravy train. Babangida established
innumerable commissions, directorates, centres, bureaux, task forces, committees etc.
with open-ended budgets, woolly and indeterminate agendas and arbitrary powers to
accommodate his multitudinous army of cronies, lackeys and opportunists.

The main distinguishing feature of corruption in the Babangida regime was the
pervasive culture of impunity: any of his acolytes, however high or low in status,
could loot the treasury to their heart's content with impunity, provided they
remained absolutely loyal and committed to the leader. Those who backslide or
waver in their loyalty and commitment, like Professor Tam David-West, were
terrorised with all the coercive instruments of state power, even when they had done
no wrong. Since the Babangida junta operated like a mafia with a strict code of omerta
(or silence), they were able to broaden and deepen the scope of corruption in Nigeria's
public life almost to a limitless extent, and without fear of detection or punishment.
Within this mafia context of public decision-making, the Central Bank of Nigeria
(CBN), the country's bank with a legally guaranteed independent board of directors
and power to issue the country's legal tender currency and to monitor and regulate
the country's banking system, was turned into an instrument for the private and
primitive accumulation of Babangida and his cronies. Under the administrative and
structural changes in the CBN announced in the 1988 budget, the Bank was
transferred to the office of the President and the CBN governor was obliged to report
directly to the President. Furthermore, by the CBN Decree of 1991 the president's
control of CBN became complete. According to a former top official:

_In practical terms the 1991 CBN Decree made the President the sole authority for deciding
the nation's monetary and banking policy, and for issuing directives for its implementation.
The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had become the 'Central Bank of the President' (CBP),
a unit or department in the office of the president carrying out the president's binding
directives on monetary and banking policy_ (Enuenwosu, 1994).

It was in these and other ways that Babangida was able to fund his multitudinous
corrupt and corrupting projects by using the CBN Ways and Means Advances to
underwrite his regular budget overruns: N8.3 billion in 1988; N14.6 billion in 1989;
N18.6 billion in 1990; N24.6 billion in 1991 and N41.5 billion in 1992. Since the whole period of Babangida’s dictatorship witnessed a progressive shrinkage of the national economy, these advances were not funded from excess of national revenue over expenditure, but by the simple and prodigal expedient of printing the requisite amount of currency notes. Between IBB’s accession to power in August 1985, and his exit in 1993, Nigeria’s money supply (or money in circulation) jumped from N11.8 billion to N100.5 billion, thus injecting an intolerably high level of cumulative devaluation and inflation into the national currency and economy (Ibid.). In this way IBB withdrew vast sums of money from the public treasury to promote the private accumulation venture of members of his regime, and thereby dramatically lowered the level of income and living standard of the vast majority of Nigerians.

As the recent Pius Okigbo Panel of Inquiry into the Central Bank’s Accounts during the Babangida era revealed, it was this unscrupulous subjugation of the CBN to the president’s will that made it possible for Babangida to siphon some $12.4 billion of Nigeria’s oil revenue from the CBN account into a so-called dedication account, money from which he was able to use without being accountable to anyone.

When you add to all this the measures adopted under IBB’s structural adjustment program (SAP) – like regular auctioning of foreign exchange under SFEM (Second-tier Foreign Exchange Market), AFEM, etc; the selling off of publicly owned enterprises to cronies of the regime and their foreign friends at ridiculously low prices; the debt-equity swap – to transfer public assets into the private coffers of members of the regime and their supporters, it is obvious that those who have characterised the IBB regime as ‘army robbery – the highest stage of armed robbery’ – have not exaggerated the reality of our situation.

The tragedy of the Nigerian predicament is that since Babangida double-crossed himself by annulling the 12 June presidential election and was forced to ‘step aside’ on 26 August 1993, nothing in our national reality has changed for the better. On the contrary, corruption has remained a cardinal and directive principle of state and national policy and continues to sap the vitality of our national economy and the creativity of our people.

The Cumulative Impact of Corruption on the Nigerian State

The fraudulent accumulation process has resulted, over time, in the progressive and phenomenal enrichment of Nigerian rulers (both civilian and military), the emptying of the national treasury and the indebtedness of the country almost to the point of bankruptcy: hence the critical dearth of resources for investment on the social, economic and overall cultural development of the masses of our people. Nigeria is, therefore, in a paradoxical situation in which the scandalous, almost legendary, wealth of key ruling class members exists to mock the unspeakable mass poverty, misery and degradation of the Nigerian people. This has, in turn brought about a situation of potential and actual violent confrontation between the minority plutocrats and the majority paupers and destitutes; within which context the current urban phenomenon of ‘area boys’ is just a minor manifestation. This situation is also highly productive, at the attitudinal level, of mass cynicism about, and distrust of the political elite, and constitutes a major factor in the persistence of inter- and intra-communal disunity, antipathy and strife, as well as the progressively worsening problem of political and social instability since independence. Since the public treasury has been the primary and ultimate source of rapid and sensational private accumulation by the Nigerian political elite, the struggle to capture state power (and,
therefore, the national treasury) among factions of the ruling class has become progressively acrimonious and bitter. This is because in this kind of struggle which ends in a winner-take-all resolution, the losing factions tend to be rigorously excluded from sharing in the loot. Hence, the invariable tendency among elite factions to use the poor masses from their areas of origin (village, town, local government, state or ethnic group) as cannon fodder and battering rams against their rivals and competitors from other areas, thus further dividing the people and undermining the stability of a Nigerian state and society that is already profoundly unstable.

Rampant corruption among the ruling class cabal has, over time, taught a dangerously disruptive lesson to the generality of the people: being honest and law-abiding does not pay. Consequently some of the ordinary people who have learnt this lesson from the top then try to replicate the corrupt practices of their leaders at their own lowly levels in the form of petty acts of bribery, peculation and embezzlement of public funds. It is in this way that corruption as a way of life has become pervasive and popularised in the Nigerian polity, especially in the context of IBB’s structural adjustment program (SAP), where the working people’s real incomes have become so devalued that it is impossible for most salary and wage earners and those on marginal and inelastic incomes to survive on their legitimate earnings.

The obsession of many elite members with primitive private accumulation at the expense of the public means that they tend to divert resources earmarked for running and maintaining public institutions in their charge (institutions like hospitals, schools, universities, public utilities, the judiciary, the police and even the armed forces) to corrupt private purposes. By so doing, they subvert these institutions and their capacity to perform their assigned tasks efficiently, thereby damaging the substantive interests and endangering the lives of citizens whom these public institutions are meant to serve. Through the systematic pillage of the nation’s wealth by its supposed custodians over several decades, many young Nigerians of lowly origins, after successfully passing out of schools, universities and other institutions of learning, cannot find gainful employment. This is because resources, which could have been used for job creation, have been looted by the leaders. As a consequence many of these educated young people are either ‘brain drained’ to other lands in search of greener pastures, or get diverted into various criminal ways of making a livelihood like armed robbery, prostitution, drug peddling and trafficking and all manner of racketeering. In this and other ways, greedy Nigerian leaders have squandered the future of their country and its children, and reduced Nigeria to its present status of a pariah in the comity of nations.

The Way Forward to a Relatively Corruption-free Society

It is my considered judgement that the primary reason why all attempts at curbing corruption in Nigeria have so far failed is that, while corruption has been deeply entrenched in the structures of the Nigerian state and society, all the advertised measures for combating it are conceived and operated at the level of form and symbolism. As long as the inequitable structures of a dependent neo-colonial state are allowed to reproduce in every generation a rampaging bourgeoisie of army officers, politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, academics and touts whose raison d’etre is primitive accumulation and maximum consumption of imported luxuries, so long will all the formal institutions and measures for combating corruption (like judicial commissions of enquiry, Code of Conduct Bureau, Public Complaints Commission, MAMSER (Mass Mobilisation for Social Justice and Economic Recovery), NOA (National Open Apprenticeship), WAIC (War Against Indiscipline Council), fail to
make any significant impact on the problem. This is because, by the structural logic of
the monopoly of state power in Nigeria by the bourgeoisie or power elite, all these
institutions set up to deal with the problem of corruption are inevitably manned,
controlled and operated by, and in the interest of, members of this ruling class who
have a vested and entrenched interest in sustaining and even extending corrupt
practices.

Consequently these putative warriors against corruption perform their task in such a
way that they end up covering up rather than exposing corruption, thus helping to
consolidate and perpetuate its hold on the society. One clever methodology for
covering up the deeds of corrupt public officers probed by judicial commissions of
enquiry was invented during the Obasanjo regime and developed to the status of an
art during the Babangida regime and subsequently. By this methodology the
government appoints a supposedly high-powered judicial commission to investigate
a notorious case of public corruption or misconduct and, after the commission has
completed its work and submitted its report, the government either completely
suppresses it, or, in a few cases, merely publishes its own views on the report in form
of a government 'white paper'. This so-called 'white paper' usually ignores all the
serious and weighty findings and recommendations of the commission while
highlighting only the trivial and innocuous ones which cannot in any way hurt
government's cronies and agents who are the subjects of the probe.

This was what happened to the innumerable panels of enquiry, (including the
visitation panels into Federal Universities) set up by Babangida in his eight years of
thieving and corrupt dictatorship. The same thing has also happened to the report of
the Pius Okigbo panel of enquiry into the accounts of the Central Bank of Nigeria
under IBB. This report, submitted to Abacha more than a year ago, is still being
actively covered up from the Nigerian people in spite of Okigbo's revelation during
the presentation ceremony that $12.4 billion of Nigeria's revenue from crude
petroleum sales disappeared into the black hole of Babangida's 'dedication accounts'
and was not reflected in the official government accounts kept by the CBN.

The critical challenge which the stubborn persistence and growing virulence of
corruption poses to all Nigerians of integrity and conscience is, therefore, how to roll
back the escalating phenomenon of corruption in our public life and terminate the
culture of impunity that underpins it. Meeting this challenge will involve the
mounting of a determined and robust struggle to change the constitutional and legal
order and the power configuration in the Nigerian society such that the vast majority
of marginalised Nigerian men and women are empowered to participate freely,
actively and maximally in the politics, economy and overall culture of the society.
This would mean an end to the 'cash and carry' mode of politics, started with the
majority African governments set up in Nigeria in 1952, and carried to its absurd limit
during the spurious transition politics of Babangida. The institutionalisation of such
an ethos of popular participatory democracy is absolutely essential because the broad
masses of our working people, whose interests and well-being are the principal
casualties of elite corruption, are the only class of people who can be both objectively
and subjectively committed to combating corruption. With this kind of active and
committed mass participation, representatives of the working people will be able to
monitor closely the behaviour of those who are in charge of the state and its treasury
and hold them accountable for any crimes against Nigerian humanity, including
crimes of corruption and larceny against the wealth of the nation. This necessary
expedient of empowering the Nigerian working people vis-à-vis the corrupt and
subversive political elite can be facilitated by pursuing the following minimum
political agenda of democratic governance:

1) The institutionalisation of a multi-party political system in which parties must be genuinely mass-based, national in outlook and exclusively funded by its members' financial contributions, which must be limited to what an ordinary working person can afford. This will safeguard the parties from being highjacked and turned into the political instruments of money bags against the people.

2) The constitutional entrenchment of the principle that the Nigerian people in their respective constituencies have the power to recall at any point in time any elected official who has been found by due process to abuse or betray the people's mandate.

3) The constitutional requirement that only men and women with proven ability and integrity should be appointed to the governing boards of public institutions, corporations and businesses to ensure that the public resources and assets therein will be safeguarded and enhanced rather than looted and squandered by their official custodians as has hitherto been the case.

4) Freedom of information as an entrenched legal norm to include (a) the requirement of open declaration of assets by all public officers, on entering and leaving office and irrespective of rank or status. Such asset declaration should be available for verification and monitoring by any interested citizen; (b) open and uninhibited access by interested citizens to all documents relating to, or dealing with any aspect of public policy. (This will mean, effectively, the death of all secrecy laws, behind which past and present governments have covered up all manner of crimes against the people).

5) The constitutional entrenchment of freedom of the press as the watchdog of the people's interest, subject only to the limitations imposed by the laws of libel and defamation.

6) The constitutional entrenchment of the principle of independence of the judiciary and the insulation of the appointment and tenure of judges from interference by political decision makers whose conducts might be subjects of adjudication by the courts.

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What Does the ‘Militariat’ Do When it Rules? Military Regimes: The Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia

Jimmy D. Kandeh

A significant group of military interventions, especially in West Africa, has been carried out not by disaffected senior officers, but by junior officers and NCOs – the militariat, occupying a class position within the army analogous to the working class within society as a whole. Such interventions are directed as much against the senior officers as against the political elite to which they are closely linked by clientelist ties. Despite this, and the populist rhetoric adopted by the militariat when first in power, the regimes they install have failed to adopt social transformative goals, or create new mobilisational political structures.

Comparison of Liberia under the PRC (1980-89), Sierra Leone under the NPRC (1992-96) and the Gambia under the AFPRC (1994) shows that instead the regimes are marked by violence and instability, and in two cases by the outbreak of civil war. Corruption and human rights abuses have been commonplace, and the regimes have failed to strengthen state capacities, to restore military discipline, or to create new social and political institutions. This underpins their reluctance to relinquish power voluntarily. These characteristics are attributed to the lumpen culture of the militariat, to its subversion of military discipline, and to the decay of political and social institutions under the precursor regimes. As the Gambia suffered to a lesser degree from all three of these, it shares the features of the militariat to a lesser degree than Liberia or Sierra Leone.

The capture of state power by conspiratorial elements of the military underclass, or militariat, is a recurrent fact of political life in West Africa. In no other subregion of Africa have subalterns of armed forces seized power with such regularity and dispatch as in West Africa. Liberia in 1980, Sierra Leone in 1992 and The Gambia in 1994, exemplify this pattern of military coups ‘from below’. All three coups were internally popular not only because they replaced discredited and floundering regimes but on account of the populist posturing of their youthful leaders. These leaders shared a common class background, erupted on their respective political scenes under similar circumstances and exercised power in much the same way.

Although labour processes within militaries differ ‘from that of a factory and administrative agency in the emphasis it places upon the practices of power, discipline and surveillance ...’, there is a clear sense in which military hierarchies can be analysed in terms of labour processes and power relations (Luckham, 1994:22).
Cleavages among soldiers – both hierarchical (between senior and junior officers) and vertical (between officers and non-officers) – are embedded in the structural division of labour between management (officers) and workers (militariat). This division, especially the differential access to public resources it furnishes, is often implicated in coups led by elements of the militariat.

The term militariat refers to the lower rungs of the military hierarchy, from the rank of lieutenant down to that of private, although it is not uncommon for the political leadership of this substratum to include captains and other junior officers. While the militariat's location in the class structure is as part of the working class, it is differentiated from other subordinate strata by its access to, and operation of, the means of destruction in society. As a constitutive element of the repressive apparatuses of the state, the militariat, more than any other subordinate group, is strategically positioned to play a central role in the deinstitutionalised politics of African states.

The contradiction between the subordinate class location of the militariat and its positional centrality represents one of the many paradoxes of political life in Africa. Internally fissured by ethnicity, regionalism, clientelism and other parochialisms, the militariat's organisational and leadership potential is circumscribed by its social location. Political conspiracy and action by some of its elements seldom involve the entire substratum, not the least because of the manifest impossibility of mobilising this disparate grouping into a unified political force. Thus, when the militariat seizes power, it is often a handful of some of its adventurist and tenacious elements who initiate and benefit from such action.

The emergence of the militariat as a major contender for power in West Africa highlights some of the pitfalls of clientelism as a mechanism of political domination. In both pre-coup Liberia and Sierra Leone, senior military officers were clientelised and respectively absorbed into the ruling True Whig Party (TWP) and All People's Congress (APC) oligarchies. In The Gambia, where most of the senior officers were Senegalese and later Nigerian, the denationalisation of the senior officer corps eliminated the possibility of a military coup led by senior officers and contributed to the resentment felt by Gambian officers who saw their foreign commanders as career impediments. Complementary civilian and military elite interests, and the fact that clientelism disproportionately benefits elites rather than subalterns, explain why coups in the contemporary period became increasingly likely to be led by sergeants and lieutenants rather than by brigadiers and generals.

In the analysis that follows, I argue that the militariat is an atavistic political force that is more likely to collapse the state than rescue it from institutional decay (Zartman, 1995). The atavism of the militariat derives from the lack of discipline within its ranks, the reliance on violence and terror as political instruments and the propensity to ignite and/or sustain rebellions. At a deeper level, this retrograde impulse is the product of a lumpen culture that is textured by ignorance, political thuggery, hooliganism, banditry, and warlordism. The devalorisation of humanity within this lumpen ‘life world’ is frequently displaced onto the public domain when the militariat takes charge of the state.

The political enthronement of military subalterns represents a dual usurpation of military hierarchy and societal political leadership. Restoring discipline and rank hierarchy to the armed forces under these circumstances may prove to be more difficult than securing compliance from a restive mass public, but failure to re-
establish discipline and the chain of command (as in the cases of Liberia and Sierra Leone) inevitably weaken the capacity of the militariat to govern.

What delinks the militariat in power from popular forces and currents is the failure to translate populist coups into populist regimes. ‘Populist regimes attack established institutions and try to create new norms to govern political behaviour’ (Bienen, 1985:357). Such regimes have social transformative goals which require the mobilisation of popular sectors, the enhancement of state capacities and the construction of new political institutions. In none of the cases examined here was the rhetorical populism of the militariat authenticated by the institutionalisation of populist norms, organisations and procedures.

Background to the PRC, NPRC and AFPRC Coups
The dominant group in Liberia prior to the 1980 coup d'etat was the minority Americo-Liberian community. The one-party state, through the TWP, embodied and advanced the interests of this group’s elite as well as those of foreign capital. Although a few educated leaders from the hinterland (Jackson Doe and Edward Kesselly come to mind) were co-opted into the TWP leadership, ‘there was no channel through which independent interests, organizations or political perspectives, could be incorporated into government’ (Clapham, 1989:101). Sloganised responses to festering problems, such as William Tolbert’s ‘Rallytime’, ‘Higher Heights’ and ‘Mats to Mattresses’ campaigns, did nothing to ameliorate the political exclusion and social deprivation of the majority of Liberians. This combination of political and social marginalisation formed the backdrop to the seizure of power by elements of an unclientelisable and impoverished military underclass.

Intellectual and political opposition to TWP domination catalysed the events that culminated in the People’s Redemption Council (PRC) coup. Two organizations in particular, the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) and the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL), played leading roles in organising societal opposition to the Tolbert government. In contrast to the elitist and clientelistic TWP, these organizations, particularly MOJA, were inclusionary and mass-based. MOJA was formed and led by radical faculty members at the university of Liberia who shared common pan-Africanist and populist-socialist convictions. The movement, whose leaders included Amos Sawyer, Togba Nah Tipoteh and Boima Fahnbulleh, sought to combat social injustices at the continental and national levels. MOJA was an active force within the student movement and was closely aligned with the Student Unification Party (SUP), the dominant student party at the university in the late seventies and early eighties. The PAL, led by Gabriel Matthews, started as a Liberian student organisation in the US. Once relocated in Liberia it transformed itself into a political party and became a major thorn in the flesh of the Tolbert government.

A turning-point in the confrontation between the Tolbert government and an increasingly assertive societal opposition came in April 1979 when Tolbert announced a 50 per cent increase in the price of rice, the country’s staple. A subsequent mass demonstration in Monrovia left over 100 civilians dead, mostly the victims of police brutality as soldiers refused to shoot at demonstrators. In a move that betrayed the government’s lack of confidence in its own army, Guinean troops were brought in to restore calm but this intervention could not save the Tolbert administration.
While ethnicity was a primary basis of the Liberian state’s exclusionary logic, this was not the case in Sierra Leone where the ruling stratum was ethnically heterogenous. Sierra Leone’s political system did not reflect the interests of an ethnic minority and, although ethnicity continued to shape political processes and outcomes, the political redefinition of ethnic boundaries after independence diminished the political salience of the Creole-‘country man’ division. Unlike the PRC coup in Liberia, ethnicity was not a major factor in the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) coup in Sierra Leone.

As in Liberia, the 1992 Sierra Leone coup was precipitated by social unrest. Public protest in the late 1980s and early 1990s focused on problems of declining living standards, leadership corruption and the need to democratise the political system. Leading the struggle for democracy were university students, teachers, the labour movement, the Sierra Leone Bar Association, independent newspapers and representatives of the external estate. Saddled with a flawed and unpopular one-party system, the incumbent APC government reluctantly agreed in 1991 to liberalise the political system and hold multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections. Uncertainty over whether and when these elections would be held – no date was announced – and public fears that the APC would rig them, called into question the party’s death-bed conversion to democracy.

While the APC was trying to devise a strategy to remain in power, an insurgent group calling itself the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and supported by Charles Taylor in neighbouring Liberia, launched an armed rebellion against the government in March 1992. The APC’s inept handling of this rebellion solidified its unpopularity, especially after it became apparent that party chieftains were profiting from the war and were using it as a pretext to delay the transition to multi-party democracy. All of this gave credence to the popular belief that the APC could not be trusted to end the war and hold competitive multi-party elections.

The APC’s military response to the rebellion was to arm a demoralised militariat and increase recruitment into the army. After years of being either disarmed, especially under Siaka Stevens, or lightly armed, the militariat suddenly found itself in the possession of combat weapons. The arms allotted for counter-insurgency were stockpiled and later used to oust the APC from power. Tired of putting their lives on the line ‘in spite of very poor logistic support provided by the government whose leadership sit in Freetown enriching themselves by gross appropriation of war funds’ (West Africa, 17 May 1992:790), a group of soldiers drove in a convoy from the war front to make their grievances known to the authorities in Freetown. The panic reaction of the APC leadership to a war-weary but heavily-armed contingent of disgruntled soldiers, resulted in a few skirmishes between armed supporters of the APC and protesting soldiers. By the time the dust settled, the president and a few of his henchmen had fled to neighbouring Guinea and the mutineers found themselves in control of the government.

Gambia, likewise, was ruled by a civilian regime that had been in power for too long and had lost touch with the masses. Dauda Jawara, the only leader of independent Gambia until the 1994 coup, had by all accounts grown complacent after almost thirty years in power. Gambia’s political system under Jawara was less exclusionary and repressive than Liberia under the TWP or Sierra Leone under the APC, but all three regimes shared a common neo-patrimonial bias and were mainly accessible through informal clientelistic networks that formed around national, sectoral and local elites.
All three regimes faced what Chris Allen has described as a 'crisis of clientelism' which often 'led to, but was not resolved by, military intervention' (1995:305).

The first serious challenge to Jawara's People's Progressive Party (PPP) came in July 1981 when a group of civilian radicals, led by Kukoi Samba Sanyang and Koro Sallah, attempted to overthrow the government. Jawara, who at the time was in London, was able with the help of Britain and Senegal to foil the coup and to re-establish his authority. This restoration was followed by the formation of the Senegambia confederation, an arrangement that practically entrusted the security of the Gambian state to the Senegalese. Relations between the partners of the confederation deteriorated toward the end of the 1980s, leading to the replacement of the Senegalese by Nigerian military officers.

The period between the failed coup of 1981 and the successful coup of 1994 was marked by growing leadership corruption, endemic poverty and public discontent. Jawara was viewed in the West as a champion of democracy and human rights and Gambia seemed the quintessence of social tranquillity and political stability in Africa. This stability, however, masked a corrupt political system mired in patronage, nepotism and cronyism. Rather than view the failed coup of 1981 as a wake-up call to reform the political system and restore probity to public institutions, Jawara continued to surround himself with sycophants and opportunists whose abuses damaged the credibility of his government. It was against this background of a complacent and discredited leadership that the AFPRC coup took place.

One of the many similarities of these coups was the youth and social background of the *putschists*; most were in their twenties and chronically destitute. The PRC coup was led by one master-sergeant (Samuel Doe), four staff sergeants (Quiwonkpa, Zuo, Dixon and Gban), one sergeant (Thomas weh Syen), eight corporals (Podier, Swen, Voine, Friday, Johnson, Bather, Norman and Penue), and one private first class (William Peters). Doe was functionally illiterate, as were many PRC members, and the educational levels of his Sierra Leonean and Gambian counterparts were only marginally better. The core of the NPRC included two captains (Valentine Strasser and Karefa Kargbo), four lieutenants (Bio, Mondeh, Nyuma, M'bayo and Kambo), one sergeant (Musa) and a private citizen (Benjamin). Valentine Strasser, the leader of this group, barely finished high school and was a disco dancer before and after joining the army. The original master-minds of the AFPRC coup were four disgruntled lieutenants (Jammeh, Singateh, Sabally and Hydara). Many of these youngsters enlisted in their respective armies to escape unemployment and permanent lumpenisation. A high percentage of army recruits during the Tolbert administration, for example, came from the ranks of the urban unemployed – this was Tolbert's solution to the problem of urban vagrancy. The rebel insurgency in Sierra Leone also led to the massive recruitment of urban 'riffraff' and rural drifters into the army. In The Gambia, the army, though much smaller, was similarly recruited from the ranks of marginals.

The TWP, APC and PPP were moribund regimes lacking popular support. As one-party (Liberia and Sierra Leone) and dominant party (Gambia) governments, these patronage oligarchies destroyed the autonomy and effectiveness of state institutions by subordinating the latter (including the military) to the interests of party government. Senior military officers were, for all intents and purposes, part of the ruling elite. Under Tolbert, the officer corps of the Liberian army was dominated by clients of TWP chieftains. In Sierra Leone, the APC absorbed the army by requiring all top officers to be members of the party and by appointing the head of the army to
parliament and, later, as president of the country. In The Gambia, the fact that top military officers were mostly foreigners practically eliminated the possibility of a coup led by these officers. Given this interlocking pattern of civil-military relations at the elite level, it is not surprising that military subalterns, rather than senior officers, staged the PRC, NPRC and AFPRC coups.

These military interventions also unmasked class cleavages within the Liberian, Sierra Leonean and Gambian armies. The PRC and NPRC coups were as much directed against senior military officers as against civilian incumbents. The perception among rank and file soldiers that their senior officers were primary beneficiaries of a corrupt social order was cited, particularly in the Sierra Leone case, as one of the reasons for seizing power. In Liberia, senior military officers, including the former chief of staff and two generals, were among those charged with high treason by the PRC. Sierra Leone’s NPRC, which also detained and retired many senior officers, executed Lt. Colonel Yayah Kanu for allegedly plotting from his prison cell to overthrow the government. Gambia not only detained and retired its few local officers, it also asked the Nigerian military personnel brought in by the Jawara government to leave.

Some differences, including timing, separate the contexts of the three coups. Armed rebellion precipitated the NPRC coup but was not a factor in the Liberian and Gambian coups. Power was personalised by Jawara but caballised by Tolbert’s TWP and Momoh’s APC ‘Binkolo mafia’. Ethnicity played a major role in the PRC coup but was not an important factor in the NPRC and AFPRC coups. External reactions were uniformly negative but the fact that the Liberian coup occurred during the cold war enabled its leaders to secure crucial support from the US. Save for the international outrage over the executions of 1980, the external response to the PRC coup was less hostile than the reactions to the NPRC and AFPRC coups. The fact that the Sierra Leone and Gambia coups occurred in a post-cold war global context predicated western support for the NPRC and AFPRC on the implementation of democratic transition programmes by these regimes. Thus, whereas Liberia’s PRC was less externally burdened by such conditions and even went on to civilianise its tyranny, the NPRC and AFPRC came to power at a time when democratisation had become a western requirement for bilateral and multilateral financial assistance.

The PRC, NPRC and AFPRC in Power

The public objectives of the militariat often reflect populist themes such as the need to combat corruption, alleviate poverty and democratise the political system. According to Sgt. Samuel Doe,

the PRC government came to power not to continue the suppression of our people but to release them from the chains of oppression and provide them with a full and meaningful life


The NPRC acted ‘to eradicate ... the destructive, exploitative and oppressive regime of the APC government’ and to ‘save our country from the total catastrophe that we are rapidly heading for’ (West Africa, 28 December 1992:2234). Lt. Yayah Jammeh described the AFPRC coup as a ‘supreme sacrifice’ necessitated by ‘rampant corruption and the suppressive nature of the PPP for the past three decades’; the goal of the AFPRC was to launch ‘a new era of freedom, progress, democracy and accountability’ in The Gambia (Daily Observer, 25 July 1994:1). How these regimes fared in the pursuit of their original goals is the subject of the remainder of this article.
Corruption

Having presented themselves as revolutionaries, the military leaders of Liberia, Sierra Leone and The Gambia lavishly appropriated populist slogans and symbols during their first few months in office. In Liberia, the public was deluged with official salutations directed at them and sloganised representations of the centrality of their struggles. The ‘cause of the people’ became an undertaking which, from the perspective of the PRC, justified the execution of former officials and confiscation of their properties. An end to corruption, according to Doe, was to be the main preoccupation of the PRC and a precondition for its return to the barracks.

The PRC chose to fight corruption in its first few days in office by executing most of the key members of the TWP oligarchy it could lay its hands on. Thirteen officials in all (excluding the president, murdered earlier at his executive mansion) were executed after hasty kangaroo trials; all but one were Americo-Liberians. The official reasons given for this act involved an *ex post facto* reclassification of corruption as a treasonable offence, a device whereby the PRC set out to eliminate the entrenched interests of Americo-Liberian elites.

Over 400 leading officials of the deposed TWP government were arrested and detained on charges of corruption and treason. Corrupt government officials were not only to be dismissed from office and denied ‘employment anywhere in the country as long as the PRC is in power’ but, as sergeant Doe warned, ‘when you are grabbed, ... hey ... you may not live to tell the story’ (*West Africa*, 18 August 1980:1542). In a broadcast that betrayed the false populism of the PRC, Doe promised Liberians that ‘we will all enjoy like the corrupt Tolbert government enjoyed’ (*West Africa*, 1 December 1980:2400).

NPRC and AFPRC leaders also tried to pass themselves off as revolutionaries. Their self-appointed mission was to end corruption and make their states more responsive to the needs and aspirations of ordinary citizens. Unlike the PRC, these governments instituted commissions of inquiry, headed by qualified judges, to probe the assets and activities of their predecessors. Both the decision to launch these investigations and the facts revealed by them, generated public support for the actions of these governments. But whereas the AFPRC seem to have stayed the course in its crusade against corruption, the NPRC’s anti-corruption posture was fitful, contradictory and short-lived.

According to the white papers released by the NPRC government and which were never published, the three commissions of inquiry concluded that officials of the ousted government, including former president’s Stevens and Momoh, had acquired assets far in excess of their official emoluments. Most of their assets were confiscated by the state and many were ordered to pay back huge sums to the government. No system, however, was put in place to properly account for assets confiscated by the state. In his first interview by a local newspaper after the AFPRC coup, Lt. Jammeh informed Gambians that his new government:

> will not tolerate any sort of corruption, we will not be secretive in anything that we do. ... we are not here for praises, we are not here to enrich ourselves. We are here to set up a just system that is not corruptible (*Daily Observer*, 5 July 1994:8).

Just as Sgt. Doe threatened to physically eliminate corrupt officials, Jammeh warned Gambians that ‘anyone convicted of corruption will regret why he was born in the first place’ (*Daily Observer*, 10 October 1994:1).
The anti-corruption stance of the PRC and NPRC was, from the beginning, flawed by glaring inconsistencies. The refusal by PRC and NPRC leaders to declare their own assets called into question the sincerity of their anti-corruption posturing. As Gabriel Bacchus Matthews complained in an appearance before his PRC bosses to answer questions about his assets:

*I am appearing in protest before you because you should have declared your assets before requiring the ministers appointed to declare theirs. However, in due respect for you, I am happy to appear in the cause of the people* (West Africa, 16 June 1980:1092).

Boima Fahnbulleh, the PRC's first minister of education, voiced similar outrage at the lifestyles of PRC members when he publicly asked: 'How can you ride in the same cars, sleep in the same houses and adopt the same values as those of your predecessors if the revolution is to succeed?' (West Africa, 23 June 1980:1156).

Issues of lifestyle also dogged the NPRC leadership in Sierra Leone. The abuse of power and spectacular displays of opulence by previously destitute subalterns destroyed public faith in the NPRC's ability to engage the problem of corruption. NPRC members moved into the homes of their predecessors, cavorted around in the same cars, pursued the same women and indulged in the same excesses as the ousted regime. Prominent members of the NPRC, including the head of state, were implicated in diamond smuggling schemes (West Africa, 31 October 1994:1939). As William Reno (1995:175) writes,

*As the inherited technocrats from the old regime issued promises to the IMF, Strasser's troops were already mining diamonds in Kono for exchange in barter deals for weapons in Belgium and Romania. It was while mining diamonds at Gandohun ... that Strasser's men were overtaken by RUF rebel forces in mid-1992. The invading forces allegedly took advantage of the troops' attention to their mining operations to mount an offensive to take the Kono mining area.*

The 'Mountain Fatfoot' anti-smuggling programme, ostensibly designed to encourage citizens to turn in diamond smugglers, became an elaborate NPRC diamond laundry scheme. Strasser and Bio reportedly defrauded the state of $982,000 from the illegal sale of Sierra Leonean passports to Hong Kong Chinese (Reuter, 14 September 1996). In the words of Thaimu Bangura, finance minister in the new government, 'those boys (NPRC government) looted everything they could lay hands on – not a cent was left in the treasury; they stole everything' (Sierra Leone Progress, August 1996:4).

The AFPRC's record in the area of leadership corruption has been less incriminating and contradictory. AFPRC leaders were more austere and reticent than their counterparts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The commissions of inquiry they launched performed their tasks independently of the government and helped introduce an element of accountability to the machinery of government. Several top and middle level officials in the Jawara government were detained and deprived of some of their assets. Almost all of Jawara's assets in The Gambia were confiscated by the state but unlike Liberia's PRC, which eventually returned most confiscated properties to their owners as the government moved away from its earlier populist rhetoric, and Sierra Leone's NPRC, whose leaders simply expropriated much of what was confiscated, the AFPRC actually turned over the bulk of what it confiscated to the state.

In many ways, AFPRC consistency on the corruption issue was not unconnected to the self-deprecating style of its leader. There were hardly any demonstrable signs of
leadership corruption and deviation from coup objectives. Jammeh was from an ethnic group (Djola) that is more egalitarian and marginalised than the Madinkas, Wolofs and Fulas. He was also a devout Muslim with an abiding sense of mission and empathy for the poor. Whether Jammeh’s ethnic background and faith had anything to do with the grudging respect he cultivated as a leader is unclear. What was certain, however, is that Jammeh and his colleagues tried to emulate the example of Rawlings in Ghana by remaining as true to the original objectives of their coup, and as close to the people, as they possibly could.

Where the AFPRC sought to deconstruct the parasitic logic of the political system it inherited, the PRC and NPRC deepened and ramified the predatory ethos of the regimes they had vowed to destroy. In Liberia, ‘since the state had historically been used as a means of personal enrichment, it was not illogical for Doe to use it for the same purpose’ (Ellis, 1995:176). Corruption as a mode of capital accumulation was also central to APC domination in Sierra Leone. The failure of both the PRC and NPRC to break with the past and disavow a predatory regime imperative explain their inability to seriously deal with the problem of corruption.

Human Rights

African armies have a reputation for perpetrating ghastly atrocities on their civilian population. This reputation stems mainly from the actions of the militarist, although senior officers have also been implicated in human rights violations. Crimes by the military against innocent civilians tend to increase dramatically when the military, especially the militarist, is in power. The spate of civilian beatings by soldiers after the AFPRC seized power in The Gambia prompted one local newspaper to lament that ‘hardly any cases of such military brutality had been reported during the days of the deposed Jawara regime’ (Daily Observer, 10 October 1994:4). In most cases, ‘the fear of commissions of inquiry, fear of retribution, and concern over a loss of entitlements are some of the key reasons the military could be a threat to human rights’ (Conteh-Morgan, 1994:84). The human rights violations of the AFPRC pale in comparison to PRC and NPRC atrocities. For one thing, the AFPRC was opposed to the death penalty. In the words of Jammeh:

We abhor the death penalty as much as any other Gambian. And let nobody fear, we are not going to set up any military tribunal. We have only suspended the constitution but the judiciary will not be suspended. And all due process will take place without interference (West Africa, 14 August 1994:1388).

Unlike the PRC and NPRC who routinely and arbitrarily executed their political opponents, the AFPRC preferred to hand down jail sentences even in cases of alleged treason. The National Intelligence Agency (NIA) was the main instrument of AFPRC repression. This agency was empowered by Decree No. 45 to ‘obtain and provide the government with information relating to actions or intentions of persons which may be a threat to state security’ and ‘to arrest and detain for investigation any person ... suspected of having an intention to undertaking or undertaking activities inimical to the security of the state’ (Foroyaa, 12 July 1995:6). The extensive powers granted under this decree were routinely invoked to harass and detain political opponents and journalists.

The more salient human rights abuses of the AFPRC include detention and harassment of ex-ministers, the mystery surrounding the deaths of Koro Ceesay and Sadibou Hydara, molestation and beating of civilians by unruly soldiers and attacks
on journalists. Ceesay was an energetic and charismatic young Gambian who was appointed Finance minister a few months before his charred remains were discovered in his car; suspicions of AFPRC involvement in his death have never been substantiated. The circumstances surrounding the death in detention of Sadibou Hydara, one of the original leaders of the AFPRC also raised some concern. The official explanation was that Hydara died from acute pulmonary oedema, a condition induced by high blood pressure. Hydara's widow, however, disputed the government's claim that her husband suffered from high blood pressure (The Point, 8 June 1995:1).

The PRC and NPRC were worse human rights offenders than the AFPRC. Both regimes regularly executed their opponents without much of a trial. In the case of the PRC, those eliminated included former members of the TWP and PRC governments. In instances where kangaroo trials were held, the defendants were convicted without calling witnesses or holding pre-trial investigations. A few soldiers were also executed for looting but most of the PRC executions targeted former associates of Sgt. Doe himself. Newly promoted Gen. Thomas Weh Syen, Lt. Col. Nelson Toe and Harris Johnson were the first from within the PRC to be executed for reportedly plotting to overthrow the government. Many others were to follow later, including Quiwonkpa, killed during an attempt to overthrow his erstwhile comrade-in-arms, and Moses Flanzamaton (deputy commander of Doe's executive mansion battalion), executed without trial after a bizarre plot to implicate civilian leaders as an alleged coup unravelled (West Africa, 13 May 1985:929-930). Charles Gbenyon, a news editor at the Liberian Broadcasting Corporation (LBC), was murdered by Doe's executive mansion guards for allegedly siding with Quiwonkpa in the latter's unsuccessful attempt to take over the government. Amos Sawyer has described the first six years of the PRC as 'years of rape and plunder by armed marauders whose ideology is to search for cash and whose ambition is to retain power to accumulate and protect wealth' (1987:8). This assessment is echoed by Max Sesay (1996:36):

The Doe era (1980-1989) was characterised by sustained levels of brutality, dramatic economic decline, political immobilization, and purges of real or imagined enemies. The regime's brutality was markedly represented by the haste with which those allegedly implicated in plots to overthrow the government were summarily executed.

Human rights abuses of the PRC intensified after Doe 'civilianised' his dictatorship in 1985. Threatened by an armed rebellion tacitly supported by the neighbouring Ivoirian government, Doe embarked on a policy of ethnocide directed at the Gio and Mano. Relying on armed elements of his Krahn ethnic group, Doe massacred and displaced thousands of Gios and Manos for supporting Quiwonkpa and later Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). This in turn endangered members of his Krahn ethnic group who became targets of reprisals by NPFL commando units.

A much abused legal instrument in the PRC's repressive arsenal was Decree 88A which empowered the government to detain anyone it believed was spreading 'rumours, lies and disinformation' about the PRC. Under the provisions of this decree, Liberians were arrested and detained for all sorts of reason, even including discussing Doe's educational credentials. Many critics of the government were routinely arrested and detained without trial for not working in the 'interests of our revolution and party'. This forced what remained of the political opposition, especially the followers of Quiwonkpa in Nimba county, to go underground only to re-emerge in the form of an armed rebellion in 1989.
Brutalisation of civilians, detentions without trial and summary executions also characterised NPRC repression in Sierra Leone. In perhaps one of the most offensive human rights violations in independent Africa, the NPRC government in December 1992 executed a pregnant woman, along with 28 others, without the benefit of a trial. What gave the human rights situation in Sierra Leone a barbaric twist was the rebel insurgency which started under the APC government in 1992 and intensified under the NPRC. This insurgency, as with the NPFL rebellion against Doe, provided a cover for soldiers to pillage and terrorise the countryside.

A direct consequence of the assault on civilians by rebels and government soldiers was the displacement of over a third of the country's population. Sierra Leoneans, uprooted from their homes, overcrowded urban centres and sought refuge in neighbouring countries. More than 250,000 Sierra Leonians became refugees in Guinea and another 600,000 lived in camps for displaced people (Amnesty International, 1995:11). Displacement worsened an increasingly lawless environment as those fleeing organised banditry were forced to choose between either becoming brigands themselves or joining the teeming ranks of the destitute, starving and dying.

One reason the human rights abuses of the AFPRC were the least atrocious of the three regimes was that Gambia, compared to Liberia and Sierra Leone, did not have a history of political violence and executions. Gambian society under the PPP enjoyed many of the political freedoms denied Liberians by the TWP and Sierra Leonians by the APC. This tradition of relative openness and respect for human rights could be ignored only at the peril of the AFPRC government. Furthermore, the AFPRC never had to deal with an armed rebellion which could have in all likelihood led to more serious abuses. The fact that a plurality of the Gambian populace continued to support the AFPRC reduced the need to abuse the powers of the state as part of an effort to coerce political acquiescence.

**Democratisation**

Military disengagement from politics in Africa has historically been 'protracted, hesitant and partial' (Welch, 1983:541). Although there have been a few cases of planned exits (Ghana in 1969, Nigeria in 1979), most instances of military withdrawal from direct political involvement have been abrupt and short-lived. The brief duration of periods of disengagement gave credence to the thesis that only a 'contingent disengagement' is possible in third world states (Finer, 1974:19). But the context that informed this perspective has been radically altered in the past decade. Democratic pressures are no longer simply localised, they are now globalised and the coalescence of internal and external democratic currents has dramatically improved prospects for longer periods of military disengagement.

Military regimes have always had to address the issue of civilianisation in one form or another. In Sierra Leone and The Gambia, the issue was not whether, but when and how, the military should hand over power to civilians. Democratisation had already forced its way onto the agenda of the Sierra Leonian state before the NPRC coup, while the deposed regime in The Gambia was at the very least quasi-democratic. Even Liberia was showing signs of partial liberalisation in the months leading to the PRC coup. Since the AFPRC toppled what was considered to be a democratic regime, its leaders faced the most intense external pressure to hold democratic elections.

The PRC of Liberia had no genuine interest in handing over power to a democratically elected civilian government. Doe formed his own political party and pursued a
civilianisation without democratisation project. A new constitution was promulgated after a referendum in 1984. The ban on political parties lifted, and a Special Electoral Commission established. The Commission, however, lacked autonomy from the government, denying registration to Amos Sawyer’s Liberian People’s Party (LPP) and Bacchus Matthews United People’s Party (UPP). To clear the way for his candidacy in the presidential elections, Doe overturned a constitutional provision excluding military and police personnel from participating in the political process and padded his age by a few years to satisfy the chronological requirement for contesting the presidency.

Despite rigging the 1985 elections, Doe’s presidential bid could officially muster only 50.9 per cent of the popular vote in a contest that was actually won by Jackson Doe (no relation of the incumbent) of the Liberia Action Party (LAP). Doe’s National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL) reportedly won 21 of 26 senate seats and 51 of the 64 seats in the house of representatives. While the outcome of these elections, and the fact that they were held in the first place, may have satisfied the US (Doe’s primary target audience), they did nothing to further the cause of democracy and political institutionalisation in Liberia. Fear of reprisals and related pathologies of power explain why Doe stayed in office for as long as he did, choosing to fight it out to a gruesome end rather than escape with his life and wealth.

In Sierra Leone, the issue of returning the country to civilian democratic rule was on the agenda of the NPRC right from the beginning. The NPRC’s declared objectives in seizing power were to restore state capacity, end the rebel war and democratise the political system. Few would disagree that it failed on the first two counts and may have partially succeeded on the last in spite of its own contrary inclinations and preferences. A palace coup two months before the March 1996 elections, as well as last minute manoeuvres to postpone the elections, raised serious doubts about the NPRC’s commitment to democratic elections. That elections were held and power transferred to a democratically-elected government distinguishes the NPRC leadership, which was not personalised, from the Doe leadership, which was not only personalised but ethnicised or ‘Krahnised’.

Many reasons can be adduced for the NPRC’s decision to hold multi-party elections and retreat from the political scene. In a very real sense, the NPRC’s exit from power was a case of reluctant or induced abdication. It was widely known that most NPRC members did not want to replicate Doe’s folly by prolonging their stay in power, but they feared reprisals if they were to leave office and none wanted to be questioned or held accountable for their actions. They could only hand over power, therefore, to an elected civilian government that would not investigate or prosecute them. Thus, in one of its final actions as a government, the NPRC indemnified its members before handing over power to a new civilian government in April 1996.

Guarantees that the new civilian government would not act against the interest of NPRC members was not the only sense in which military disengagement was induced in Sierra Leone. The stick wielded by the international community, and pledges of assistance to NPRC members if they delivered on their commitment to hand over power, persuaded it to relinquish power, especially after a EU official threatened that

*if the elections are not conducted and civilian rule is not put in place ... we will use all the instruments available to the European Union to isolate Sierra Leone* (New Citizen, 15 January 1996:2).
By maximising the costs of staying in power and minimising the personal costs of abdication, external pressures on the NPRC to hold multi-party elections, even in the midst of an intractable civil war, represented a formidable force the likes of which Doe never had to contend with in Liberia.

A resurgent civil society was also a major factor in the NPRC's decision to transfer power to an elected civilian government. The NPRC's inability to end the rebel insurgency and the breakdown of law and order throughout much of the country, increased the public's sense of frustration, alienation and anger. Many saw democratic elections as the least costly way to get rid of the NPRC. The most vocal and powerful new civic organisation to emerge during this period of democratic ferment was 'Women For a Morally Engaged Nation' (WOMEN). Led by Zainab Bangura, this organisation vigorously campaigned for elections to be held on schedule, even daring renegade soldiers bent on derailing the elections to shoot at its members. Political parties were also adamant in their refusal to postpone the elections and they were joined in this posture by many professional and societal organisations.

The clearest indication that some members of the NPRC were rethinking their commitment to democratic civilian rule came in January 1996 when Strasser was suddenly replaced by his deputy Julius Maada Bio (now Brigadier) in a palace coup. The NPRC blamed the change in leadership on Strasser's blatant attempt to make some major changes in the electoral laws of the country and start machinations to ensure that he would be installed as the next president come February 26 (Unity Now, 18 January 1996:1). Upon replacing Strasser as chairman of the NPRC and head of state, Bio vowed to adhere to the democratic transition timetable. A few weeks later, however, he too began to prevaricate, arguing that it was necessary to end the rebel war and secure peace before holding elections. This volte face came as a complete surprise to James Jonah, the chairman of the Interim Electoral Commission (INEC). Jonah reluctantly agreed to convene a second consultative meeting (Bintumani II) of political organisations to once again decide on whether to proceed with the elections as scheduled. The fact that the NPRC was suddenly engaged in peace talks with the RUF was cited by Bio and his supporters as grounds for postponement. Jonah, however, was in no mood to agree even in the face of threats on his life and armed attacks on his residence by soldiers, insisting that the NPRC and RUF had no mandate to postpone the elections. In the end, Jonah's determination to proceed with the elections on schedule carried the day.

In the Gambia, Jammeh initially dismissed democracy as an imported concept and seemed ambivalent on the issue of returning Gambia to constitutional democratic rule. He argued, rather strenuously, that his government was transitional but that it would 'have to make sure that Gambians are aware of what their rights are, what kind of leaders they want and what type of system they want to put into effect in this country', before returning to the barracks (Daily Observer, 5 July 1994:8). One reason for the AFPRC's equivocation on the issue of democratisation was the distinction its members sought to draw between what they termed 'real democracy' and 'apparent democracy.' In the words of Lt. Edward Singhatey, 'all we wanted to do was come to State House, take over and put in place a new government that would rule with real democracy and not apparent democracy' (Daily Observer, 22 September 1994).

Under mounting pressure from the international community, the AFPRC announced a four year timetable to return Gambia to constitutional rule. Both the Gambian public and the international community expressed dissatisfaction with this timetable. The European Union declared it 'unsatisfactory and counter-productive' and the US
urged a one year transition period. These external voices were joined by the Gambia Bar Association, the Gambia labour movement and the Gambia Teachers Union, in demanding a speedy return to civilian rule. The AFPRC eventually adopted a two year transition programme that is to culminate in presidential and parliamentary elections planned for December 1996.

Since the announcement of the new transition schedule, alkalos (Muslim opinion leaders) from the provinces have on several occasions called on Jammeh to cancel the proposed elections and stay in power. There was even talk of Jammeh ‘doing a Rawlings’ by forming his own party and contesting the elections as a presidential candidate. Initially, Jammeh, like Strasser in Sierra Leone, publicly dismissed suggestions that he remain in power or contest the forthcoming elections. Quite recently, however, Jammeh has announced his intention to do what Doe did in Liberia and Strasser tried but failed to do in Sierra Leone – contest the presidency. The PPP, the National Convention Party (NCP) of Sheriff Dibba, and Hassan Camara’s Gambian People’s Party (GPP) have been barred from contesting the forthcoming elections. The fact that the NPRC and AFPRC were more receptive to democratic pressures than the PRC is not surprising. Liberia, unlike Sierra Leone (1961-67) and The Gambia, lacked any democratic tradition and the PRC was in power at a time when the politics of the cold war dictated US support for despots who professed to be anti-communist. The NPRC learned from the mistakes of Doe’s government and seemed determined not to repeat them.

State Capacity and Institution Building

Related to the issue of democratisation is the problem of institutionalising political power. Military coups suggest very low levels of institutionalisation but do not preclude the construction of legitimate political institutions. Military regimes ‘can be effective builders of political institutions ... but they can play this role most effectively in a society in which social forces are not fully articulated’ (Huntington, 1968:261). Mexico, Turkey, South Korea, Pakistan and Brazil are often cited as examples of countries where military leaders served as institution builders. Military leaders have not fared as well in Africa although ‘... Uganda under Museveni shows that a dominant military can gradually and incrementally recreate civilian institutions through diverse processes of penetration and legitimisation’ (Khadiagala, 1995:68).

Institution building entails the creation and strengthening of state capacities. These capacities are defined by the protective, regulative, extractive and allocative functions of the state. In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, the state collapsed to the degree that it ceased to perform these functions. In Nimba county, home of Quiwonkpa, the coercive resources of the Liberian state were deployed to terrorise rather than protect local residents. After Quiwonkpa’s unsuccessful attempt to take power, Doe purged the armed forces of Gios and Manos and launched a campaign of terror against members of these ethnic groups. State terror in turn fostered the emergence of warlord armies supported by ethnic groups targeted for extinction by Doe’s Krahn soldiers. In the ensuing civil war that engulfed Liberia, both state and government collapsed as Doe could not even provide security for his own person.

The banalisation of violence, the fragmentation of power and the breakdown of law and order signalled the protective and regulative collapse of the state in the final years of Doe’s personal dictatorship. A corollary of this penetrative shrinkage was the state’s extractive and allocative retraction. Capital flight created a domestic liquidity
crisis in the first few months of PRC rule as over 20 per cent of deposits in the commercial banking sector were transferred abroad. In less than two years after the PRC coup, private sector liquidity fell from $175.5m. to $102.6m. The volume of US currency in circulation fell from $10.5m. in 1980 to $4.2m. in 1984 while Liberian coins (Doe dollars) in circulation increased from 11.6m. to 31 million Liberian dollars (West Africa, 13 January 1986:56). The foreign debt of the Liberian state more than quadrupled, from $750m. in 1980 to $4.0bn. in 1990. While this economic downturn was periodically cushioned by aid from the US (which increased from $10m. a year before the 1980 coup to over $80m. a year after it), the inability of the PRC to defend the territoriality of the Liberian state, protect its citizens and enforce law and order, contributed to the destruction of the Liberian economy.

Economic devastation was particularly evident in the extractive sectors of the economy. Since Monrovia was cut off from ‘Greater Liberia’ by the civil war, the Doe government lost substantial revenue from iron ore, diamonds, timber and agricultural products. The abandoned Bong Iron Ore Mining Company was plundered and its machinery sold overseas by Charles Taylor’s NPFL. LAMCO, another iron ore multinational, had to reach agreement with Taylor’s NPFL to continue using port facilities at Buchanan. Since Taylor’s forces controlled much of Liberia outside the capital of Monrovia, the Doe government was deprived of critical resources which in turn undermined the allocative role of the state.

Under pressure from the US and in a partial abdication of sovereignty, Doe placed the Ministry of Finance under the supervision of US financial advisers in 1987, but not even this action could save the economy from its downward spiral. Liberia’s gross international reserve was a paltry $1m. in 1987 and, with a high external debt burden and nothing to show for it even before the onset of the civil war, the Liberian economy was in free fall toward the end of the Doe years. Growth rates were consistently negative and when combined with the effects of corruption, diminished the state’s capacity to provide and expand social amenities. No significant development project was undertaken by the Doe government and the average Liberian was in every respect worse off after than before the PRC coup. Doe blamed the revenue shortfalls of his government on ‘evil forces’ bent on destroying the Liberian state. As he put it:

*We have had to expend valuable resources and energy against evil forces which have been tirelessly at work to destroy our country, discredit every legitimate effort we have made, and offer the most negative impressions of our country to the outside world. The disruptive forces of coup attempts have contributed to our economic difficulties and the crisis of confidence in the country* (West Africa, 22 April 1985:809).

While the constant threat and fear of *coup d'état* may account for the Doe regime’s inordinate obsession with security, it does not explain the institutional and economic collapse of the Liberian state. This collapse, among other things, was rooted in the disconnection between state and society and in the wholesale departure of the PRC from its original coup objectives.

In Sierra Leone, signs of institutional collapse predated the NPRC coup and were among the reasons given for ousting the APC from power. Like its predecessor, the NPRC strayed from the objective of legitimising political power and became more consumed by the need to maintain its dominance. This primacy of domination over legitimation contradicted the imperative of institutional development. By proving incapable of deconstructing the predatory essence of the regime it inherited, the NPRC accelerated the institutional demise of the state. This was evidenced by the lack
of penetrative presence in the countryside, the loss of governmental control over its security forces, the displacement of almost half the country’s population and the government's decision in 1995 to hire mercenaries. Road traffic between Freetown and the provinces came to a complete halt for much of 1995 as rebels and renegade soldiers went on the rampage, scorching villages, plundering property and killing innocent civilians. Attacks against civilians by renegade soldiers quickened the pace of destabilisation and, as the security situation deteriorated and soldiers became indistinguishable from rebels, provincial urban communities organised civilian defence committees and vigilante patrols to defend their towns. These efforts were often supervised by secret society (Poro, Wunde) members and traditional hunters (kamajors). Interestingly, the NPRC on many occasions consulted tamaboros (sorcerers) and kamajors before launching attacks on rebel positions, but the absence of trust between the military and society limited the effectiveness of such cooperative endeavours.

The absence of discipline within the armed forces undermined the regulative capacity of the Sierra Leonian state and fostered its extractive contraction. The Sierra Rutile Company and the Sierra Leone Ore and Metal Company (SIEROMCO), which accounted for 60 per cent of the government’s export earnings, were forced to close down their operations following attacks by rebels and renegade soldiers in January 1995. Sierra Leone’s gross international reserves stood at a paltry $33m. in 1993 (less than a month’s imports) while the country’s external debt ballooned from $1.6bn. in 1992 to $12.7bn. in 1994 (West Africa, 10 September 1995:1396 ). Negative growth in industry and agriculture, combined with the preponderance of smuggling activities in the mining sector, depleted the foreign exchange earnings and tax base of the state. The Bumbuna hydro-electric project, started by the APC in the early 1970s and which the NPRC vowed to finish, was never completed. While there were a few noticeable improvements in road construction, mass communications and the supply of energy, the predatory character of the NPRC regime and the realities of the rebel war deprived the state of the resources needed to carry out its basic functions.

In the Gambia, where neither state nor government collapsed, there was no discernible deflation of institutional capacity under the AFPRC. Incidents of civilian harassment by soldiers multiplied but at no point did the relationship between the Gambian armed forces and society degenerate to the level of distrust and hostility that characterised the Liberia and Sierra Leone situations. The AFPRC also had fewer problems maintaining discipline within the Gambian armed forces. This may have been due to the small size of the Gambian army (800 men, 1 battalion) and the fact that the AFPRC did not have to contend with an armed insurrection. Rather than contract state capacities, AFPRC rule may have strengthened them by consistently privileging a social agenda in its rhetoric and some of its policies.

Gambia’s economy was in far better shape at the time of the 1994 coup than were the pre-coup economies of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Official development assistance as a percentage of Sierra Leone’s GNP was 164.4 per cent in 1993, compared to only 25.5 per cent for The Gambia in the same year. Gambia’s external debt grew modestly from $137m. in 1980 to $386m. in 1993, compared to Sierra Leone’s debt burden which had skyrocketed from $435m. in 1980 to $1.6bn. in 1993 and $12.4bn. by 1995. Gambia’s international reserve was also respectable for a country its size – at $94m. it was almost three times the combined reserves of Liberia and Sierra Leone (World Bank Report, 1995). The AFPRC coup led many observers to predict serious economic problems for The Gambia. Tourism, in particular, was the hardest hit by the change in government. Many European governments and tour operators declared Gambia
unsafe after the coup and sought to dissuade their nationals from vacationing there. This campaign resulted in massive lay-offs in the hotel industry and the loss of a critical source of revenue for the government. Job loss in tourism, where an estimated 10,000 workers were laid-off, also affected taxi drivers, horticulturists and handicraft traders, not to mention the Gambian extended family. Compounding the loss of jobs and revenue from the tourist sector was the suspension of economic aid by the European Union, USAID and the World Bank.

Nonetheless the AFPRC remained steadfast in its commitment to a reformist agenda. By shortening its transition timetable from four to two years, it was able to negotiate an end to the suspension of multilateral and bilateral aid. The regime then went on to embark on several projects, including the building of a new hospital in Farafeni, the construction of a new international airport, as well as several schools and recreational facilities throughout the country. Thus, even as its revenue base was threatened, the AFPRC was still able to launch projects that would benefit the average Gambian.

Ultimately, it was the protective and regulative impotence of the state, especially in Liberia, rather than its extractive and allocative contraction, that heralded its demise there and in Sierra Leone; neither military government established political institutions capable of outlasting them. As the PRC and NPRC deviated from their original objectives, they lost public support, a condition that did not lend itself to the construction of effective political institutions. No new institutions involving popular sectors were established in Doe's Liberia and although the NPRC briefly flirted with the idea of youth mobilisation by establishing a National Social Mobilization Secretariat (NASMOS), this effort amounted to nothing more than an outlet for dispensing patronage to supplicants of the NPRC. No new procedures and organisations of lasting value have been established in The Gambia either, but the fact that the Gambian state did not collapse under the weight of AFPRC abuses makes the task of institution-building in The Gambia less daunting than in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Conclusion

Since 'the African military, imbued with colonial ideology, compulsively ... seeks to pre-empt institutionalisation precisely because it sees it as a threat to its chances of effectively imposing despotic rule on society', African states would perhaps be better off dissolving rather than maintaining their 'unregenerated colonial militaries' (Agyeman, 1988:403). Instability represents a boon for rank and file soldiers with limited or no access to state resources, as it provides them with opportunities to loot public and private property. Violence under these circumstances becomes 'the vehicle of change' that guarantees capital accumulation not only by dominant classes (Hutchful, 1984:133) but by armed subordinate strata. Thus while political violence in the past may have disproportionately benefited elites, its banalisation under the militariat has made it less class specific.

Lonsdale's observation that 'the insecurities of rulers have been their people's undoing' (1986:156) captures an important dimension of the tragedy that unfolded in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In both cases, the military itself became the main source of predatory instability. Liebenow's 'atavistic model', which sees rule by the militariat as part of 'a calculated effort at creating disorder ...' (1986:143), is particularly applicable to Liberia and Sierra Leone, where the militariat's 'ecstatic revolution' (Opala, 1994) spawned disorder, lawlessness, banditry and 'spoils-based collapse' (Allen, 1995).
The Gambia's Jammeh has the potential of following the example of Jerry Rawlings in Ghana, especially in combating corruption and strengthening state capacities. But if Ghana under Jerry Rawlings and Burkina Faso under Thomas Sankara point to an alternative possibility for the militariat, it is because their leaders had a clear vision of where they wanted to lead their countries and were imbued with the integrity to stay the course of their vision. About Sankara, Francois Mitterand once remarked: 'He has the earnestness of a vibrant youth, and is devoted to his people, but he is too earnest' (Skinner, 1988:448). It is this sincerity and earnestness, among other things, that sets Sankara and Rawlings apart from their imitators in West Africa.

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NGOs, the State and Civil Society

Henrik Secher Marcussen

This article examines the validity of some of the objectives of non-governmental organisations (hereafter NGOs) that are based in the donor states and operate in the third world. The author has personal experience in the evaluation of several Scandinavian NGOs working in Africa and takes a somewhat sceptical position as to the capacity of such NGOs to 'construct' civil society in African states. Inevitably, such NGOs are part of a wider system of development assistance, and their field operations – particularly if they are to participate in the development of long-term sustainable development – will both inevitably reflect the nature of this system and have to work closely with existing state structures. On the other hand, in this new phase, the NGOs are outsiders which are, in an artificial way, entering into a process which ought to be much more genuinely and organically evolving out of the local context itself. How this is to be achieved is beyond the scope of this article.

Since the 1960s, when most African countries achieved their independence, a number of important changes in policy focus and in theoretical emphasis have taken place. In the period immediately after independence there was a profound belief in the ability of the state to manage and steer the development path. The strategy was based on economic growth and a top-down approach which would produce major changes in the living conditions of ordinary people by a trickle down effect. As a corollary to such policies, a state-centrist approach dominated the theoretical debate. Whether neo-classical in approach – within the modernisation paradigm – or adhering to the prevailing dependency school, the two approaches shared the belief that economic growth/local capital accumulation was the prerequisite for establishing the necessary capitalist relations of production, and that the role of the state was crucial for achieving this, as the only instrument able to generate and accumulate economic surpluses which could be invested or redistributed.

Since then, a dramatic shift in policy focus has taken place in which the role of the state has been drastically reduced. The African states have themselves contributed considerably to this result: rather early the state appeared as the most important arena of political struggle and enrichment, and numerous examples of mismanagement, corruption, nepotism, repression, dirigisme, authoritarian rule were the result.

While at policy levels structural adjustment programmes are the most prominent (and influential) expressions of this credo, a profound shift has taken place also at the level of theory. The rational and economically thinking individual (man) is at the focus of attention: one who optimises gains and plays the rules of the game in order to better his position in actual or future struggles and competition over scarce resources. Methodological individualism is in focus, and the neo-liberal paradigm is at the fore, nearly unchallenged (but see Toye, 1991; Manor, 1991 and Colclough, 1991)
Previously the state sought to control all levels of society, neglecting the development of civil society and its institutions. Today, decentralisation, democratisation and empowerment of the local population have gained ground. The political vacuum left by a diminished state has allowed advocates of the market and the private sector to claim them as the prime agents of development. Simultaneously, increasing efforts are made to build on grassroots movements and organisations and other tendencies in building the antidote to the weakened state in a strengthened civil society.

In many situations, however, it has been left to NGOs rather than the market to fill the vacuum left by the state. NGOs have experienced a dramatic growth in numbers and funding making them the most important factor in building civil society: supplementing, but more often replacing the state, opposing, or disengaged from state policies and strategies (Chazan, 1988; Azarya, 1988). In the words of Fowler (1992:7):

*The dominant western concept of socio-economic development based on liberalism and market forces maintains that NGOs must be supported because of their political role within civil society. It is envisaged that people must be empowered to take over some aspects of development from the overbearing, autocratic, inefficient and corrupt states that have commonly ruled in Africa. NGOs must also provide countervailing power to government expansionism; strengthen people's ability to hold public servants and politicians accountable for their (in)actions; and, foster democratic change by expanding social pluralism.*

But are NGOs actually fitted to fulfil this role? Before discussing this, it is necessary to clarify with which of the many types of NGOs this article is concerned, and to outline the increasing role of NGOs in development activity. It is also important to include a note of caution. The immense increase in the volume, scope and budgets of NGOs based in the third world is a subject beyond the scope of this analysis. Its focus is, and it needs repeating, a non-scientific sample of evaluations and assessments of a number of ‘first world’ NGOs that operate in the third world. The author's own participation in such assessments is limited to a number of African countries, and it is as yet impossible to determine whether such an analysis can be generalised to other African countries, or other regions (though certain findings in the secondary sources quoted seem to point in roughly the same direction).

**The Growing Importance of NGOs**

During the past 20 years, aid channelled through NGOs has increased dramatically, from $2.7bn. in 1970 to $7.2bn. in 1990 (Fowler, 1992), while OECD estimates total Northern NGO spending at $9-10bn. annually (OECD, 1993a:1). On average it is estimated that NGOs today account for about 13 per cent of total ODA (official development assistance). The increase has been especially remarkable in the case of the Scandinavian and other ‘like minded’ donors, who allocate up to 25 per cent of aid through NGOs (by contrast the UK allocates 5-8 per cent (Danida, 1993). Multilateral organisations also increasingly rely on NGOs for implementation of projects (Cernea, 1988). According to Landell-Mills (1992:565), in 1991 44 World Bank assisted projects in Africa were implemented by associated local NGOs, equaling 55 per cent of all loans and credits accorded Africa in that year, compared to only seven projects each in the years 1973 to 1987.

On average, a third of NGO funds stem from government sources, but the percentage varies greatly. In Denmark, where the requirements for counterpart financing have been relaxed, or completely abolished in exchange for a fixed overhead percentage of
budgets, the government and the ‘non-private sector’ is by far the largest single source of funding for the NGOs, in certain cases financing more than 80 per cent of total activities. The number of NGOs supported varies a great deal, from 600 in Sweden to around 100 in Britain. In all cases, however, a small number of NGOs, ranging from 4 to 10, have received by far the largest transfers, from 65 per cent to 95 per cent of total NGO disbursement.

Two interconnected reasons stand out for this upsurge in using NGOs: the belief that NGOs efficiently and cost-effectively are able to implement projects in a sustainable manner, particularly those close to the grassroots, and that, consequently, donors increasingly look to them for implementing projects, making still larger amounts available. In this, NGOs are also seen as the most adequate instrument to correct the failures of both markets and, in particular, governments:

In an area of declining financial resources and deepening poverty both donors and national governments are looking to NGOs as a means of getting benefits more directly and cheaply to the poor than governments have been able to accomplish on their own. Many NGOs are becoming increasingly aware of their potential to command national attention and international funding, and of the need and opportunity to exert badly needed leadership in addressing people-centered development issues within a broad policy and institutional context – issues that donors and governments have too long neglect (Korten, 1987:147).

The empirical focus of this article is on a particular kind of NGO: organisations with their headquarters in the donor states which receive state and some private funding for their work in recipient states. Fowler’s categorisation (1992) of such ‘northern’ NGOs includes: 1) public service contractors, which comprise highly professional organisations with paid staff, operating on the basis of market demand, and a development agenda defined by its funders (public donors), 2) value oriented public service contractors, which, again, are highly professional organisations, but which operate on the basis of both a market demand and the organisation’s own development agenda. In this case, we are talking about NGOs which have developed out of specific historical circumstances and with varying constituencies (trade union background, Christian communities, solidarity activities or specific political orientations). These organisations have often experienced a transition in form and function, having gone through a process of professionalisation and, in response to demand from public donors, have gradually shifted focus towards more long-term development activities. Finally, 3) voluntary organisations, which are totally run by volunteers and maintain a distinct ideology. Although all three types are in the development business, the second group is by far the most important.

Given the immense growth in number and size of such northern NGOs it is important to have a certain conceptual grasp of these NGOs scope, role, management etc. Korten (1987 and 1990) has offered an ideal-type model, representing different ‘generations’ of NGOs, with different backgrounds, functions and perspectives. At the same time this categorisation represents the main challenge facing many NGOs, in the transition from being primarily relief and emergency voluntary organisations to becoming truly professional long-term development institutions. The other major feature of this categorisation is the functional emphasis, from the NGO as a ‘doer and implementer’, to a role as facilitator and catalyst, which increasingly must focus on supporting the creation and strengthening the ‘enabling environment’.

While this categorisation illustrates a sequential or chronological development, which many NGOs are trying to effectuate in their organisational development, at the
same time it is obvious that NGOs often represent functional mixes, where NGOs act as doers, implementers and catalysts simultaneously. However, to Korten, the third generation is to many NGOs still the ideal, the most difficult transition to make and realize, but also the one which NGOs eventually have to reach, if their role in strengthening civil society, as perceived by neo-liberals, is to be realised.

**Comparative Advantages of NGOs**

According to conventional wisdom, the comparative advantages of NGOs include the following (Cernea, 1988; UNDP, 1993; Danida, 1993):

- a capacity to reach the poorest, and ‘outreach’ to remote areas;
- a capacity to promote local participation and to implement projects in direct collaboration with target beneficiary groups;
- a capacity to operate on low costs;
- a capacity to be innovative, experimental, adaptive and flexible; and
- a capacity to strengthen local institutions/organisations; to empower marginal groups.

NGO assistance is in particular expected to be sustainable, and the development activities supported through NGOs to supplement or complement bilateral or multilateral aid, most often provided on a government-to-government basis. In other words, the functions and roles played by NGOs are mainly as more efficient project implementors, particularly at local level using participatory methods. Another important role is as service delivery agents (in health, education, etc.), substituting for the state, either resulting from effects of structural adjustment or as a result of state incapacity.

**What have we learnt about Northern NGOs?**

Several authors (for example, Bratton, 1989:572, Hyden, 1988:12) stress that very little is actually known about the efficiency and impact of NGO-intervention, and whether NGOs basically can deliver and fulfil the expectations now placed on their shoulders. Thus an OECD report argues that (1993a:1):

> Despite the fact that they spend tens of millions of dollars annually through their NGO communities, few governments have taken evaluation seriously, with the result that Northern NGO survival has been almost completely de-linked from performance.

In the following sections, the NGO strong points identified above will be assessed on the basis of recent evaluation and research experience. In this, the author will draw heavily on the results of two recent major evaluations in which he took part as team leader, one for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a Sahel-Sudan-Ethiopia Programme (Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1992 and Marcussen, 1996), where in particular the results from Mali, Ethiopia and Eritrea will be included. The other was a capacity assessment analysis for Danida of four major Danish NGOs, including NGO activities carried out in Namibia, Uganda, Burkina Faso and Bangladesh (COWIconsult, for Danida, 1995).
Table 1: Ideal Model for NGOs Transition, following Korten (1990:117)

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<th>Country</th>
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Reaching the Poorest, and ‘Outreach’ to Remote Areas

In its Human Development Report, UNDP (1993) tries to synthesise findings regarding NGO performance in tackling poverty. UNDP reports a number of individual project successes, but hastens to add that there have also been failures. ‘More successes than failures?’ the report asks, answering that ‘nobody really knows’ (p. 94).

One of the more thorough evaluations of this aspect of NGO performance has been carried out for the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) by Riddell & Robinson (1992a, b). Not surprisingly, given the difficulties in measuring poverty alleviation and choosing the right time perspective, the results of their assessment of recent evaluations and studies are also ambivalent, although with an overall positive bias. Around three-quarters of the sampled projects had a positive impact in alleviating poverty (1992a:3). However, most of the projects ‘failed in reaching the poorest, and even in cases where poverty alleviation occurred, improvement in economic status was modest. There was little evidence to suggest that many beneficiaries had managed to escape from poverty on a permanent basis’ (1992b:8; 1992a:4).

The evaluation carried out for the Norwegian Foreign Ministry of their Sahel-Sudan-Ethiopia Program (the SSE Program) allowed us to compare the performance of multilateral organisations funded under this programme with the performance of Norwegian NGOs. Reaching the poor and working in remote, inaccessible areas, underprioritised by governments and underrepresented in many other respects, is according to this study no longer the prerogative of NGOs. In the part of the evaluation carried out in Mali, the NGOs and multilateral organisations worked in precisely the same remote areas, under similar conditions and hardships, and they all targeted the poorer segments of the population. For example, in areas in the inner delta along the river Niger, the Norwegian Church Aid, IFAD, UNSO/UNDP and the World Bank all carried out project activities financed through the SSE Program. Moreover, for all these agencies the cultivation of the fodder plant bourgou was a major objective and projects implemented had the same target beneficiary groups. But the partners did not differ markedly in the quality of their participatory approaches. Most striking, however, there had been no co-ordination of efforts nor sharing in experience gained among the partners (even when funded under the same programme umbrella), a major weakness to which we will return later.

The assumption that the NGOs work directly with the recipient communities, adopting a participatory approach and reaching the poor, might still be tenable. However, the lack of clearly identified target groups and organisations, which
characterised the NGOs working in Mali, gives the appearance of ‘trial and error’ rather than a well conceived strategy for exploiting NGO strengths.

The strategies of Norwegian NGOs operating in Mali were not particularly sensitive. A prime example of a lack of socio-economic sensitivity can be seen in the neglect shown by projects towards the interaction between pastoralists and cultivators, with support generally being given to the latter, with no consideration of the impact upon the pastoral economy and community. In certain cases, Norwegian NGOs had supported projects which tended to regard sedentarisation and the adoption of cultivation as the primary solution to problems facing pastoralists and they had encouraged settlement in areas traditionally used for grazing.

**Participatory Approaches**

Riddell & Robinson's study confirms the importance of beneficiary participation in the planning, design and implementation of projects’ (1992b:7). Adhering to the principles of participation is not however exclusively characteristic of NGOs. In the SSE Program evaluation, while both multilaterals and NGOs recognised the importance of participatory approaches, there was no clear distinction in terms of approach and implementation between those working in Mali, where the NGOs in particular failed to demonstrate the more advanced level of participation expected of them.

The lack of participation can be explained in a number of ways. Thus in the case of certain NGOs, especially the Norwegian ones, the traditional relief orientation of the agency (corresponding to Korten’s first generation) had led to a top-down approach. The use of food for work, generally imposed on communities with little or no discussion, had continued this process. In other cases, attempts to cover large and diverse areas with insufficient baseline information had led to ‘blueprint’ planning.

**Operating at Low Costs**

In the ODI evaluation quoted above, most of the studies revealed high project costs and that benefits take time to ripen and mature. According to the evaluation, in five projects, benefits exceeded the costs of achieving them, while in ‘five others, the objectives were achieved, but at a high cost of staffing and resources’ (1992b:9). In the SSE-Program, approximately 40 per cent of total funding under the programme was received by nine Norwegian and two international NGOs, compared with 52 per cent received by multilateral organisations. Contrary to expectations, NGO projects tended to be larger than those implemented by multilateral organisations and only one multilateral organisation, IFAD, received contributions larger than those for the average-sized NGO project. By far the largest undertaking was the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) project in Gourma, Mali, accounting for Kr120m. over a five-year period (approximately $20m.).

Several of the NGO projects cover vast areas, typically some 20,000 sq.km in Mali (the NCA project). Several NGO projects are thus very ambitious, covering large tracts of land, have huge target beneficiary groups and are addressing multiple objectives within the same project, including health and sanitation, water supply, education, small-scale industries, dune fixation, tree planting, relief operations and food for work campaigns. In addition, large project facilities are often established, with expatriate housing facilities (small towns in the landscape), a huge car fleet, and
elaborate administrative routines and procedures, locally, nationally and at headquarters – all contributing to some NGOs being very large and obviously not operating at particularly low costs. Such projects are often seen as ‘fortresses’, or, as it was described in the evaluation, ‘bastions in development’, enclaves which have only limited contact or coordination with other donors, and little sharing of the experience gained.

A similar picture appeared from a recent evaluation of four major Danish NGOs, which had also undergone dramatic changes in their project portfolio, receiving sharply increasing contributions from Danida. In addition, many of the NGOs under the SSE Program were strongly influenced by their past in spirit and approach, continuing to emphasise various measures to secure food and its distribution. They also failed to move beyond their traditional ideology of relief and disaster prevention to evolve into full fledged long term development institutions. In these respects, neither the Norwegian nor the Danish NGOs reviewed were particularly flexible or adaptable.

Innovative, Adaptive and Flexible

Riddell and Richardson found a number of good examples of both project replicability and innovation, but the lessons learned tended ‘to play a larger role influencing the organisational capacity of the implementing NGO rather than leading to a redesign of the project approach’ (1992a:25). Nine out of sixteen projects were found to contain some element which could be termed innovative, mostly in the specific approach adopted in different socio-economic and political settings, rather than in technology.

Despite the formulated desire within the SSE Program of finding new solutions to old problems (food security), many projects within it were found to support and continue to implement, almost unquestioningly, techniques and measures which have been applied for a long period and in many cases found to be of limited effectiveness. This applied particularly to Norwegian NGOs in Mali, where there was a considerable reliance upon external inputs and established approaches to soil and water conservation. Few questions were raised concerning the long-term sustainability of these measures. Other NGO projects in Ethiopia and Eritrea showed some encouraging innovative techniques, building on local knowledge, institutions and capacity and having an integrated view of the environment. The international NGOs in Mali, namely CARE and IUCN, had responded to innovations in natural resource management, while the multilateral ILO/ACOPAM and the World Bank were experimenting with techniques in maintaining soil fertility.

The NGOs working in Mali showed little socio-economic sensitivity and thus proved less capable in adapting to new requirements, although a certain professionalisation had taken place. Several had developed to a size where they did not differ from many other major bilateral or multilateral donors, somewhat like super tankers at sea, experiencing great difficulty or great time lag in trying to change course.

However, the NGOs did maintain their comparative advantage of being less bureaucratic than other partners under the SSE Program. In general the multilateral organisations had very slow and cumbersome administrative procedures and routines and very long lines of command, while their blueprint approaches to preparing, planning and implementing projects resulted in problems of inflexibility.
Strengthening Institutions and Empowering Local Groups
The ODI study broadly confirmed the view 'that most NGOs place a high premium on the formation of new groups, or the strengthening of existing groups, a means of raising awareness, empowering the poor and promoting the goal of self-reliance'. Results were mainly good in cases where groups 'genuinely represented their interests (the poor) (rather than a front for elite groups) and where they provided effective channels of communication with the NGO', in contrast to projects where groups established were unstable or in internal conflict (1992a:20).

In the case of the SSE Program, examples were reported where participatory approaches were tried, and efforts made in strengthening local groups. However, a danger common to many projects was observed, the creation of new structures through which to work. Some SSE funded projects replicated government structures and, in both Mali and Ethiopia, this led to competition rather than coordination of efforts with the extension staff of the Ministry of Agriculture. The World Bank's natural resource management projects in Mali, based on participation and decentralisation, developed not only top-heavy extension structures but also new parallel structures of coordination and planning.

To sum up, it seems that the NGOs surveyed had achieved a lot in certain areas, particularly in empowering local groups and institutions, alleviating poverty and using participatory approaches. However, comparing the performance of NGOs with that of other aid partners produced less spectacular results. No great differences were discernible for example in participatory approaches or in reaching out to remote areas, and having the poorer strata of the population as target beneficiary groups, and reaching them. One major conclusion of the evaluation of the SSE Program was that the projects of the NGOs and the multilateral organisations showed little difference in quality, scope and approach. Rather, the tendency was towards convergence, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish one partner from the other.

In Korten's terms, the Norwegian NGOs have not yet accomplished the intended transition from agencies for relief and disaster prevention to long term development institutions. Although a certain professionalism has evolved gradually in project preparation, design and implementation as well as in staffing, they have experienced great difficulties in becoming institutions addressing broader development issues. This difficulty in moving into the third generation is not peculiar to the Norwegian NGOs (Danida, 1989; Marcussen, 1996; COWIconsult, 1995).

The transition, which has been forced upon the NGO community partly as a result of certain donors needing to disburse increasing amounts of funding, is thus not easy. However, apart from the manifest objective difficulties in becoming comprehensive professional development institutions in a highly competitive donor world, Korten's categories outlining the transition seem to overlook some inherent paradoxes (Marcussen, 1996:281). Among them are the risk that with increasing professionalism, the introduction of project supervision and management tools (for example, Logical Framework Analysis), greater accountability to donors with regard to reporting and monitoring, the introduction of administrative procedures for 'economies of scale', NGOs might move further and further away from their original comparative advantage, the grassroots and their direct involvement with the target beneficiary groups. Another risk reported by the OECD study (1993a:9) – which partly confirms the above findings – is a growing homogenisation of NGOs.
What all this would imply for those NGOs that are expected to take up the other major function, that of strengthening civil society in the vacuum left by the retracting state (and the inefficient market), is even more problematic, especially when considering some of the difficulties which NGOs have been reported as having in operating on a larger scale and addressing broader societal issues. Expecting them to play the role as facilitators, catalysts, advocates and networking partners vis-à-vis civil society may place a burden on most NGOs which they are unable to shoulder. It may also be the case that unless NGOs pursue another type of transitional process than the one advocated by Korten, which means one which will maintain some of the basic qualities and comparative advantages of NGOs, while stressing some new skills to be developed, their prospects of playing the anticipated positive role in strengthening civil society might be even more bleak. We shall return to these issues below.

**NGO Shortcomings Encountered**

While certain NGOs, may possess the comparative advantages listed it is far less certain that all – or most – do. NGOs seem to have particular difficulties in reaching beyond the micro-scale, perhaps because most have originated abroad and are funded from the outside, while having geographically-fixed projects as their point of departure. Evaluations and studies have shown NGOs have special problems in: 'scaling up' their activities; ensuring replicability and multiplier effects; learning from experience and engaging in coordination with other partners; ensuring institutional sustainability and linking up with local, regional or national structures and organisations.

**Scaling up Development Impact**

A number of studies have identified a failure of NGOs to make the right linkages between their work at micro-level and the wider systems and structures of which they form a small part (Edwards & Hulme, 1992:13). Going beyond the micro-level brings the state and state structures into the picture, as well as other NGOs, local institutions and other aid donors. In order to scale up development impact, NGOs necessarily will have to relate to the larger political and socio-economic processes, in which not least the state plays a crucial determining role. Increasing the impact of even small NGO projects thus has nothing to do with scale as such, but rather with strategic bridging to larger structures – at times, acting as a non-governmental organisation with the government.

For ideological and many other reasons this is apparently difficult, with NGOs preferring to by-pass state structures and establish parallel ones (Peart, 1995:163; Tvedt, 1994). But this path is indispensable, both to establish individual project successes and to respond to the demand to strengthen civil society. Yet the general impression of NGO performance in this regard is disappointing:

*NGO contact with the wider structures they seek to influence is often too limited to effect any real change. NGOs are peripheral to the systems they are trying to change, and lack the leverage necessary to maintain their influence when there are other, more powerful interests at work* (Ibid., 20).

The NCA project in Gourma confirms this to some extent. The NCA had established itself in Mali as the single most important donor. In Gourma, it had become the basic region-wide development institution, providing food for work and handing out food...
rations in drought years, delivering services in health, planting trees and fixing sand
dunes. At its disposal was a huge infrastructure, and, particularly in the early years,
many Norwegian expatriates were housed within its confines. Both the physical
impression left and its mode of operation were that of a project functioning as a self-
contained enclave in the region, with few links to the surrounding society and its
institutions, whether traditional or parts of the formal government institutional
structure. In many ways, the project had completely taken over the developmental
role of the state in the region, yet with only limited formal contacts to government
structures. The Touareg uprising worsened the situation, as the project had employed
leaders from rebel groups. It also had little to offer by way of contacts with other
partners or taking part in coordination efforts, by which a wider dissemination of
project experience could take place.

Institutional Sustainability and Capacity Building
Collaborating directly with grassroots organisations and supporting their organisati-
onal growth could be another important step in strengthening civil society. It is,
however, neither that easy nor something NGOs necessarily possess the qualifications
to achieve. As Thomas (1992:138) stresses, there are no examples ‘of widespread
social transformation brought about directly through such methods (of empowering
the poor)’. Uphoff (1993:608) also warns against this ‘populist’ fallacy of regarding
NGOs and local grassroots organisations as ‘invariably superior’ to state or market
alternatives, and maintains that grassroots organisations and NGOs ‘are limited,
often flawed channels for promoting development’.

Many NGOs do not have the institutional assessment capacities nor the intimate
knowledge of the local situation required for selecting partners and formulating
appropriate strategies. For instance, often NGOs tend to work with a local community
as if this were a well defined, homogenous entity and an unproblematic concept
(Thomas, 1992:138), which is seldom the case. In many other cases, NGOs do not have
the insight to assess activities in relation to both overall national strategies and plans,
nor how they link to the market and efforts in privatisation (see Peart, 1995).

In the evaluation of the SSE Program, the NGOs showed particular weaknesses in
assessing institutions and seldom had strategies formulated (or activities introduced)
aiming at linking up with the broader institutional structures. A tendency to establish
parallel structures and institutions was prevalent, obviously out of fear of linking too
closely with local state structures and as a reaction to shortcomings in existing
institutions.

A similar example was given in the evaluation of environmental education projects in
Burkina Faso, supported by Danish Red Cross with Danida funding. For years, the
project had supported the introduction of environmental education at primary school
levels in northern Burkina, and had showed some progress in creating awareness and
establishing nurseries and fostering tree planting activities among villagers. But it
had only few, and formal, links to the schooling system and to the teachers in Yatenga
province, and when discussions regarding a possible extension of the project were
initiated, the timing of this came as a big surprise for the local teachers, whose
involvement was not foreseen as they were not supposed to be involved in project
preparations, formulations nor assessing experience gained in past phases of the
project. The project had failed to see its activities as integral parts of the formal
educational system, instead directing most of its efforts into ensuring successes at the
local (micro) levels.
Networking and Exchanging Lessons Learned

Both academic and practitioner literature sees NGOs as failing to learn from, or share, experience, attributing this to more basic organisational weaknesses. Thus Bratton (1989:572) argues that:

"NGO projects are often isolated from one another and from planned government interventions, and are difficult to replicate in dissimilar settings. Moreover, small is usually expensive, and while NGO micro-projects may be relatively effective, they are also usually inefficient. There is a persistent shortage of skilled managers in the voluntary sector and a lack of clarity about the management principles ... Finally, because research and evaluation are not always conducted, very little in the way of systematic learning is being gleaned from the NGO experience."

The OECD Issues Study (1993a:5) is still more critical but sees the failure to learn as arising from the need to promote success and conceal failures from funding agencies.

The SSE Program and Danish evaluations generally did not support the view that NGOs are well suited to learn from experience and share with others the lessons learned. Rather, most of the NGOs assessed had a limited project focus perspective even when, as in Mali, several worked under the same funding umbrella with very similar objectives, target beneficiary groups, and locations. The Danish NGOs also had difficulties in learning and sharing, particularly for those that had originated as rather traditional relief and disaster prevention agencies, dominated by a deep concern for alleviating poverty, malnutrition and hunger here and now, but neglecting longer-term development perspectives, including the scaling up and sustainability problems. Only one of them, IBIS, had initiated a reform process, whereby advocacy, facilitation and empowerment were to be integral parts in all projects, if necessary at the expense of direct project implementation. This organisation was also the one best placed (and had done most) in trying to establish more systematic reporting and feedback procedures for experience learning and sharpening the tools for future support activities.

Networking – along national and/or sectoral-thematic lines – may be one of the means for reaching beyond the often isolated project focus. While according to Clark (1991:99) there have been a number of successful results from meetings held in this regard, our expectations should also be realistic (Korten, 1987). NGOs do have difficulty in working seriously with one another, due to jealousy, rivalry or simply defending their turf!

The NGO Challenge

The challenge facing most NGOs today, certainly the NGOs covered by the evaluations conducted on Norwegian and Danish NGOs, is to respond adequately to two conflicting demands, or challenges.

On the one hand, many NGOs are increasingly being used as implementing and executing agents by bilateral or other donors. With increased funding (which most NGOs gladly and quite unreservedly have accepted) has come increased demands for accountability, professionalism and demonstrated impact of activities. As a result, many NGOs have begun to transform themselves, reducing the voluntary part of their activities in favour of staff being trained as professionals and having explicit professional qualifications. New modes of operation have also been introduced and new administrative, monitoring and reporting procedures established, leaving an
impression of NGOs as no longer very small-scale, but with a risk of soon becoming rather heavy, but professional, aid bureaucracies.

On the other hand, many NGOs are faced with a challenge of reaching beyond their micro-scaled project focus, scaling up their activities in order to ensure broader societal impact. The virtues or comparative advantages, of NGOs have in the opinions of many donors placed NGOs firmly on the map with regard to their superior capabilities in furthering participatory approaches, empowering local groups through which they work, being cost-effective, small, innovative and flexible, etc. These virtues have also led NGOs to being viewed as the most obvious partners and agents in supporting the construction and strengthening of civil society in the developing world. Such a role will, of course, have to be pursued in close collaboration with local NGOs and community groups, but the Northern NGOs are intended in this process to act as the prime initiating agents (partly because of donor requirements as to accountability!), as facilitators, catalysts and mediators.

While most NGOs are already in the process of professionalising their organisations in order to meet the first challenge, they are far from meeting the second. This is due, in part, to a number of conflicting reasons.

One is that professionalisation risks undermining some of their existing virtues, such as flexibility, responsiveness, willingness to experiment and take risks etc., as well as marginalising the particular motivated efforts by voluntary or solidarity groups within the organisations (Thomas, 1992:144; Edwards & Hulme, 1992:214ff; Clark, 1991, 1992). Second, even when having tried to respond to this first challenge – that of transforming NGOs organisationally from relief and welfare organisations, based to a considerable degree on voluntarism and involvement, to organisations acting as public service contractors, which only few NGOs so far have successfully completed – responding to the second challenge exacerbates the problems. The difficulties encountered in transforming organisations from first to second generation NGOs, according to Korten, can be expected to be exacerbated when making the great leap forward to third generation NGO.

As a prerequisite for taking up the role as agents in strengthening civil society, NGOs need to develop skills and administrative procedures which do not evolve naturally from the previous generation of NGOs. The transformation from first to second essentially has sought to build on a prior set of experiences not too far from the objectives and ideals of the new professional organisation, but the shift from second to third generation is much more dramatic, decisive and carries much more serious organisational consequences.

Acting as catalysts in furthering civil society entails maintaining the best of all generation NGOs, continuously stressing in particular the virtues of working with local groups and community structures, empowering local groups and strengthening their institutions and political roles, while at the same time, a certain degree of professionalism will be needed, in order to receive continuous funding from donors. In addition, it requires that completely new functions are developed and perfected; roles and functions of which most NGOs have no or little experience, such as acquiring particularly well developed knowledge about the local setting and showing great sensitivity towards local conditions. Parachuting in expatriate staff – as has been the norm for project execution, whether within one mode of operation or another – is out of the question, as the deep and intimate knowledge of local conditions needed can only be gained from long period of word on the ground.
Another qualification of the new generation of NGOs will be the ability adequately to assess partners and partner institutions in order to support institution building, which has been shown in a number of evaluations to be a major NGO weakness and which is a critical task in the search for sustainable development. Once again, knowledge of the local situation is pertinent, as are the more formal tools for assessing institutions and institutional demands. Contrary to much rhetoric surrounding local groups and institutions, many such institutions are no better than the discredited state, as mentioned by Nugent (1993:627) and stressed by Uphoff (1993:607-8):

*These institutions (grassroots institutions) and the opportunities they present for rural development need always to be assessed in relation to both state and market institutions, since the strengths and weaknesses of all three sets of institutions are complementary and interrelated ... To suggest that GROs (grassroots organisations) and NGOs can make important contributions to rural development in the 1990s and beyond does not mean that they are inherently or invariably superior to state or market alternatives. The ‘populist’ fallacy is as mistaken as the ‘paternalistic’ fallacy when it comes to assessing the virtues of grassroots or non-governmental organisations.*

Local institutions are no more democratic or representative than other organisations, simply because they are local or close to the grassroots. Nor are they necessarily less clientelistic or rentseeking than the State. Expecting NGOs to assess such institutional problems proved in the above mentioned evaluation of Danish NGOs working in Central America to be extremely difficult, as ideological or political ‘correctness’ or the politically accepted phrasing of goals and objectives seems to replace proper institutional assessments.

Other new roles and functions may include the professional ability to act as lobbyists and advocates, in the North as well as in the South, vis-à-vis governments, regional groupings, major donors or donor groupings, combining diplomacy with political sensitivity in order to get the message across. Other skills would include developing new success criteria for projects, to satisfy donors but also the continued organisational development of the NGO in question; or acquiring new skills in information and communication (Edwards & Hulme, 1992:214), in education and institution building, among others.

While this new trend is consistent with the roles NGOs are anticipated to fulfil vis-à-vis civil society and the vacuum left by the state, and may respond to what donors would like to see happen, the latter still use and fund them as project implementors/executors, without necessarily reflecting on the contradictions contained therein. NGOs might thus be caught in the accumulation dilemma, where continued organisational growth can set in motion a number of forces not easily controllable, and which runs counter to the more idealistic NGO objectives.

But even if NGOs succeed in keeping some distance from governments, walking on two legs, whereby they continue to receive the needed funding for implementing projects, while gradually developing their skills as catalysts, facilitators, the basic problem of performing the latter task are still present. The new facilitating role inevitably will entail less physical involvement in the south (meaning less income), fewer staff at home (as the role as catalyst is less labour intensive than project execution), a completely new staff with new skills of a new and not easily identifiable type, more local staff employed (which again costs less, meaning less income). In brief, a completely changed organisation, of a much leaner type and with a much less
staff and bureaucracy at home. In organisational terms, this entails a new kind of professional scaling up, while the organisation basically has to be turned into a much smaller and leaner type: in other words a kind of scaling down in activity and hence in income. Gradually, this path would lead to transferring still greater responsibilities to the South and, ultimately, to the dissolution of the Northern NGOs, at least as known today. How this dilemma will be tackled and perhaps resolved, particularly in times where funding into the coffers of NGOs has flown so relatively freely, is a major new NGO challenge. And the NGO community has yet to formulate a strategy for a way out of this dilemma.

NGOs, the State and Civil Society

As Clarke has suggested (1991:75-76), there are basically three different ways in which NGOs can relate to the state: 1) complementing it, by filling gaps, providing services, 2) opposing it, either directly or by lobbying against it, together with local groups and in support of locals, and 3) reforming it, working with the grassroots, helping them raise concerns at state level and working with governments to improve policies.

As most evaluations and studies have shown, acting directly with the state in reforming policies, with or on behalf of local groups, is not a preferred type of NGO activity, and not an area in which NGOs have shown particular strengths. Often the state is seen by NGOs (and local groups of people) as part of the problem, rather than the solution. This has contributed to seeking solutions to problems by by-passing the state (as also shown in the above evaluations). Although states and state policies can negatively affect local development efforts, or actively go against real decentralisation efforts, constructively relating to the state is, however, a prerequisite for successful activities in many respects (Uphoff, 1993:618; Thomas, 1992:145).

Two kinds of hypothesis have been offered regarding the impact on the state and its legitimacy from supporting civil society. One hypothesis is that strengthening civil society (for example through NGOs) will have a positive bearing on the state, as some vital, functional gaps in service delivery will be filled, and other shortcomings be substituted for. Provided the state is able, together with the local community, to handle and administer this situation well, the state can profit from this by showing its ability to cope with shortages while retaining power and control and, perhaps, even strengthening its legitimacy (Nugent, 1993; Tripp, 1992; Hyden, 1988:13).

The opposite hypothesis tends to see successful grassroots developments and the provision of certain services, otherwise believed associated with state functions, as destabilising and undermining factors (Fowler, 1991:63). To the extent that the community, supported from the outside through NGOs, is successful in mobilising local groups and forces, or providing services – in for instance health and education – this is viewed as challenging state control and supremacy, and would in the long or short run further erode an already fragile state legitimacy. According to this hypothesis, conflict between the state and civil society is at the fore. But the problem with both hypotheses is that neither is well substantiated by empirical studies.

Among the few studies undertaken is Peart (1995), who in Guinea analysed NGO efforts in supplying rural smallholders with certain inputs and in organising producer groups, with the associated aim of establishing an institutional base for smallholder power able to make claims upon the state. He sought to assess whether NGO interventions through projects were undermining 'the development of private and public institutions and mechanisms, such as specialised credit institutions, input
NGOs, the State and Civil Society

markets and improved seeds projects, which have been nationally identified as crucial to rural development’ (p. 152). Thus NGO importation of fertilizers, using their tax-exempt prerequisites, had undermined business opportunities for private agents who in accordance with state policies of privatisation had tried to get a foothold in the market. The result was that ‘The development of a national network of private operators in fertilizers (was) thereby impeded, and this precondition for higher inputs use nationwide remain(ed) unfulfilled’ (p. 161). Furthermore, the promotion of credit mechanisms, subsidised through NGO projects, had distorting effects on specialised institutions charging real interest rates.

Other examples are given by Tvedt (1992, 1994), based on studies of Norwegian NGOs operating in the conflict-ridden Southern Sudan. Tvedt’s main point (1992:22) is that the NGOs eroded the authority of a weak state, ‘not by organizing civil society against the state, but by being efficient substitutes for state administration’. And he goes on:

As the state was withering away (...), whole districts or sections of ordinary government ministries’ responsibilities were handed over to NGOs to run. The NGOs put up their own administration and organisation undermining the state institutions without establishing viable alternative structures, also because there was no ‘civil society’ to root them in. Moreover, the project proliferation imposed potential and long-term burdens on state administration and state finances, cornering the state with no alternatives but to lose face. Additionally, the NGOs competed with the state for the region’s perhaps scarcest resource: educated manpower. (...), one impact therefore was to weaken foundations for a region-wide, rule-oriented and universalistic state administration and bureaucracy.

While Tvedt is very insistent on the negative impact of NGO interventions on the state, this may be ascribed to the peculiar setting of the problematic in Southern Sudan. The NCA project in the Gourma region of Mali had very similar roles and impact in the way of being a huge institutional set-up, outside the reach of government and generally substituting for the inefficient state, but it was not possible to see similar state eroding effects.

Which hypothesis is valid might thus depend on the specific socio-economic and political setting. However, the discussion as to the role of NGOs in strengthening civil society and whether this role falls naturally within the comparative advantages of (foreign) NGOs, in addition to investigating how the impact of NGO interventions affects state authority, legitimacy and policies, is still very pertinent.

The scarce evidence thus seems to indicate that there are few examples where the strengthening of civil society (by NGOs as intermediary organisations) has had a positive impact on the state, its legitimacy and general functions. Rather, studies seem to indicate that efforts in compensating for missing state functions tend to erode the legitimacy of the state. Fowler (1991) mentions examples from Eastern and Southern Africa where the population has been mobilised to counteract state power, fostering negative reactions from the state which has felt its hegemony threatened (and with the NGOs in question, supporting this process, having been banned). Finally, seeking to reform the state by working through grassroots movements and organisations may be an area to which NGOs give increasing priority, but one in which few results have been reported.

As mentioned above, to play this role NGOs will need completely new skills and possibly also completely new organisational structures: much smaller, leaner
organisations, with intimate contextual knowledge and great capacities in assessing institutional needs and supporting institutional developments within civil society. Developing these organisations would entail a gradual reduction in size while shifting mode of operation increasingly to the South. Given the continuous heavy funding possibilities from aid donors and through it the established organisational accumulation imperative in many NGOs which have grown really big, such a transition may turn out to be extremely difficult to pursue.

Wider Perspectives

Following from the retraction of the state, not least as fostered by structural adjustments and other policies embedded in neo-liberal ideology, it has largely been left to NGOs (as intermediary institutions) to fill gaps and, in particular, to strengthen civil society through support to local groups of people and local organisations and community structures, to help in implementing decentralisation policies, to assist in empowering the locals and foster democratisation, etc. This role is both created by default of the state, and fostered by neo-liberal thinking in which NGOs are expected to assist in further reducing the state. To the extent that they succeed in strengthening civil society (and filling the gaps left by the state), while other forces are in play in making the market work, the state can become even smaller, more reduced and less influential.

The function which NGOs (as Northern intermediary organisations) are expected to perform in strengthening civil society in the developing world has, however, nothing to do with the way in which civil society and its institutional build-up took place historically in the western world, whether the organisations of civil society followed a strategy of consensus (as in Scandinavia) or of cooperation based on a distinctive division of labour between civil society and the state (as in the US), strengthening the organisations of civil society was more based on cooperation than conflict with the state (Salamon, 1986, 1994; Tvedt, 1994). Another important difference is that civil society in the West developed organically within the general mould of society and the forces generating its growth. Using Northern NGOs as a main driving force in shaping civil society in the developing world of today is an artificial and externally-driven process (which may create artificial institutions, which are not sustainable, because of being funded from the outside), which again has been, in part at least, provoked by efforts in reducing the role of the state, efforts also introduced from the outside.

It is a paradox that the NGOs generally have accepted this role, possibly lured into it by generous donors, without reflecting on the many, perhaps conflicting, agendas they seek to serve. On the one hand, the NGOs maintain their rhetoric and phrases about public participation, empowerment of the locals, decentralisation and democratisation while, on the other hand, they completely fail to see that they very easily risk playing a forceful role in the neo-liberal game, further eroding the state – a game, which they would harshly criticise under other circumstances (as reflected in the public debate over structural adjustment and its effects).

Adding to the paradoxes involved, Tvedt asks whether NGO effort in strengthening democratisation actually can be expected to lead to it. Referring to comparative research in European history, Tvedt mentions that,

*a multitude of development NGOs in itself is not a vehicle for achieving a democratic society or a sign of democratic improvement. (...) More important than the number of
Based on experience from, for example, Bangladesh, he refers to findings in which the multitude of NGOs and local organisations actually have contributed to 'the paralysis of social and political action'. Even if NGOs have proved to possess democratic ideals and rules of the game, and have succeeded in encouraging local democratic institutions, such successes do not support the flourishing of representative democracy, but is rather separated therefrom. To support democratisation through NGOs will not guarantee democracy; rather, according to Tvedt 'it actually encourages negligence of national assemblies and governments in order to enter into direct co-operation with organised interests. Thus organisations in society may be strengthened at the expense of representative democracy'.

In a sense, we are back at discussing some of the new skills required of NGOs in order to fulfil their role adequately, skills which go beyond professionalisation of tools and administrative procedures, and beyond the common populist ideology surrounding NGO work. In a number of cases reported, NGO supported organisations and institutions have not been particularly democratic in their outlook or mode of operation, but have been influenced by the elite or powerful groups in society, and used as vehicles of social mobility for personnel previously employed by the state, etc.

Yet another paradox arises from structural adjustment. In implementing it the state apparatus is expected both to contribute to its own reduction, while at the same time supporting and strengthening civil society, or the conditions which may lead this to thrive. Not only is it expected to pursue a number of far-reaching reforms – which in reality require a strong and capable state – but also to be willing to curtail its capacity to act as a providing state. The state is also expected actively to contribute to constructing civil society through decentralisation policies, whereby the state might be further eroded. And in supporting civil society, possibly through NGOs as intermediary organisations, the state will also have to accept the diversion of funding from its own coffers to the NGO community and its projects, as the general trend shows that the NGO sector will receive still increasing shares of aid, at the expense of aid provided to governments.

The fundamental paradox in all this, which is not realised either by donors or by the NGO community, is that strengthening civil society requires as a necessary indispensable condition the strengthening of the state: the state and civil society stand or fall together (Chazan, quoted in Bratton & Rothchild, 1992:278).

If development strategies in Africa are built on a minimalist state in combination with a strengthened civil society in many respects replacing the state – an effort which to a great extent is funded externally and implemented through northern and southern NGOs – the result may well be an anomaly, artificially constructed and externally driven. The resulting asymmetry might easily risk being not only unsustainable, but even unstable and perhaps violent. In a nutshell, what is needed is that the northern NGOs accept a secondary role in relation to indigenous NGOs: to accept that they themselves have neither the capacity nor the local skills to bring about the empowerment strategies their rhetoric says is now necessary. But how this is to be achieved is beyond the scope of this article.
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Uganda: A Bantustan?

Martin Doornbos

It may seem paradoxical to register a reservation about a piece with whose core substantive contents one does not, grosso modo, disagree, yet this is precisely what this note is set out to do. My attention was recently drawn to an article which I had missed when it first appeared in 1995, namely the paper on 'Reconstructuring the Ugandan State and Economy: The Challenge of an International Bantustan' by David Himbara and Dawood Sultan (ROAPE 63, 1995). Evidently the paper has been provoking questions with readers, or at least with the one reader who spoke to me about it and was asking what I thought of it. Upon reading, I do think it deserves a (belated) comment.

The Himbara/Sultan paper's central argument is that Uganda has become 'an aid-driven economy [with] an administrative apparatus highly dependent on donor personne'. This judgment by itself is not particularly astounding or novel, nor particularly different from how an analysis of most other African economies might read. What matters are the qualifications that are being associated with this state of affairs in the Ugandan case.

After giving a brief resume as to how Uganda had entered its independence, with fierce competition among various sub-nationalist fractions before experiencing the disastrous years during Idi Amin and Obote II, the authors go on to demonstrate – basing themselves on some interesting and revealing observations in this connection in the Rehabilitation and Development Plans 1991/92 to 1994/95 of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (1992) – that in the subsequent reconstruction process foreign donors have come to constitute a dominant and seemingly permanent element in the policy making process. The authors actually speak of a case of 'recolonisation' (p. 91), though elsewhere in the article they typify Uganda's condition today as even worse than colonisation since 'not even a direct colony was as acutely reliant on external forces' (p. 85) and during colonial times at least 'the bulk of colonial revenue was raised from within the colony itself' (p. 92), which today is no longer possible.

To be sure, one might quibble here about various specific points and nuances, such as whether or to what extent it is recurrent budgets for regular state expenditures for which Uganda has become overwhelmingly dependent on donor support (as Himbara and Sultan imply) as opposed to budgets for rehabilitation and development (which their major single source appears to suggest), or again about the extent to which 'aid-driven' in actual practice means 'donor-dictated' or might instead be allowing some space for 'policy-dialogue' (admittedly one of the gross euphemisms of our time) and thus for inputs and priorities from the Ugandan side. Such qualifications are not unimportant – on the contrary – and in a fuller and more searching analysis than Himbara and Sultan have given us these should clearly have been explored. However, focusing on any such differences or variations might obstruct a view on the broader and more important dimension that remains beyond dispute, which is simply that Uganda is a country that has indeed become heavily dependent on aid.
and in which donor agencies have increasingly much to say. On this score, again, one can only register one's basic agreement with the authors.

Now, as hardly needs spelling out in ROAPE, the persistence of heavy aid-dependence is a given (on which one can and in fact must agree) that at its more general level has been provoking major ongoing debates. One (vocal) side to this is, of course, that represented by the advocacy of conditionalities, political and otherwise, and by numerous calls for reform of the state, the economy, and what not. By implication all these start off from aid-dependency and in fact use this as their leverage. One level further (up, down?) one can indeed hear the calls for recolonisation, which currently seem to be issued with less and less constraint in various quarters and media. Heavy donor and involvement from these perspectives appears to be viewed not only as unproblematic in itself but as an essential factor to achieving other kinds of goals.

In contrast, the other side to this tends to view this overall state of affairs and the increasing external involvement it entails as deeply tragic, no matter how well-intentioned some of the individual projects or programmes might be. Probably the most serious critique of the phenomenon of donors running the show that is observable in many parts of Africa must be that it tends to stifle and erode away responsibility and initiative in policy formulation towards basic national development strategies from where it belongs, namely with the relevant government and planning departments and authorities. If sovereignty is in question in Africa today, this is probably due more to the massive external inroads into the policy-making arena than to the loss of territorial control as suffered by a number of states.

Against this background, my reservation against the piece by Himbara and Sultan is twofold: one is their singling out of Uganda as a special case, even a 'novelty', in terms of this syndrome of aid plus donor-dependency; and second, there is their selection of the term 'Bantustan' to characterise the ensuing Ugandan situation. These two steps in combination lead to an unwarranted imagery of Uganda as a peculiar puppet regime within Africa at large, whether intentionally so or not.

As to the first of these, puzzling as it may seem, there is no indication in the paper that the authors recognise that heavy aid-dependency and donor-tutelage is a phenomenon that can be found throughout most of Africa (and might thus theoretically qualify most African countries as 'Bantustans' in their terminology). There is no recognition, for example, that countries like Tanzania or Ghana or several others which unlike Uganda have not gone through periods of excessive traumatic violence, find themselves similarly at the mercy of aid and its donors as Uganda does. Instead, as mentioned, the Ugandan case is viewed as a 'novelty', possibly to be followed only in future by other countries emerging from crisis situations like Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda, Zaire, Angola, Mozambique or Burundi (p. 92).

In the light of the authors' perspective on the pervasiveness of donor rule in Uganda it is quite ironic, though, that a plausible argument could well be made that it is Uganda which, on precisely opposite grounds, takes in an exceptional position. At the present time of massive collective donor pressure on African countries, including Uganda, to go multi-party, I know of no other African country that over the past several years has persisted in its efforts to develop its own political cum electoral system as an alternative form of democratic representation and, despite considerable misgivings on the part of the major donors, has so far managed to get away with it.

As for my second reservation, for what should be obvious reasons the epithet
'Bantustan' can only be regarded as a most unfortunate if indeed not malicious choice. It may well be that from some South African perspective – from where one of the authors is writing – the term might primarily be associated with its decentralising/budgetary aspects (though frankly I would doubt that this could still be the case in South Africa today), but surely in the rest of Africa and the world at large the term stands primarily as a synonym for apartheid, the institutionalisation of racial segregation and the installation of illegitimate puppet regimes. Again, add to that the singling out of Uganda as a special and ‘novel’ case by the authors and a very peculiar proposition emerges as to how according to them we should view this country's status and legitimacy. Is that what the authors were seeking to achieve?

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Liberia: After Abuja

Stephen Riley & Max Sesay

In April 1996, Liberia's latest shaky peace settlement, the 1995 Abuja Accord, finally collapsed amidst intense fighting in the capital, Monrovia. The accord was the thirteenth peace deal agreed by the warring factions in the six-year old civil war and held the best chance of a return to relative peace and reconstruction. Since August 1995, when the peace deal was signed in Nigeria's capital, there has been some moves towards the goals of peace, disarmament and demobilisation, and elections in 1996 for a more legitimate government. There is urgent need to disarm the estimated 60,000 combatants, revive the capacity of the collapsed state and revamp old, or establish new, institutions required for the huge task of reconstruction and reconciliation in the twenty-first century (Riley, 1996; Sesay, 1996b).

These recent developments have provoked numerous interpretations, among them the suggestion that the collapse of the most hopeful peace deal invokes Kaplan's apocalyptic analysis of the new forms and manifestations of conflict in the next century (Kaplan, 1994; 1996). The nature of the war and the pessimism over Liberia's apparent ungovernability has also led to some suggestions that the UN should consider making Liberia its Trust Territory. The immediate cause of the renewed violence was the determination of Roosevelt Johnson, leader of the Krahn faction of the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO-J), to resist arrest and prosecution by some members of the 'collective presidency' for murders he was alleged to have committed. However, the events of April 1996 should be seen as the culmination of a myriad of problems that bedevilled the peace process, in particular the transformation of war into lucrative business, problems in the peace negotiations and the flaws in the Abuja peace deal itself.

The intervention of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in August 1990 to help resolve the Liberian conflict is, at best, controversial. It has been characterised in various ways. For some, it is a bold attempt at peacekeeping (Vogt, 1992; Wippman, 1993); and for others, it offers serious lessons in regional conflict management in the post-cold war era (Aning, 1994a; Ofuatey-Kodjo, 1994; Weller, 1994). Yet for some others, the nature and cost of such an ill-conceived and regionally divisive collective intervention exercise by reactionary West African leaders has had disastrous consequences for regional cohesion and development, and it is practically unsustainable (Sesay, 1996a).

The Diplomatic Peace Process

Peacekeeping by ECOMOG, the ad hoc military force of ECOWAS, was paralleled and complemented by a vigorous diplomatic peace process aimed at finding a political solution to the conflict. By September 1995, a total of thirteen peace accords had been signed as a result (Graham, 1995). In addition, the peace process has so far led to the installation of three ECOWAS-backed interim administrations. The background to the current crisis is the debilitating impact on the peace process of a complex interaction of forces. Some recent analyses (Sesay, 1996b)
have focused on Taylor's pivotal position in the conflict. For a long time, Taylor's signing of ceasefire agreements and accords was never an indication of his sincere commitment to a negotiated settlement of the conflict. Rather, such agreements provided him with a breathing space in the fighting, which he used to rearm, reorganise and relaunch his attacks. Moreover, Taylor negotiated only under intense military or diplomatic pressure. Determined to rule Liberia at all costs, Taylor, until June 1995, detested talking directly to the Nigerians, whom he regarded as the greatest impediment to the attainment of his ambitions. Moreover, he was never keen on any peace plan that fell short of installing himself at the Executive Mansion. His quest for power was always suspect to a great many Liberians and few believe he wishes to obtain power in the national interest. Even Taylor's flowery programmes for reconstruction are generally deemed to be fundamentally self-serving and superficial.

On the other hand, ECOWAS repeatedly made concessions to Taylor in what amounted to an appeasement policy. Keen on ending the war fairly quickly, ECOWAS acceded to most of Taylor's demands, including the expansion of ECOMOG, direct UN intervention in 1993 and the early replacement of the Sawyer-led Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) with the transitional government of David Kromakpor in 1994. The irony was that ECOWAS' approach, which came to look like weakness, sent the wrong signals to Taylor. It was only after Taylor's territorial losses and diminished external support that Taylor realised he would never attain his ambitions through military means. Warring factions also proliferated due to the pervasive feeling that Taylor had to be stopped from obtaining power by force of arms.

By the time of the signing of the Abuja agreement, the NPFL already had a dissident group, the Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC), led by Tom Woewiyu (currently Labour Minister). ULIMO had also split up into a Krahn faction (ULIMO-J), led by Johnson, and a predominantly Mandingo group (ULIMO-K), under the leadership of Alhaji Kromah. Other factions, either to defend regional interests or simply to further personal and ethnic ambitions, also sprouted. The two most important in this respect are the Lofa Defence Force (LDF) and the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), the latter led by Dr. George Boley and also Krahn-based. Even the rump of the national army, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), had long become one of the warring factions. It is the bastion for the defence of the interests of the minority Krahn, the late president Samuel Doe's poorly educated ethnic group that dominated politics in the 1980s and has come to define its security in terms of dominance of the AFL and top government positions in Liberia. It was the attempt to topple the dictatorship of Doe and end Krahn hegemony that led to the outbreak of civil war in 1989.

The consequences of an increase in rebel groups are three-fold. First, it led to a further diffusion of arms in the country and increased the total number of combatants. This has immensely complicated the process of disarmament. Second, like Taylor, the leaderships of the other factions, to whom Taylor lost most of his territory since 1993, also realised that the war was very good business. The territories they and their fighters controlled became a source of wealth, enrichment and power, and it thus became difficult to negotiate their relinquishing. Therefore in the popular view, the fierce horse-trading and diplomatic backdealings witnessed over a period of six years was mere squabbling over the spoils of office. Third, the proliferation of warring factions also made the negotiation process more complex. To be effective, any agreement had to be acceptable to all the parties concerned.
The collapse of the Cotonou, Akosombo, Accra and Abuja accords was due to either the refusal of some parties to attend talks, their refusal to sign the relevant agreement or the fact that their leaders were left out of the major governing body, the Council of State. The political process has lately come to be seen by faction leaders and their supporters as another means of furthering their interests and ambitions after the pillaging of the interior is now almost complete. As the post-Abuja events have demonstrated (see below), key players threatened with exclusion from this process would ensure that nothing meaningful comes out of any negotiations or peace agreements. The manner in which leaders of warring factions conducted themselves in the course of the conflict thus had a great bearing on the futility of the negotiations.

Liberians have become wary of demagogues, of people who profess one thing but do something entirely different, and of people who pursue selfish motives in the name of fighting for the general good. Peace accords collapsed with predictable speed because of the enormous greed, hatred and suspicion bred by generational feuds, personality conflicts and a ruthlessness for elite aggrandizement (Reno, 1995). In the process, ethnic identities, traditional loyalties, and youth and rural resentments have been exploited and manipulated (Ellis, 1995; Richards, 1995). These concerns affected every bit of the peace process, including the serious business of producing qualitative peace instruments.

With the arguable exception of the Cotonou Accord of July 1993, the peace agreements are generally poorly drafted, poorly written, and simplistic. They don't truly reflect the complexity of the problems in Liberia. Another explanation for the difficulties encountered in the peace process relates to the negative effects of intra-regional rivalry. For a long time, the various factions could count on outside support, especially support from some ECOWAS countries themselves. The varieties of regional interests at stake in the conflict bred enormous suspicion amongst regional players. The simmering disunity beneath the facade of a united ECOWAS hampered the organisation's efforts to take a united stand on Liberia and helped undermine most of the peace accords. This was apparent since the time of the series of talks hosted by Côte d'Ivoire's late Houphouet-Boigny that culminated in the signing of the Yamoussoukro IV agreement in October 1991.

However, the trend became more evident after Ghana's Jerry Rawlings became chairman of ECOWAS in August 1994. In a rather swift move of policy reversal, Rawlings quickly developed a friendship with Taylor, with whom he (and his senior government officials) held closed and behind-door talks in Ghana and other secret locations across the region. Although this injected a fresh momentum into what had become a stalled peace process and got two agreements quickly signed, there were reports of Nigerian unease at these developments, especially as the full details of these meetings still remain a matter for speculation.

The Nigerian authorities thus had great misgivings for the Ghanaian-sponsored (September 1994) Akosombo and (December 1994) Accra agreements, in particular the provision that Taylor was to be vice-chairman of the proposed Council of State in charge of foreign affairs and security. Apart from the fact that this would have put Taylor in the position to determine the status of ECOMOG troops in Liberia, the proposed chairman of the Council, Tamba Taylor (no relation of Charles Taylor), was a 90-year old traditional chief whom many believed would be easily manipulated by Taylor. If successful, the two agreements would also have added to Rawlings' stature as an international statesman and would have been viewed as an indictment of Nigerian diplomacy in Liberia. However, Rawlings, in the aftermath of the fiasco of Akosombo
and Accra, decided in early 1995 to turn attention to getting Taylor to mend fences with the Nigerian government of General Sani Abacha and to dispel all talk of a rift between Abuja and Accra. The result was the signing of the Abuja Accord.

The most thorny issue in the Liberian peace process has, however, always been the question of encampment, disarmament and demobilisation of combatants. Of the estimated 60,000 combatants at the height of the war, about 50,000 were still under arms by the time of the signing of the Abuja accord. The mutual suspicion amongst the leaderships of the warring factions not only collapsed accords, but also made it impossible for one faction to undertake unilateral disarmament. The confidence and security-building measures necessary to mitigate the typical effects of this suspicion have never been in place in Liberia. Before Abuja, this situation gave rise to faction leaders threatening to execute, and in some cases reportedly executing, those of their war-weary fighters who wanted to disarm without permission. This phenomenon led to widespread scepticism among external donors, who accused faction leaders of failing to demonstrate a solid commitment to ending the war. On occasions, therefore, both ECOMOG and the UN Mission (UNOMIL) have threatened to pull out unless the factions disarmed and their leaders seriously committed themselves to finding a political solution to the conflict.

At the heart of the problem is the inadequacy of economic and financial resources necessary to ensure a comprehensive disarmament programme. Years of fighting have instituted a gun culture that has become the basis of survival for fighters who have little hope in what the future holds for them. Adequate financial resources are, therefore, necessary to put in place a programme that will offer a more attractive lifestyle and a fairly certain form of sustenance to ex-combatants. ECOMOG is hugely over-stretched and poorly financed, despite Nigerian estimates that it spends over one million dollars a day in the operations and that its total expenditure since 1990 has risen to $4 billion (Reuters, 16 April 1996). A donor conference held in New York in October 1995 pledged just over $100 million towards disarmament, reconstruction and democratisation in Liberia. For comprehensive disarmament to have taken place, however, ECOMOG's force needed to have been further strengthened, from the current 7,000 to 12,000 troops. But this increase alone required an additional $133 million. ECOMOG troop requirements for this purpose since April, now put at 18,000, makes matters seen more sombre. For effective monitoring also of the designated nine safe havens and 12 assembly points, UNOMIL needed enlarging by 42 observers prior to April, which required an additional $62 million. Estimates for relief alone, put by the UN at over $100 million (West Africa, 6 November 1995) before April, now almost double this figure.

In light of these estimates and the invariably huge financial cost of reintegration of the fighters, the pledges at New York in 1995 appear quite simply inadequate. Even so, hopes existed that the euphoria generated by the Abuja Accord would be sustained if donors delivered their pledges quite rapidly. This, however, did not happen, leading to a loss of the window of opportunity, rhythm and momentum provided by the agreement. The promised assistance with finance and logistical needs for ECOMOG were frightfully slow in coming. The young ex-combatants were invited to come to town on the promise that they would be given jobs or sponsored to various educational institutions. The failure to deliver on this promise – while their leaders had fat jobs as Council members, ministers and chief executives of state enterprises, as well as living posh suburban lives in Monrovia – even further heightened the disillusionment and alienation of this youth. All that was needed was a spark to set this
explosive situation ablaze. The departure from the Liberian scene of most aid and relief agencies in the aftermath of the April debacle has further worsened the acute humanitarian problem prevalent in the country and once again sparked off a mass exodus of people, crammed in old and crumbling sea vessels, seeking refuge in other countries.

Weaknesses of the Abuja Accord

There were reasons to believe that the Abuja agreement of 19 August 1995 held the best chance of returning peace to Liberia. One significant departure from previous accords was the decision to include members of the major warring factions in the collective presidency, the Council of State of the second Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG 2). The Council was to have one chairman and five vice-chairmen of equal status. This made it possible for Charles Taylor, representing the NPFL, to be part of the governing body of Liberia for the first time. Installed on 1 September 1995, the Council came to be headed by Wilton Sankawulo, an English Literature professor from the University of Liberia, an institution that remained fairly neutral throughout the civil war. The two other representatives of warring factions were Alhaji Kromah (ULIMO-Mandingo) and Dr. George Boley (LPC). The remaining two were civilian representatives, namely, Oscar Quiah (for the coalition of civilian groups) and Chief Tamba Taylor, whose proposed chairmanship of the Council was dropped at Abuja.

Another significant proviso of the accord, and a departure from earlier ones, was the stipulation that although the chairman was ineligible to contest the elections scheduled for August 1996, all other members could do so provided they resigned their positions at least three months prior to the elections. This provision cleared the way for the major faction leaders to battle it out in pursuit of their ultimate ambition, the presidency. Combined with later promises of external financial support, these aspects explain the euphoria with which the Abuja Accord was greeted. This high expectation was heightened by Taylor's announcement in August 1995 on various local and international media networks that the war was over and that he would return to tell his fighters to lay down their arms. Taylor himself was greeted by thousands of jubilant crowds in Monrovia when, for the first time since his invasion in 1989, he entered the capital on 31 August 1995 to take his seat in the new Council (Sesay, 1996b).

Like previous accords, however, the Abuja peace deal was inherently flawed. A provision in the accord allocated various faction leaders control of corporate executive positions and headships of parastatals. This led to appointments to government positions based not on merit, but rather on factional and ethnic affiliation. The local press and religious groups were especially vociferous in their criticism of this aspect of the agreement and argued that appointments of this nature served only the parochial interests of the faction leaders, and not the purposes of national reconciliation.

Pundits in Monrovia were also quick to draw attention to the poor choice of Sankawulo as Council chairman. He came from an obscure political background and lacked a political base. The fact that he was nominated by Taylor, without his knowledge, provoked widespread skepticism about the degree to which the chairman would eventually be able to resist the wily and manipulative tactics of his promoter. By early 1996, a lot of the fears expressed regarding Sankawulo were gradually been realised. He turned out to be 'powerless (and) unable to call members to order when they squabble(d) over the spoils of office and (did) their best to make the peace process unworkable' (Africa Confidential, 16 February 1996). One source noted that power was carved up between Taylor, George Boley
and Alhaji Kromah, 'in a tactical alliance that has nothing to do with the patriotism, peace or democracy proclaimed in the flowery titles their respective militias bear' (The Times, 11 April 1996). Along these lines, the Council became torn apart by differences over interpretation and perception of fundamental issues in the peace process. The general public impression, in view of these divisions, was that there was more than one government in Monrovia (West Africa, 19 February 1996). When fighting erupted in April 1996, Sankawulo was hopelessly marginalised and even failed to make a statement on the situation, while Taylor and Kromah gave orders to their fighters to lead the assault on Johnson.

The greatest beneficiary of such executive paralysis of the Council, and the chaos that resulted from it, was Taylor who, in the run-up to the April violence, was doing everything in his power to convince his supporters that he was, in fact, the real or de facto chairman of the Council. The pomp, pageantry and long speeches that characterised a party he threw in the prestigious Centennial Pavilion on 29 January 1996, a day after his birthday, left those who attended firm in the belief that Taylor was 'the leader'. This was followed on 31 January 1996, in a speech to students at the University of Liberia, by Taylor's outburst against total disarmament. Arguing that complete disarmament was unknown in modern world history, Taylor suggested the arming of the national police force, headed by one of his nominees, Joe Tate, and which recruited over 800 NPFL fighters in late 1995.

On the eve of the April violence, Taylor had been campaigning for support for the idea that disarmament should come after the elections, and not before. This, no doubt, is a fundamental breach of the Abuja agreement (BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, 3 February 1996). Taylor had also proposed bringing ECOMOG forces under the Council's (and therefore his) control, a prospect long dreaded by the Nigerians. His 'status of forces' idea would limit ECOMOG's stay in Liberia to specific periods that were subject to renewal by the Council. Taylor went further than that to suggest a change in the name of the current administration by dropping the term 'transitional'. He sought international recognition for the new name of Government of the Republic of Liberia, a change which is also fundamentally in breach of the Abuja Accord (BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, 29 March 1996). Without the consent of other members of the Council, Taylor had, moreover, marked down in his diary the date of 20 August 1996 for the elections, which he was best placed to win. It was widely expected that the elections originally scheduled for August 1996 would have confirmed this.

The Events of April 1996

With hindsight, at least two mistakes were made at Abuja and subsequently. One was the decision to exclude Johnson, as leader of a major warring faction, from the Council of State. The basis for his rejection was the fact that he, like Boley and Quiah, was Krahn. It was agreed to limit Krahn representation in the Council to only two members since the Krahn comprise only four per cent of the entire population. Johnson was consequently offered the position of Minister of Rural Development. His ULIMO-J faction was also given three other ministries, four deputy ministries, and four managerial and eight deputy-managerial positions of public corporations and autonomous agencies. However, although these provisions were all built into the Abuja Accord, they never went down well with Johnson's supporters. Shortly after the signing of the agreement at Abuja, ULIMO-J fighters began attacking and looting relief convoys designed for the interior.

Matters worsened when, in December 1995, Nigerian ECOMOG troops,
deployed to disarm fighters but long
known to be engaged in smuggling and
shady business dealings, attempted to
dislodge some of Johnson's fighters from
the rich diamond-mining sites in Bomi
County and along the Lofa Bridge in
Lower Lofa County. ULIMO-J fighters
went on the rampage in the city of
Tubmanburg, 70 kilometres northwest of
Monrovia, killing and capturing several
ECOMOG soldiers and civilians (*The
Economist*, 20 January 1996; *West Africa,*
22 January 1996). An inquiry into these
events found ULIMO-J guilty of violating
the ceasefire agreed at Abuja and of
Johnson wanting to derail the peace
process. Johnson was thus relieved of his
duties as faction leader. Following from
this, it appeared logical to the Council to
dismiss Johnson from his post as Minister
of Rural Development, although this was
quite unnecessary.

A second major mistake was to allow the
militias of the warring factions to enter
Monrovia in large numbers rather than
secure speedy disarmament and demobi-
lisation outside the capital. The immedi-
ate trigger of the April violence, however,
was the decision by the Council, under
the influence of Taylor, to send an elite
police unit (mostly made up of former
NPFL fighters) to arrest Johnson and to
force him to stand trial for murder
charges. Against all advice and caution
from Accra, Abuja, the OAU and US,
Taylor vowed to bring the full force of the
law to bear on Johnson. This decision
stunned Liberians as well as outside
observers. The move to arrest Johnson
was interpreted by the latter's supporters
as an attempt to exclude them from the
benefits of the peace dividend in post-
war Liberia. After all, the war Taylor
initiated in 1989 was responsible for over
150,000 deaths and Taylor himself was
personally responsible for the execution
of scores of his supporters (*The Times,* 11
April 1996). This time, however, with the
connivance of ECOMOG, Taylor at-
ttempted to seize the moral high ground
of politics by turning law enforcer, a
move widely interpreted as the start of a
systematic campaign to eliminate his
opponents. While Johnson never denied
the murder charges, he saw no reason
why he should not get away with it like
the others.

What followed was the worst mass vio-
ience Monrovia has witnessed since 'Op-
eration Octopus' in 1992, and created
dramatic headlines once again in the
western press (*The Times,* 9 April 1996;
*The Guardian,* 10 April 1996). The police
force attacked and overran Johnson's
residence in the Monrovia suburb of
Sinkor. Johnson, however, managed to
escape and joined forces with the dis-
armed and encamped AFL at the Barclay
He pandered to the fears and anxieties of
the Krahn military elements by suggest-
ing that this was Taylor's final attempt to
eliminate the Krahn. This strategy suc-
cceeded in winning the support of Boley,
who broke away from his Council col-
leagues Taylor and Kromah and joined
forces with Johnson (*West Africa,* 15 April
1996). Johnson's supporters meanwhile
went on the rampage and a spree of
looting and hostage-taking of ECOMOG
soldiers, Lebanese traders and other civil-
ians ensued. As Minister of Rural Devel-
opment, Johnson had managed to turn
his Monrovia home into an arsenal of
weapons captured from ECOMOG troops
in Tubmanburg (*The Economist,* 13 April
1996). As news of the fighting spread,
fighters from the interior, most of them
Krahn, converged in the southeast of the
capital and attacked the suburbs of
Paynesville and Congo Town, two strong-
holds and areas of residence of both
Taylor and Kromah.

Meanwhile, in a surprise but disappoint-
ing move, the Nigerian Defence Ministry
gave instructions to ECOMOG forces to
remain neutral and to treat the matter as
an internal affair (*BBC, Summary of World
Broadcasts,* 11 April 1996). This, however,
did not stop ECOMOG soldiers from
taking part in some of the most serious
looting in Monrovia since the civil war began (The Times, 12 April 1996). As a result, the US, in characteristic form, ordered first the evacuation of its nationals (and later other foreigners and aid workers) from Liberia, and then the deployment of almost 2,000 Marines to protect the US embassy (The Times, 13 April 1996; 22 April 1996; West Africa, 15 April 1996). As the attitudes of the opposing belligerent factions hardened, ceasefires brokered by diplomatic teams despatched by ECOWAS and the US rapidly collapsed. A situation resembling that of 1990 re-emerged. Taylor demanded either the unconditional surrender or departure of Johnson from the Liberian scene, while Johnson, like Doe (his Krahn compatriot), remained determined never to surrender to the man he hated most and rejected all offers of protection and asylum by both Ghana and Nigeria. As the fighting continued, US Marines, for the first time, shot dead three Liberian militia men on 30 April, when the US embassy came under attack from some of the fighters.

**Abuja Revisited**

ECOWAS then embarked on frantic moves to save the Abuja Accord, starting with the convening of an emergency summit on Liberia on 7 to 8 May, which both Taylor and Kromah refused to attend. A statement issued at the end of the talks called for an end to the fighting, for the deployment of ECOMOG troops to separate the combatants, and for an undertaking by the warring factions that they were still committed to the agreement signed in 1995. But persistent calls for a review of that agreement led ECOWAS to convene, again at Abuja, in late August a meeting of its Committee of Nine on Liberia (made up of Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, The Gambia, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Senegal). What emerged was a revised and an extended form of the 1995 agreement, signed on 17 August 1996 by all parties to the first agreement.

To the relief of most Liberians and many observers, Sankawulo was replaced as Council chairman by the first woman head of state Africa has produced, the 57-year old former Senator, Mrs. Ruth Sando Perry. The composition of the rest of the Council was unchanged. However, to ensure greater compliance with its provisions, the revised agreement incorporated a number of threats to warlords and their families: freezing of assets, a ban on travel to and expulsion from ECOWAS member-states, and the possibility of establishing war crimes tribunals to try those accused of human rights violations since 1989. A new timetable for the implementation of the revised Abuja Accord was also agreed. Disarmament and demobilisation should have been completed by the end of January 1997 and all warring factions dissolved by the end of February. Campaigning and electioneering should then commence, following the resignation from the Council and other public offices of those wishing to contest the elections, culminating on or about 31 May with elections for a democratically elected government. The elected government is expected to be inaugurated by 15 June 1997.

There are hopes that the persuasive and tough Mrs. Perry, viewed by both warlords and their fighters as their ‘mother’, would succeed in appealing to all combatants to lay down their arms and to warlords to abide by the provisions of the new agreement. Further pledges of increased US financial and logistical support for an enlarged ECOMOG, coupled with an extended mandate for UNOMIL, have revived hopes in the ECOWAS peace plan and raised optimism that the salvaged Abuja peace deal will eventually restore peace to one of Africa’s troubled societies. The reconstituted administration of Mrs. Perry was installed on 23 August 1996, two days later than planned, and is beginning to come to grips with the arduous task of implementing the new arrangements.
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Bibliography


Africa’s Economic Renewal under the spell of Globalisation

Glenn Brigaldino

Among the policy themes that rally little, if indeed any political support in the United States, development cooperation regularly sits in the back row. In recent years nearly all OECD countries have failed to meet their own targets for improving development aid. The US has continuously scored as an under-performer with regard to development cooperation, in spite of political lip-service to reforming aid and enhancing effectiveness of national as well as international approaches to development.

Seen against this background it was refreshing to observe a broad and genuine concern, albeit within its own terms of reference, about the issues at stake during the international conference on Africa’s Economic Renewal organised by the Overseas Development Council (ODC) in Washington, DC from 10 to 12 June 1996. This two day event brought together an audience of over 150 actors in development cooperation with Africa. The official objective of the conference was to set priorities for African renewal on the basis of accumulated policy experiences from the last twenty years. The conference organisers succeeded in bringing together a very broad range of influential policy actors and decisions makers who presented their views to a well-informed audience mainly of academics, development professionals and NGDO representatives from the US.

The conference agenda was based on a strategic choice to combine high-level expert debate and political lobbying with the launching of a thematic ODC book edited by Benno Ndulu and Nicolas van de Walle (Agenda for Africa’s Economic Renewal, ODC policy perspectives no. 21,
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1996). Together with eight contributors to the book, Ndulu and Walle identify important lessons to ‘engineer Africa’s economic recovery in the coming years’. The study crystallises core lessons of experience from African development, pointing out six major areas that the authors claim can be agreed as central to the continent’s economic renewal in the light of globalisation. Key choices that need to be made by policy makers in the critical areas of agriculture, trade and industry, state capacity as in poverty alleviation and human resource development are analysed. However, the editors do tend to overemphasise the role of macro-economic factors in African recovery processes and there is little if any questioning of the social and political rationales upon which globalisation occurs.

In this sense, the ODC conference virtually mirrored the stance of the launched book. The opening keynote speeches followed suit by discussing African development mainly with growth and economic performance in mind. Benno Ndulu, co-editor of the launched book, focused on macro-economic stability questions. A consolidation of macro-economic stabilisation was called for as a prerequisite to sustainable growth in Africa.

Ndulu made a number of technical suggestions for improving economic performance, ranging from enhancing tax systems and revenue collection, sequencing of adjustment measures and debt reduction. National strategies, especially when combined with effective capacity building efforts and institutional reform, play an essential role in this process of bringing about economic renewal in Africa.

The second keynote speaker, Jeffrey Sachs of HIID, captivated the audience’s attention. In a clear and slightly provocative presentation Sachs proclaimed the need for a very limited set of policy priorities for Africa. In essence, Sachs suggested the avoidance of long lists of policy priorities and recommendations; African countries and their donors should concentrate on a few major economic measures to boost growth. These include flat rate tariffs (10% was suggested), a curb on government spending to below 20% and actions to ‘wipe out’ debt. The main impediments to growth were said to be:

- inflexible and closed trade regimes in Africa
- low private and public savings rates
- neglect of infrastructural development (seen as a central factor in crippling trade and development).

Sachs did acknowledge that much of his presentation was rather sweeping, but restated his core argument that substantial improvements in growth/economic performance in Africa could be sparked off through a relatively small set of policy changes.

Chester Crocker, former Assistant Secretary of State, gave the third opening address. He emphasised that there is a need for the emergence of ‘interest-based politics’ between Africa and its international donors. Political ‘imperatives’ for development in Africa were the ending of wars and the establishment of functioning conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms. Progress in regional integration was seen as crucial for Africa’s economic development. However, like Sachs before him, Crocker expressed sympathy for the idea of ‘phasing out’ aid over a set period of years; this was said as being ‘compatible’ with putting an end to ‘the wish-list mentality’ of many aid receiving governments. Consequently the view was expressed that linkages between the private sectors of African countries with the international private sector are essential for economic growth.
With the tone for the conference theme of Africa's economic renewal thus set by the keynote presentations, it became clear how US-development cooperation is increasingly being coupled to economic prerogatives for US-American capital. As the US continues to underperform and fail to meet standards in international development cooperation, it appears that aid resources are increasingly linked to the aid recipient countries' full adaptation of free-market economic policies, under terms favourable to US-capital interests.

With this context given, the four simultaneous discussion panels provided a much needed opportunity to discuss aid approaches to such core issues in development which relate to the effectiveness of individual donor's aid efforts. In panel one, central dimensions of state capacity were identified, namely: regulatory and legal state capacity; administrative/managerial capacity; technical capacity; fiscal/taxation capacity.

Furthermore, the patrimonial nature of the state in many parts of Africa was seen as having contributed to a severe erosion of capacity to manage development agendas and other state responsibilities. Yet through continued democratisation the process could be reversed as government accountability and public participation proceed to develop stronger roots in civil society.

Harris Mule, former finance secretary from Kenya, went on to focus attention on the magnitude of Africa's economic crisis and its role in eroding state capacity. Too often, the state no longer functions effectively as an agent for development, as debts, terms of trade and economic conditionalities work together to limit policy options available to African countries. Unless such trends are halted and reversed, state capacity for economic reform is likely to remain weak. State institutions will need to be complemented by private as well as traditional capacities in order to effectively manage the development process.

Trade and investment policies were examined in panel two, with special attention paid to the perceived limits of government-led growth. Though the state's provision of public goods and its contribution to macro-economic stability are crucial to economic development, accelerating growth, according to the views of this panel, will require stronger involvement of investors, entrepreneurs and enterprises from the private sector. Promoting an enabling environment for private investment thus requires establishing a partnership between government and the private sector. The objective of industrialisation in Africa strongly depends on building up indigenous capabilities, combined with a range of reform and stabilisation policies focusing on infrastructures and human capital.

The third panel concentrated on the processes of human capital formation, yet focused too heavily on specific issues of training instead of exploring the broader institutional issues of human resource development. Attention was drawn to gender issues in African human resource development, the point being made that the larger the gap between men and women in terms of human resource indicators, the lower GDP tends to be. It was seen to be important to attain consensus on policy prescriptions for human resource development. These will then need to be well coordinated and differentiated according to national specificities.

Panel four acknowledged agricultural transformation and environmental management as keys to broad-based growth and poverty alleviation in Africa. These, perhaps most intensively debated issues in development cooperation, continue to require effective policy responses and sustainable approaches in spite of the numerous international initiatives and strategies in place. It appears that it is at last being commonly accepted, that only
participatory local institutions will be capable of mobilising the local knowledge and resources required to promote agricultural transformation. For economic growth to resume in many parts of Africa, development policy will need to concentrate on rural areas and their regional contexts of food security and trade. Thus, agricultural development must reclaim a top position on national and international development agendas.

Day two of the conference was opened with an address by N. D. Soglo, the former president of Benin. The recent peaceful democratic transition in Benin was presented as an example of how Africa is internalising democratic processes as guiding principles for its future development.

The following session on 'improving aid', dealt with experiences in Botswana with aid. For most participants, Botswana presents a good example of recipient-driven development aid. Aid to Botswana is seen to have been effective in promoting national development primarily because all aid is compatible with a locally defined development strategy and integrated into a local institutional framework. In recent years, donors have come to consider Botswana as being on the verge of 'graduating' from aid. Indeed there is now a real concern that donors will withdraw too quickly from the country, given the developmental successes reached so far. Yet a too sudden withdrawal, especially from supporting recurrent costs, could jeopardise the progress made.

The question 'what role for the US in Africa's recovery?', was raised in the second session. US Congressman J. McDermott gave a very unexpected speech, in which he presented a current congressional proposal aimed at creating a US-Africa free trade area by the year 2020. Recognising that the US today has become a secondary donor and marginal trade actor in Africa, institutionalised forms of trade and investment are called for to strengthen ties with sub-Saharan Africa. In essence, the proposal aims at securing economic influence in a potentially profitable region of the world market in light of dwindling US aid resources to the African continent. In short: a strategy for more trade and continued modest aid levels.

In the next presentation, E. Jaycox, formerly of the World Bank, picked up the 'pro-Africa' tone of the session. The US was criticised as not cooperating very much with its international partners in development cooperation matters. Regrettably, the US continues to evade its responsibilities with regard to supporting international development institutions.

The current US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Affairs, George Moose, was disappointing in terms of advancing innovative approaches to US relations with Africa. For the most part of his speech, he delineated his views on how to integrate Africa into the world market. The 'no growth – no development' line of thinking he embraced is perhaps representative of the kind of 'new-growth theory' thinking that seems to be creeping into aid policy-maker circles.

Generally, aid and trade strategies towards Africa that promise continued political influence while advocating a policy agenda of stagnating or reduced resource transfers to the South, appear to be gaining widespread appeal. It was interesting to notice the absence of environmental and sustainability issues in the conference's deliberations. At no point did questions about unsustainable modes of production and consumption in the countries of the North surface during the different sessions. Views that were critical of current distribution patterns of financial and productive resources in the global economy, did not emerge. By the end of the day, there appeared to be two essential tendencies dominating current
1) For internal political reasons related to the presidential elections, political commitment of the US to deepen development cooperation currently does not exist. Foreign aid is almost traditionally represented in the US public and issues related to international cooperation with poorer countries are regularly distorted by the media. Influential conservative groups in the US exploit existing prejudices and ignorance for their own political purposes. In this political climate it is extremely difficult to argue effectively in favour of continued and improved approaches to cooperation. No serious discussion of necessary, increased financial and material resource transfer to countries in the South is apparent. Quite the contrary, both adversaries as well as protagonists of development aid seem to be preoccupied with devising ways to reduce absolute and real levels of aid.

2) On the other side of the US political spectrum, development-minded actors seem fully engaged in policy thinking along the lines of ‘new growth theory’. Indeed, the ODC conference theme itself was a reflection of this trend. While one can agree with many of the arguments calling for intensification of economic activity in Africa, the main flaw in the line of thought preoccupied with more ‘growth’, is the absence of sustainability issues from the debate. Again as in the mid-1980s, abstract growth in itself is seen as a sufficient precondition to developmental progress. This thinking runs the risk of ignoring the trends in globalisation to extract profits without economic growth, in particular through speculative financial transfers.

For example, the debates did not discuss environmental problems associated with the wasteful production and consumption modes in the North and their replication in parts of the South. More growth along the lines of social exclusion and sharply unequal distribution does not appear as an obvious strategy for meeting basic needs of rapidly growing populations in many parts of the developing world. The tendency in development thinking that focuses on growth and private sector involvement, runs the risk of overemphasising the possibilities and capacities, especially of the least developed countries, to participate in the competitive and highly unequal world market of today.

In conclusion of the two points raised above, there seems to be a readiness on both sides of the US political spectrum to explore policy options that allow for continued significant influence of the US in international affairs, without either increasing resource transfers to the poor or changing production and resource depleting lifestyles in the North. In this context there is a continued need for development policy debate to be based on a wider public basis, both in the North and the South.

Increased and intensified public discourse on international policy will be needed. At the same time, more independent policy research is required, especially originating from Africa. The ODC conference was perhaps too ambitious in terms of its strategic agenda. The event was certainly well-organised and succeeded in underscoring the role ODC plays in the US as a
facilitating institution for research and aid debate. In this respect, ODC achieved its objective not only of keeping the aid debate alive, but also advancing policy debate among influential aid actors.

There were few shortcomings within the themes explored during the conference. However, the failure to contemplate alternatives to dominant forms of globalisation, left an intellectual void to be filled.

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Glenn Brigaldino is a Development Cooperation Consultant based in Maastricht, The Netherlands.

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Democracy and Imperial Rivalry in Equatorial Guinea
Neil Hughes

The February 1996 Elections

In the Equatoguinean presidential elections held on Saturday 25 February, the incumbent President, Teodoro Obiang Nguema, not surprisingly won an overwhelming victory receiving 99% of the vote. On Malabo Island 99.24% of the 76% turnout voted for Obiang, the candidate for the PDGE (Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial). In Bata, on the main-

land, he received 99.69% of the vote (*El País*, 27 February 1996). This is the third time since coming to power in a bloody coup in 1979 in which he overthrew his uncle, Francisco Macías, that Obiang has attempted to give a semblance of legitimacy to his rule by seeking a popular mandate. In June 1989, in elections in which he was the only candidate, Obiang won 99.96% of the vote. In November 1993 he again won an overwhelming majority following the withdrawal of the opposition parties from the electoral process (Max Liniger-Goumaz, 1996:76).

The results have been met by universal condemnation from international observers, opposition parties, and press in the former colonial power Spain. The cause of such criticism has been the fraud and coercion that has characterised the electoral process in Equatorial Guinea. In a meeting with the President one week before the election took place, the four main opposition candidates – Severo Moto (Partido del Progreso), Andres Moises Mba Ada (Union Popular), Secundino Oyono (Convergencia Social Democrática y Popular) and Buenaventura Meswi (Coalición Socialdemocrata) complained of the regime’s fraudulent handling of the elections and demanded that they be postponed. Obiang’s refusal to countenance any of the opposition’s demands led to all but one of them (Secundino Oyono) withdrawing from the campaign. It seems that Obiang’s main reason for not delaying the elections was financial arguing that £5 million had already been spent on their organisation. In an attempt to persuade the opposition leaders to reconsider their decision it is believed that each of them was offered £7,000 to continue with their candidacy (*El País*, 22 February 1996).

Government manipulation of the electoral process began in January when in an attempt to catch the opposition off guard, the elections were brought forward by six months. Severo Moto – leader of the
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Government manipulation of the electoral process began in January when in an attempt to catch the opposition off guard, the elections were brought forward by six months. Severo Moto – leader of the
opposition Partido del Progreso (PP) – has argued that this was done because Obiang feared the effect that an election victory for the Partido Popular (PP) in the Spanish General Elections, held in March, would have on elections in Equatorial Guinea (El País, 4 February 1996). In Spain, the Partido Popular has been a vociferous critic of the Obiang regime and has argued that Spanish aid to its former colony should be strictly conditional upon democratic reform.

There has also been extreme criticism of the strict requirements that must be met before opposition leaders can stand for election. Thus, candidates must be married, be over the age of 40, have had five years continuous residency in Equatorial Guinea, pay a deposit of 3 million CFA, have no criminal record and be of proven Equatoguinean descent. These conditions are particularly restrictive for opposition leaders who have spent considerable periods of time in exile or have been arrested for their political activities. It is unlikely that even Obiang himself fulfills the conditions given that it is widely believed that his parents were originally from Gabon. The only opposition leader to fulfill the requirements is Amancio Gabriel Nsé who was chosen by the Plataforma de Oposición Conjunta (POC), a coalition of the opposition parties, to stand as its candidate in the elections. Nsé, if allowed to stand, could potentially have constituted a formidable opponent, given the success of the POC in municipal elections on 17 September 1995 in which it purported to have won 20 of the 27 municipalities. Although the extent of the POC’s electoral support was denied by the regime, Obiang did finally concede defeat in 9 towns (Max Liniger-Goumaz, 1996:80).

The choice of Nsé as the POC’s candidate was fiercely contested by other opposition leaders, especially Severo Moto. Moto, who returned to Equatorial Guinea from exile in Spain following the calling of the elections, felt that he was the ‘natural opposition candidate’. The main issue in the debate over who should represent the coalition centred around whether or not to chose a candidate who fulfilled the requirements set by the regime. Moto, who had been convicted of conspiring against the regime and was later pardoned, felt that the government’s conditions should be rejected. His stance was supported by the Unión Democrática Nacional (Udena) and the Unión Popular led by Andrés Moisés Mbá. The other five opposition parties, however, favoured a legal candidate and thus supported Nsé’s candidacy. Angered by the lack of support from the other coalition members Moto and Mbá decided to break from the coalition and stand as their own party’s candidates in the elections. According to the POC, Moto and Mbá had agreed to split the opposition coalition and to desist from criticising the regime in exchange for being allowed to stand as candidates in the elections (El País, 26 January 1996).

The break-up of the coalition was subsequently used by the government controlled Junta Electoral Nacional (National Electoral Commission) as an excuse to block the participation of the POC in the elections. In justification for its ruling the Junta Electoral argued that following Moto and Mbá’s decision to stand independently of the POC that the coalition no longer existed and would thus not be permitted to participate in the elections. In the words of the Commission:

Given the internal disintegration of the coalition it is logical that such an electoral coalition should no longer exist (El País, 2 February 1996).

Democratisation

The elections which were to be the first multi-party presidential elections since political independence in 1968 are part of a process of democratisation begun in 1991 aimed at improving the international image of Equatorial Guinea. Since
coming to power in 1979 Obiang’s human rights record has been strongly criticised by Amnesty International. In January 1992, for example, Amnesty stated:

Since the introduction of a multi-party system hundreds of people have been arbitrarily detained, most of these have been ill treated or tortured, many have been left with serious injuries (Max Liniger-Goumaz, 1996:90).

One of the main objects of government repression has been the Roman Catholic church which has seen many of its priests detained by the security forces for criticizing the regime. On 9 February, El País reported that Catholic priests in Mbini had been placed under effective house arrest and were prohibited from visiting parishioners in the surrounding towns. The priests were detained after one of them was arrested for being in possession of opposition party pamphlets. Similarly Father Nkogo Eyi was forced to leave the small village of Nkue and return to Malabo as a result of the death threats he had received from members of the armed forces. The motive again for such threats was Father Eyi’s alleged support for the opposition parties (El País, 9 February 1996).

Equatorial Guinea’s major foreign donors Spain, France and the US, have been instrumental in the attempt to provide Obiang’s regime with a veneer of democratic legitimacy. Each, although continuing to provide Obiang with financial backing, has made at least some aid conditional upon political reform and human rights improvements. Such external pressure resulted in the introduction of a new constitution in 1991 followed by the legalisation of opposition parties in January 1992. According to the opposition, the democratic provisions contained in the 1991 constitution are worthless given that the regime remains dictatorial. They have been particularly critical of the clause which provides Obiang with personal immunity from prosecution. The clause states that,

considering that the President Obiang Nguema has governed the country for 12 years during which the optimum political, economic, social and cultural development has been achieved in an atmosphere of peace, justice, national unity, order, harmony, fraternity and national reconciliation he cannot be tried or called upon to act as a witness before during and after his term of office (quoted in Max Liniger-Goumaz, 1996:82).

According to Liniger-Goumaz this clause mirrors the one contained in the Chilean Constitution which provides General Augustus Pinochet with immunity from prosecution. The new Equatoguinean Constitution also imposed restrictions on participation in presidential elections, renewed Obiang’s mandate, failed to fix either an upper age limit or restrictions on the period that the president is permitted to remain in power. Apparently only death can bring about a change of leadership in Equatorial Guinea.

The first test of Equatoguinean multipartyism came in 1993. Following the signing of a national pact between the government and the opposition, elections were scheduled to take place on the 12 September. In July the decision by Obiang to postpone the elections led to an electoral boycott by the thirteen opposition parties. They argued that until minimum conditions for freedom, justice and transparency could be guaranteed they would be unable to participate. According to the Italian missionary magazine Nigrizia:

Since the introduction of formal multipartyism in January 1992 hundreds of members of political organisations have been arbitrarily detained and tortured. The promise to respect human rights has not been kept. Terror reins in the country whilst both Morocco and France support Obiang Nguema’s tyranny (quoted in Max Liniger-Goumaz, 1996:93).
With the country under a virtual state of emergency the elections finally took place in November 1993.

**Imperial Rivalry**

Since coming to power in 1979 Obiang has been courted by Spain, France and latterly the US. Whereas Spain has sought, largely unsuccessfully, to maintain its influence in the only former sub-Saharan Spanish colony, France by increasing its links with the Obiang regime has attempted to extend its hegemony in West Africa. The United States, on the other hand, has increased diplomatic and economic activity in the region during the 1980s and 1990s. The main attraction for the US are the rich oil fields that lie in Equatoguinean waters between Malabo Island and the Nigerian coast.

During the 1980s and 1990s Spanish/Equatoguinean relations have been characterised by a sense of barely concealed mutual distrust. One of the main sources of tension was the unwillingness of the Spanish government to defend the Equatoguinean peseta during the early 1980s. More recently Spanish media criticism of the Obiang regime has led to Spanish newspapers being banned in Equatorial Guinea. One of the most powerful tools against the regime has been Radio Exterior Española which has been used extensively by the opposition to denounce Obiang. In 1992 as a consequence of the regime’s appalling human rights record as well as its unwillingness to introduce democratic reforms Spanish aid was limited to support for education and health.

France in contrast to Spain has extended its links with the Obiang regime during the 1980s and 1990s in an attempt to incorporate Equatorial Guinea into its sub-Saharan sphere of influence. Through the traditional instruments of classic French imperial diplomacy France has developed important links with the Obiang regime. Symbolic of this special relationship is the incorporation of Equatorial Guinea into the franc zone. As a result Equatorial Guinea is the only non-francophone country to enjoy a fixed exchange rate to the French franc. As well as extending economic relations, France has also attempted to promote cultural links. For example, a French cultural centre was opened in the capital and the teaching of French has been encouraged (French is now part of the secondary school curriculum). There was even an attempt to replace Spanish with French as the official language. This proposal was finally blocked due to opposition both within the country at large and amongst state officials. Despite this rapprochement France since the end of east/west conflict has been increasingly critical of Equatorial Guinea’s human rights record.

According to *El País* (25 February 1996) quoting ‘diplomatic sources in Malabo, Lisbon and Paris’, attempts to increase democratic participation are closely linked to the announcement by Mobil that it will begin to extract 40,000 barrels of oil from Equatoguinean waters by the end of 1996. At the behest of Mobil the Obiang regime has been attempting to improve relations with the US government. To this end the services of Black, Maneforth, Stone and Kelly a leading American public relations company have been contracted to lobby the US government on Equatorial Guinea’s behalf and to produce literature for potential investors. Although denied by Mobil, it is also believed that they were responsible for the hiring of the South African company, Strategic Concepts, who were charged with organising the February elections.

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The OAU in Yaounde: Pursuit of Tradition or Doctrinal Renewal

Jean-Emmanuel Pondi

For the first time since the country's independence, Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, played host to the Summit Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Held between 8 and 10 July 1996, the 32nd meeting of the pan-African body's top leadership was preceded from 4 to 6 July by a preparatory Council of Ministers.

Like many meetings of this type, there were some aspects on the agenda that were routine and traditional yet many substantial new features were introduced. These transformations led seasoned observers to wonder whether the OAU had at long last started its much awaited metamorphosis towards a more people-oriented (rather than state-centred organisation.

The Traditional Aspect

The Council of Ministers prepared approximately 18 Resolutions that were subsequently presented to and adopted by the 31 heads of state and several prime ministers. The documents adopted included topics varying from 'a common Africa position on food security' to recommendations for 'the launching of an African Decade on Education, 1997-2006'. Resolutions were also voted on Burundi, Liberia, bio-ethics, Africa's debt crisis, amongst others. As is often the case in essentially political organisations such as the OAU, a large consensus on most of these Resolutions was attained only at the price of a softening of their rough edges.

Following the established tradition of the pan-African body, several speakers took the floor during the opening plenary session. The list included Meles Zenawi, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and outgoing Chairman of the Organization; Paul Biya, President of Cameroon and incoming Chairman; Salim Ahmed Salim, the OAU's Secretary General; Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the UN Secretary-General (who came to drum up continental support for his bid for a second term at the UN) and Yasser Arafat, the President of the Palestinian Authority. All, as usual, had very inspiring messages about African unity and solidarity. Apart from these familiar sequences, however, the Yaounde Summit did introduce many substantial innovations of historic significance.

For the first time in OAU history, a gathering of that level also saw the holding of several important related events. A non-governmental forum in support of the OAU was organised between 27 and 30 June 1996. It assembled a number of African NGOs that had either a pan-African dimension or a continental ambition creating the first ever Federation of OAU Associates made up of National OAU Associations and Clubs.

The second noticeable event was the Children's Summit which took place on the fringe of the official Summit between 5 and 7 July. Brought into Cameroon by the OAU, the children came from more than 15 countries, mostly from former or currently warn-torn nations such as Liberia, Somalia, Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda and Burundi. These children were given an opportunity to address the opening session directly. In characteristically blunt and undiplomatic fashion these youngsters laid the blame for the occurrence and proliferation of wars in Africa on the 'selfish, power-hungry and egotistical political leaders'. Such a display of honest language had never been seen or heard before in the OAU. And there is little doubt that the African leadership had never been confronted by such an uneasy situation.
The third remarkable feature of the Yaounde meeting was the First Ladies Summit that convened on 8 July. Breaking with their customary roles, the eleven wives that came to Cameroon soon demonstrated that the aim of their visit was not to admire the lush green hills of Yaounde in the rainy season; their working agenda focused on ways to improve the living and working conditions of the continent's poor and overworked rural women. Even if a few local newspapers adopted a humorous tone to describe their deliberations (Bertrand Toko, 'Quel idéal pour un Sommet Féministe?' in *La Nouvelle Expression*, no. 321, 4 July 1996, p. 12), the fact is that such an initiative was unprecedented in OAU business.

What transpired was that there were four 'Summits' in Yaounde, of which three were mostly ignored by mainstream, rather patronising international media organisations. By choosing to minimise the significance of these 'peripheral' events, it is to be feared that the press and some analysts failed to decode the new direction apparently taken by the OAU from Yaounde.

What Lessons for the Future?

At least three lessons can be drawn from the 32nd OAU Summit. First, contrary to habit, the Heads of State and Government of the pan-African organisation showed a clear determination to anticipate world events as evidenced by the title and content of the Yaounde Declaration, *Africa: Preparing for the 21st Century*.

Second, the unprecedented involvement of NGOs, women and children, with the consent of the OAU's top level may be interpreted as a sign that, after a long period of resistance to such a move, the Addis Ababa-based institution has decided to reinforce its legitimacy by dealing with issues that really concern ordinary Africans. A more popular orientation would indeed represent a major policy shift for the OAU.

Third, as Paul Biya, the new OAU Chair- man has suggested, 'Africa and Africans should primarily count on themselves'. In order to do so, there should be a new symbiosis between the aspirations of the average African and the policies of a continent-wide organisation such as the OAU if Africa's second liberation – economic liberation – is to succeed.

It is only to be hoped that the innovations observed in Yaounde will be confirmed and reinforced in Harare during the 33rd Summit.

Jean-Emmanuel Pondi is at the Institut des Relations Internationales du Cameroun, Universite de Yaounde.

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Parliamentary By-elections in Zambia: Implications for the 1996 Poll

Bornwell Chikulo

The October 1996 presidential and legislative elections are going to be a closely contested battle. Former republican President Kaunda's election as leader of the country's main opposition party – the United National Independence Party (UNIP) – on 28 June 1995 not only sent shivers through the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) government and attracted widespread interest among the Zambian public, but has also aroused a lot of excitement among Zambian political observers in the run up to the poll. In view of the general disaffection and disillusionment among the Zambian public with the MMD's performance in office coupled with the deep divisions
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in the three major political parties, Kaunda's return to active politics has been viewed as a threat to the MMD government and the fragile opposition, who are increasingly showing signs of paranoia in the run up to the poll.

This article reviews the by-elections that have been held in the period 1992-1995 and ponders whether these elections can provide a barometer for the forthcoming 1996 presidential and legislative elections. Finally, this article outlines the recent major developments in the Zambian politics, concluding that the 1996 poll may fail to produce an overall winner and result in a coalition government albeit on a very low turnout.

Background
The MMD came to power on 2 November 1991, after defeating the former republican President Kenneth Kaunda and his party UNIP under Zambia's first multi-party general elections held on 31 October 1991, which heralded an end to 19 years of one-party rule and the demise of the Second Republic. Kaunda's resounding defeat at the polls signalled the birth of the Third Republic in Zambia and the beginning of a new epoch in African politics (see Chikulo, 1993).

At this time, Zambia was seen by many as a model for democracy in Africa (Andreassen, et al., 1992). Unfortunately, the model seems to have lost its shine due to the political mistakes that the MMD regime has accumulated over the past four years, which have ultimately not only called into question the democratic credentials of the Government, but have also resulted in the general disaffection and disillusionment among the Zambian general public. The MMD's loss of popularity stems from economic hardship and allegations of corruption which has caused several prominent cabinet ministers (and founder members) to defect from the MMD and form splinter political parties. Consequently, the MMD which was broad-based at the time of its 1991 landslide victory has split apart, causing many by-elections to be held. Whereas the opposition's weakness before Kaunda's return to active politics gave Chiluba little fear for the 1996 elections, 'Super Ken's' (as he is now affectionately called) return to politics has sent shivers through the beleaguered MMD government and the bickering but dormant opposition parties. While during the 1991 elections which saw the MMD coming into power, Zambians voted for a democratic movement and not individuals, the 1996 poll will be closely contested and rough for politicians. The critical issue among others will be the personal attributes and probity of candidates.

The Campaigns
The 1992 by-election campaigns were basically 'no issue' campaigns unlike the 1993 and 1994 polls where issues such as tribalism, consumer prices, maize marketing, transport and medical fees topped the agenda. Earnest appeals by the Electoral Commission to rival political parties to conduct a clean, issue-based campaign and build on the reputation of the first multi-party elections were totally ignored by all the participating parties. Consequently, sporadic violence was recorded in some constituencies (Times of Zambia, 27 January 1994). Most of the political violence has been attributed to the ruling MMD. To this end, the state machinery has been utilised to aid and abet MMD cadres in harassing their political opponents (Post, 20 October 1994). Furthermore, character assassination has become the order of the day. For instance, defectors from the MMD have variously been labelled 'power-hungry', 'tribalists', 'supporters of criminals' and other such negative labels. In some constituencies, the electorate were even threatened with the withdrawal of government-sponsored development project funds if they did not vote for the ruling MMD (Weekly Post, 11 November
Although there were accusations and counter-accusations based on tribalism among the three main parties, the MMD actively pursued the strategy of slapping a tribal stigma on rival political parties – especially the National Party (NP) – by alleging that the latter was a tribal party dominated by Lozis (Sunday Mail, 17 April 1994).

In terms of policy choices the new opposition political parties seem to have little to offer. Deprived of any alternatives, the options for the electorate will have to be restricted to MMD and UNIP. Yet, with the elections just around the corner, neither the MMD or UNIP have offered a new strategy to take the country out of the economic quagmire they have taken turns to put Zambia into. In spite of the proliferation of political parties, they are all bereft of any new vision or strategy for economic growth and advancing the democratisation process. Thus, instead of promoting a new culture of electoral campaigning, the by-election campaigns appeared remarkably reminiscent of the UNIP tactics during the Second Republic. In short, little effort was being made to encourage a culture of political tolerance.

By-election Results

From the time the MMD assumed power in 1991 up to the end of 1995, a total of 43 by-elections were held due to deaths of incumbents, incumbent Members of Parliament ‘crossing the floor’; one resulted from a High Court petition. In the 1992 by-elections, the MMD, still riding on the wave of popularity, captured three out of four seats while UNIP retained one seat in its traditional stronghold in the Eastern province. In 1993, the MMD won only five out of the eleven seats, while the new NP recaptured the seats in parliament of its members who had defected from the MMD in North-Western, Southern and Western Provinces, and UNIP won one seat. However, in the 1994 by-election the MMD made major gains by recapturing six out of eight seats; the NP which was the hot favourite in the previous poll only managed to win one seat while UNIP won one seat, yet again in the Eastern province. Thus, by the start of 1994, the NP had lost its popularity.

In 1995, a total of 19 by-elections were held. The ruling MMD recaptured ten seats and UNIP won nine seats. More significantly, however, as the September 1995 by-elections amply demonstrated, the issue of party affiliation has become a rather complicated one. Out of the eight seats on offer, UNIP not only won all three seats previously held by the MMD in President Chiluba’s home area of Northern Province but also reclaimed another seat in Feira which it had lost to the MMD in a previous by-election. Furthermore, even in those areas where the MMD won – especially in the urban areas where it has a lot of support – UNIP lost by very narrow margins. On the other hand, the MMD also made inroads in the UNIP stronghold of Eastern Province by wresting the Chama South seat from UNIP, an achievement diluted by UNIP’s subsequent capture of the Kalabo seat in Western Province in the November poll. The significance of these by-elections lay in the fact that they were perceived to be a popularity test for Kaunda since his return to active politics as UNIP president. Furthermore, these victories were the first enjoyed by UNIP since the 1991 elections when it was consigned to the electoral dustheap as a minor regional party. Since September 1995, UNIP has not only managed to strengthen its position in the legislature but also has begun to make inroads into the rest of the country.

Public Disaffection

With regard to voter participation, the problem of voter apathy continues unabated. The salient feature of the 1991 poll was the sharply reduced level of voter turnout (43%). This significant drop in voter participation was nothing like the dramatic fall subsequently manifested in
the 30 November 1992 local government elections in which less than 10% of the registered voters cast their vote (see Chikulo, 1994:137) and in subsequent by-elections. Voter apathy is a reflection of growing disillusionment among the Zambian public with the politicians in particular, and the political process as a whole, and may be attributed to the disillusionment among voters and the weaknesses of the parties.

Thus, while businessmen and the well-to-do are able to withstand the impact of economic restructuring and to take advantage of the opportunities created by the MMD’s economic policies, the majority of the Zambians with meagre means have been rudely awakened to the painful process of radical economic reforms which have led to massive price rises, unemployment and greater suffering than that experienced under the one-party state. Thus, ordinary Zambians feel deeply frustrated and let down by the MMD which promised change but has failed to deliver. Harsh structural adjustment measures instituted by the MMD at the insistence of the IMF and donors generally, and the deterioration of economic conditions as well as government mismanagement which has pushed about 85% of the Zambian population to below the poverty datum line, has resulted into widespread discontent and disaffection with the Chiluba regime. At the same time, the weakness of the organisational capacity of political parties in Zambia has impaired their ability to mobilise the voters. President Chiluba and other leading officials in the MMD have admitted publicly the weak state of their party machinery. As Michael Sata, Minister of Health and National Secretary for MMD aptly put it (Post, 18 December 1995):

The party is weak, we must admit. We are not ready to meet the challenge of the next year. In 1991 it was different but in 1996 the MMD must inform the people what it has done and must not be ashamed to tell Zambian what we have not done.

The opposition parties including UNIP also do not have much to show in terms of organisational capacity. The weak organisational position of political parties has been compounded by rampant intra-party factionalism among the top leadership. Since assuming office, the MMD has failed to transform itself from a loose coalition ‘movement’ into a united formal political party. It is not a coherent political force but has been split by internal power struggles which has resulted in the proliferation of breakaway political parties. With the exception of the National Democratic Alliance (NADA) and Chama Chakombuka, all new opposition political parties have been formed by politicians who were disgruntled with the MMD.

The MMD was split by a serious internal power struggle. The internal wrangling came to a head after a scathing public attack on President Chiluba for incompetence by Dean Mungomba, a national development minister who declared on 15 April 1995 that he would challenge Chiluba for the MMD presidency at the party convention. Despite assurances that any party member was free to stand for any position within the party, Dean Mungomba and his close ally Derek Chitala, a deputy minister in the Presi-

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**Table 4: Zambia General Election Voter Turnout, 1964 - 1995**

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<th>Year</th>
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*Source: Election Office, various years*
dent's office, were expelled from the MMD in the run up to the MMD national convention held subsequently in December 1995. The duo have since formed the Zambia Democratic Congress (ZDC) headed by Mungomba. With Mungomba out of the way, President Chiluba's only challenger for the party presidency was MMD vice-president, Levy Mwanawasa. The latter openly criticised Chiluba for violating the party constitution and running the party like a 'closed shop' (Post, 18 December 1995). The re-election of Chiluba as MMD president on the 21 December 1995 seems to have brought an uneasy truce in the MMD.

Similarly, the opposition parties have also been faction-ridden. The factionalism which has been wreaking havoc in UNIP prompted the Zambia Daily Mail (19 December 1994) to assert that: 'the intrigue that has taken hold in UNIP, the largest opposition party in Zambia, is only symptomatic of a political culture that has generally been described as selfish'. Indeed, divisions in the embattled UNIP were said to have been the major hindrance in 1993 to a planned merger with other opposition parties, (Zambia Daily Mail, 30 June 1993) which was aimed at forming a formidable opposition front to the ruling MMD. The election of Kaunda as leader of UNIP seems to have put an end to internal wrangling and brought the veteran politician back into the political mainstream.

The lack of a credible opposition explains the initial excitement among the Zambian population when the NP burst on the political scene in 1993. The formation of the NP was welcomed by a number of people as 'a pleasant diversion from mushrooming, toothless political parties' (Sunday Mail, 17 April 1994). After recapturing four seats in Parliament, the NP appeared to be the party to succeed the then almost-eclipsed UNIP as the formal opposition party. It was seen as the party to change the political rut in the country and as a consequence, bring real multi-partyism into Parliament.

Unfortunately, the electoral process leading to the 7 April 1994 by-elections shattered the harmony that had prevailed in the NP. The criteria used to choose parliamentary candidates created a lot of conflict, confusion and tension. Some former MPs who had resigned from the MMD to join the NP were not selected as candidates in their former constituencies, and stood as independents: thus, for example, in Chinsali, Ms. Chilufya Kapwepe ended up standing against her own NP colleague, Ms. Katongo Maine. The resultant conflict and confusion among party officials and members cost the NP dearly: the MMD won all the seats. The infighting over parliamentary seats convinced the public that the NP was after all a flash in the pan, and cast doubts on the integrity of the leadership. The NP was seen to have failed to strike a different path and its leadership was characterised as 'more interested in carving a political niche for themselves than in offering the people a credible alternative' (Sunday Mail, 17 April 1994). Thereafter, the NP lost credibility because it had shown the same colours and instincts which people had rejected in MMD and UNIP.

The widespread allegations of corruption in Chiluba's cabinet (Ihonvbere, 1995) coupled with the rampant factionalism in both the MMD, NP and UNIP has created a perception among the general public that political parties are dominated by cliques who are not really concerned with national issues per se, but with personal power. The electorate has increasingly come to believe, as one observer pointed out that:

\[
\text{elections were for the sole purpose of putting selfish individuals in power, to get fat, rich and corrupt at the expense of the people} \quad \text{(Weekly Post, 9 September 1993).}
\]
Consequently, inter-party and intra-party competition has come to be seen as mere jostling for positions among the political elite that will not change anything (Sunday Times of Zambia, 27 March 1994; Weekly Post, 12 December 1993). As one political analyst (Weekly Post, 9 September 1993) aptly put it:

_The Zambian people were unmoved because they have come to realise that another political party, another fight for leadership positions, for awarding ourselves government contracts, etc., does not improve their lot at all. They are unmoved because they have lost faith in Zambia’s politicians and hence. Zambia’s political system (emphasis added)._

Thus, the majority of voters shun the polls because they feel that the whole exercise is a total waste of time. Such an attitude is an obstacle to the democratisation process.

**Battle Lines Drawn for 1996**

With the adoption of ‘Super Ken’ by UNIP as its official presidential candidate and Chiluba’s retention of the MMD’s party presidency, the battle lines for Zambia’s second multi-party elections in October 1996 seem to have been drawn. As the jubilant Kaunda told his supporters after being elected leader of UNIP on 28 June 1995 (The Citizen, 29 June 1995):

_I now stand ready to crush the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy._

The unofficial electioneering on the part of the MMD government started towards the end of 1995 with the Chiluba regime’s attempts to discredit Kaunda by the revelation that he had constructed a warren of expensive escape channels under State House during his 27 years reign, and the claim that Kaunda who was ‘born of Malawian parents, was not a Zambian citizen’ and thus not eligible to stand for the presidency. However, after mounting tension, the probe was dropped. Ironically, President Chiluba himself has not escaped controversy over his origins and has gone to great lengths to try and establish his _bona fides_ as Zambian citizen (Weekly Post, 18 March 1995).

In a cynical move the Chiluba government has redrafted the constitution in an attempt to bar Kaunda from standing in the forthcoming 1996 elections. The recent Constitutional Amendment Act contains a clause requiring one, together with parents, to have been born in Zambia before qualifying to contest the presidency; another clause disqualifies former presidents who have ruled for two terms. This move has been widely viewed by most Zambians as being aimed at Kaunda, whose parents were born in Malawi. Other clauses would disqualify other opposition leaders, such as UNIP’s vice-president, Chief Inyambo Yeta, as a traditional ruler.

However, in defiant mood, Kaunda’s supporters have insisted that nothing will stop Kaunda from contesting the Zambian presidency this year, Chief Inyambo reiterating that ‘regardless of what the MMD will do, the only candidate UNIP shall present to the people of Zambia shall be Dr Kenneth David Kaunda’ (The Post, 18 March 1996). Legal counters to the MMD move has meant that as we go to press it is still uncertain who will eligible to stand.

Ironically, the MMD has been the main campaign vehicle for Kaunda’s political comeback. Whereas in 1991 Kaunda stood alone, a finished and broken man, today thanks to incessant personal attacks on him by Chiluba and his MMD, coupled with physical harassment (The Post, 20 October 1995), Kaunda’s popularity is on the rise. Unwittingly, Chiluba has been Kaunda’s best campaign manager.

As far as serious leadership alternatives are concerned, Zambia seems to be facing a leadership crisis; the options are indeed
limited. With a few exceptions, most of the political parties have been taken over by Kaunda's old cohorts. As a special report in the *The Post* (17 November 1995) aptly put it:

_Sadly there is no other party that can survive outside his [Kaunda] direct or indirect orbit of influence. Like a huge octopus sitting on the political field his tentacles have even spread into the MMD where the most enduring political heavy weights are also former UNIP cohorts._

There is no denying, therefore, that as a political force, Kaunda is indeed back. Indeed, political observers and commentators are giving him a more than even chance of a return to power (should he be able to contest), though with the advantage of incumbency, Chiluba might have a slight edge over Kaunda and emerge as winner, albeit on a very low poll. UNIP seems to have been re-invigorated by the return of Kaunda to active politics, and now poses a real electoral challenge to the MMD. However, it is unlikely that UNIP will get an outright majority, even in a fair election. Thus, regardless of whoever emerges winner in the presidential poll, the legislative poll is going to be closely contested with no overall or outright winner. As a consequence, the poll may result in a hung parliament and subsequently entail a coalition government.

_Bornwell Chikulo_ is Head of the Department of Development Studies at the University of the North-West, Mmabatho, South Africa

References


Note: This article draws on material for the book project: *Democracy in Zambia: Challenges facing the Third Republic*, edited by B. Chikulo and O. B. Sichone, and to be published by SAPES Books, Harare.

The African Charter: Words are not Enough

The past 10 years have witnessed some of the most serious human rights violations on the African continent: civil strife in Somalia, genocide in Rwanda, killings by government troops and armed opposition in Algeria, and the worsening human rights situation in Nigeria, to cite just a few situations. This decade has also been marked by an improvement in human rights in a few countries: improvements associated with the independence of Namibia, the end of the civil war in Mozambique, political changes in Uganda and the end of apartheid in South Africa, are a few examples.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter), which came into effect on 21 October 1986. The adoption of the African Charter by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on 27 June 1981 marked a point of departure for African states, and represented a formal commitment to human rights, although not a political will to address with any earnestness human rights violations on the continent.

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In June 1993 Amnesty International (AI)
raised concerns about significant shortcomings in the African Charter and indicated that in some cases the guarantees it contains fall short of international standards. The weakness of the rights enshrined in the African Charter is compounded by the inclusion of clawback clauses, allowing states to curtail rights by the adoption of national legislation. While the Amnesty International document, AI’s observations of possible reform of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (Amnesty International Index: IOR 63/03/93) recognizes that a comprehensive review of the African Charter would be an ambitious and lengthy undertaking, it suggests that implementation procedures in the African Charter could be strengthened by the amendment of a few key provisions.

The African Charter allows the African Commission wide powers of interpretation. In considering complaints based on the provisions of the African Charter, the African Commission has the opportunity to interpret the African Charter consistently with current international standards and thereby address many of the limitations in its express guarantees. The African Charter permits the African Commission to ‘draw inspiration from international law’ and ‘to take into consideration ... other general or special international conventions’, rules of interpretation which allow the African Commission many opportunities to fill the lacunae in the African Charter. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have argued that the provisions of the African Charter do not provide adequate guarantees of women’s rights. However, it is for the African Commission to determine the scope of Article 18(3) of the African Charter which provides for ‘the protection of the rights of the woman and the child ... as stipulated in international declarations and conventions’. Almost 40 African states have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which provides the African Commission with a sound basis for the interpretation of Article 18(3). All African states were part of the consensus at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly which adopted the UN Convention.

While the African Commission has recently begun publishing brief interpretations of the African Charter in its decisions, it has yet to use this power to its fullest extent. It has generally shied away from adopting general comments of its interpretations of guarantees in the African Charter, except for the occasion, during its 11th session, when it adopted a resolution on the right to fair trial and another on freedom of association.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights

When the African Commission was established in July 1987 with the election of 11 Commissioners by the Summit of the OAU, it faced an almost formidable task: ‘to promote human and Peoples’ rights and to ensure their protection in Africa’. The African Commission could not have expected to receive the willing support of the majority of African governments. It was created in an environment where African governments viewed human rights with extreme suspicion, where they considered NGOs as part of the political opposition rather than a legitimate part of civil society, and where there was largely a pretence at creating democratic governments, but without the intention to establish strong national institutions to hold governments accountable for human rights violations. However, the African Charter provides the
African Commission with human rights standards to which it should hold African governments accountable and by which their actions regarding human rights should be measured.

The African Commission is severely hampered by lack of resources. The OAU, its parent body, has not provided adequate personnel and financial resources to enable the Commission to function efficiently and effectively. However, it is appreciated that the OAU, like other intergovernmental organizations, is facing a financial crisis with many member states failing to pay their dues. The African Commission is therefore able to meet only twice a year for 10 days each time, a very limited period during which to undertake protection of human rights. While funding for promotional work has been made available to the African Commission by donors, Commissioners have failed to undertake adequate promotional visits to countries for which they have responsibility. Many opportunities are missed for promoting the African Charter and the work of the African Commission, as well as for making contact with NGOs and gathering first-hand knowledge of the human rights situation in African countries.

While the African Charter provides that the members of the African Commission shall be 'chosen from amongst African personalities of the highest reputation, known for their high morality, integrity, impartiality and competence in matters of human and peoples' rights', the independence and impartiality of some members of the Commission have been a cause for concern. The process of nominating and electing Commissioners is left exclusively to governments, and lacks transparency. Experts in bodies such as the Commission who are too closely linked to their governments often appear to fail to act impartially. Some members of the African Commission have performed, and continue to perform, political functions on behalf of their respective governments; this raises questions about their perceived independence.

**Special Rapporteurs of the African Commission**

Extrajudicial executions continue to plague the African continent with such killings presently occurring in Burundi, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan, and Algeria, to name just a few countries. When the genocide in Rwanda was most intense, in March 1994, the African Commission was holding its 15th session in Banjul, the Gambia. After Amnesty International urged the African Commission, it appointed its first Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. Unfortunately, more than two years since his appointment no substantial work has been carried out, due to lack of funds, lack of initiative on his part and possibly also lack of support and information from NGOs.

At its 17th session, Penal Reform International presented a report to the African Commission on prison conditions in Africa and urged it to appoint a special rapporteur on prisons. This initiative received the support of several African and international NGOs. At that session the African Commission adopted a resolution on prisons but did not appoint a special rapporteur. At its 19th session the African Commission decided, in principle, to appoint a special rapporteur on prisons and will make the appointment at its 20th session to be held in Mauritius from 21 to 30 October 1996. The African Commission has also decided in principle to appoint a special rapporteur on women.

The effectiveness of the special rapporteurs in drawing the attention of the African Commission and of the OAU to the issues pertaining to their mandate, extrajudicial executions, prisons and women's rights will depend to a great extent on the support they receive from NGOs and their willingness and ability to
investigate human rights violations with seriousness.

**Periodic Reports by States**

The consideration of periodic reports by the African Commission forms the kernel of its monitoring function. Although there are only two African states which have not ratified the African Charter, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and Morocco, which is not a member state of the OAU, only 18 states have filed periodic reports with the African Commission as they are obliged to under the African Charter. Despite numerous appeals by the African Commission, the number of states filing reports has only marginally increased over the last few years. The Commission has also sought the assistance of the OAU Assembly of Heads of States and Governments, but beside adopting a resolution urging States Parties to file reports, no concrete attempts are being made by the OAU Assembly or Secretariat to exhort states to comply with their reporting obligations. However, where reports by states are being considered by the African Commission, NGOs are provided with an excellent opportunity to provide information which can enable the African Commission to have meaningful dialogue with representatives of governments about the true human rights situation in their countries. Governments are always tempted to paint a picture of utmost respect for human rights despite the existence of widespread human rights violations. At the 19th session, Commissioner Julienne Ondziel raised many questions of concern to Amnesty International about human rights violations in Algeria with the representatives of the Algerian Government. Similarly, Commissioner Vera Duarte raised pertinent human rights issues with the delegates of the Mozambican Government. When governments become aware that their reports will be carefully scrutinized on the basis of alternative information available to the African Commission, they may exercise restraint in the preparation of reports which laud the virtues of their governments.

**NGOs at the African Commission**

Since its inception, NGOs have contributed to the work of the African Commission. The African Commission, to its credit, has allowed, unlike any other African intergovernmental body, maximum and intimate participation of NGOs in its work. The simplicity of its procedure for obtaining observer status has allowed a large number of NGOs to obtain such status. Currently there are 167 NGOs with observer status at the African Commission, and the overwhelming majority of these are African NGOs. While observer status allows for participation of NGOs in the sessions of the African Commission, in its recent meetings the African Commission has raised concerns about the failure of many NGOs with observer status to report every two years on their activities as required by the Rules of Procedure of the African Commission.

While the African Charter provides for States Parties to the Charter to file complaints against other states regarding violations of the rights enshrined in the Charter, as is familiar with other human rights treaties, it is unlikely that any state will file a complaint. It is therefore left to NGOs to file such complaints. The Commission, being a body of 11 part-time human rights experts, is unable to keep track of the human rights situation in every single African country which has ratified the African Charter. It is therefore of paramount importance that NGOs assist victims of human rights violations to file complaints.

Although NGOs have been using the complaints mechanism, and have become frustrated at the delays in consideration of these complaints by the African Commission, the number of complaints filed with the African Commission does not
reflect the serious human rights situation on the continent. However, African NGOs such as the Constitutional Rights Project of Nigeria and the Rencontre Africain pour la D'Thetafense des Droits de l'homme (RADDHO) in Senegal, have presented very well prepared complaints, on the basis of which the African Commission has been able to render sound decisions. Gradually, the African Commission has by way of its published decisions begun formulating human rights jurisprudence which interprets the African Charter and has resulted in the emergence of African human rights reasoning.

The role of NGOs in the African Commission increased from October 1991 when the first NGO workshop prior to the ninth session of the African Commission was arranged by the International Commission of Jurists. The NGO workshops are held regularly twice a year, in March and October, before each session of the African Commission. While at the first workshop NGOs raised mundane concerns about lack of equipment and resources at the Secretariat of the African Commission, the 19th workshop, held in March 1996, dealt with substantive human rights issues such as the independence of the judiciary, and the human rights situation in various African countries. These workshops have been extremely beneficial in bringing together a range of African and international NGOs, has made the work of the African Commission more transparent, and has contributed to the effectiveness of the African Commission. Several African NGOs have also arranged workshops in collaboration with the African Commission.

The OAU and Human Rights

Human rights do not feature prominently on the agenda of the OAU and have received little, if any, attention at the meetings of the Council of Ministers and of the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments of the OAU. Apart from the adoption of the African Charter more than 10 years ago and statements concerning South Africa and Namibia, the OAU Assembly has taken limited action in the field of human rights. The OAU, in particular the Assembly, is the political enforcement mechanism of the African Commission. However, no mechanism has been created within the OAU to provide the African Commission with the political support it requires to enforce its resolutions and decisions. Beside a cursory consideration of the report of the African Commission and resolutions supporting the work of the African Commission each year, the Assembly has failed to hold member states accountable for human rights violations brought to its attention by the African Commission. Furthermore, while the African Charter provides for situations of 'serious or massive violations of human and Peoples' rights' to be brought to the attention of the Assembly and for it to request the African Commission to undertake an in-depth study, the Assembly has inevitably shied away from its responsibility by not responding to such requests from the African Commission.

Proposal of an African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights

At a workshop in Addis Ababa in November 1993, at which more than 50 African NGOs were represented, the International Commission of Jurists discussed the idea of establishing an African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights to improve the mechanism for protecting human rights in Africa. The idea received the overwhelming support of the NGOs. It also received the support of the African Commission.

The African Court will incorporate the juridical element into the protection of human rights in Africa which has been lacking. It will also provide for the rendering of binding decisions on African states, most of which have, in practice, shown little respect for the African
Charter or the African Commission. The additional protocol which will establish the African Court, also provides for victims to claim compensation against states and to enforce these orders in the domestic courts. The decisions of an African Court will contribute to the establishment of African human rights jurisprudence and provide interpretations of the African Charter on the basis of which African states may be held accountable for violations of human rights.

A meeting of government experts held in Cape Town, South Africa, during September 1995, prepared a draft Protocol to the African Charter which will first have to be approved and adopted by the OAU Assembly before it is open for signature and ratifications. This procedure may take many years.

While efforts to establish an African court should be commended, it is clear that such a court will remain weak and ineffectual until the African Commission begins to function effectively and efficiently. It is envisaged that most cases which are presented to the court will be referred to it by the African Commission. Therefore procedures for the consideration of complaints by the African Commission will have to be streamlined to curtail delays and to ensure that any remedy granted by the court is timely and that the court's ability to address human rights violations is not hampered. Much work has to be done by the African Commission, by the OAU, and by NGOs, to improve the African system of human rights protection before an African court is established.

Conclusion

The African system of human rights protection is far from effective. The lack of political will and the failure of African governments to adhere to human rights obligations which they have voluntarily undertaken makes the task of the African Commission an arduous one. The reluctance of the African Commission to act with earnestness and commitment to address the serious human rights problems facing the continent contributes to its ineffectiveness. However, it is not now sufficient for NGOs to merely criticize the ineffectiveness of the African Commission. The criticisms have to be accompanied by an offer by NGOs to work together with the African Commission to improve its effectiveness. NGOs have always been at the forefront of protection and promotion of human rights, and therefore they have a duty to assist the African Commission to fulfil its mandate.

What you can do:

1) Give copies of this article to as many people as possible. Organize meetings and discussions to explain the rights and protections guaranteed by the African Charter. Explain the working of the African Commission. (You can find more information in AI's Guide to the African Charter, Amnesty International Index: IOR 63/05/91.)

2) Decide how you will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Charter's entry into force.

3) Write to the Ethiopian or Eritrean Embassies in your country and urge these countries to ratify the Charter.

4) Write to the foreign ministry or embassy of one or more of the following countries which have not yet submitted their first periodic reports - due in 1988 - urging them to do so:


The African Charter provides the African Commission with human rights standards to which it should hold African governments accountable.

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Most academic critiques of SAPs tend to be country- or sectorally-specific with recommendations ranging from the wholesale abandonment of adjustment to better targeting or phasing of reforms. After 15 years of orthodox adjustment programmes and 50 years of the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) a review of their operations is long overdue. This feeling has been growing with a campaign entitled 50 Years is Enough in the United States, the Holland Report to the European Union and various academic interventions (Feinberg et al., 1985; George and Sabelli, 1994; Michie and Smith, 1995). Oxfam’s pamphlet is a useful and well-argued contribution to this debate.

The Oxfam Policy Department has produced a short and pithy summation of the errors of the BWIs. They begin by praising the BWIs for their stated intention of poverty reduction but go on to demonstrate through short case studies how these goals have been missed despite recent internal reviews of their operations. Chapters 2 and 3 provide a depressing inventory of adjustment while chapters 4 and 5 take these criticisms to call for wide-ranging reforms. The major reforms are:

- Debt restructuring including reduction, write-offs and better targeting of SDRs depending on the severity of the debt;
- Increasing the accountability of the BWIs by altering voting rights in favour of the poorer countries and opening up policy to closer scrutiny;
- Radically restructuring adjustment so that it is more flexible, less monetarist and longer term;
- Integrating the BWIs more closely with the specialised agencies of the United Nations.

Such reforms are particularly important at a time when the BWIs are calling for improved governance for LDCs without seriously evaluating their own governance structures. Oxfam’s statement is usefully critical and should be welcomed given Oxfam’s populism. Indeed, the pressure for reform must come from the wealthier nations since it is they who presently control the policy direction of the BWIs and not the citizens of the countries on the receiving end.

Bibliography


This book attempts to generalise the phenomenon of state disintegration by conceptualising the 'collapsed state', using examples from Chad, Uganda, Ghana, Somalia, Liberia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Angola, Zaire, Algeria and South Africa. The range indicates both the extent of the problem and the likely difficulties in capturing it in a single conceptual embrace. While the case studies are interesting the introductory chapter by Zartman is largely taxonomic and descriptive. The case studies are followed again by several chapters which attempt to place the phenomenon in a wider frame, including Ottaway on the problems of a democratic restoration and Ng’ethe on the idea of a ‘strongman’(sic) state. Others look at external intervention by the UN and/or USA. This is an interesting book with a provocative theme, but one which will require further exploration and development before it is likely to be conceptually useful. Whether the idea is worth pursuing is still to be debated.


This A4 sized publication of 120 pages contains a wealth of information on the volume and changing trends in international aid from the major bilateral donors during the 1990s. An 18 page Overview discusses issues such as the relation between private flows and aid flows, priority to the poorest, measuring basic needs effects, measurement of impact on women, share of aid going to emergencies, share going to Central and Eastern Europe, and conditionality. This is followed by a section on the World Bank/IMF, which in turn is followed by country profiles of the OECD DAC group, which taken together, makes for some rather depressing reading despite some progress in, for instance, the incorporation of gender aspects into project plans. The report concludes with a number of tables and a glossary consisting almost entirely of acronyms (there is surely a useful paper to be written on this!). The book gives a very useful guide to the latest thinking on aid by DAC member countries, and the organising agencies: ICVA, Eurostep, Action Aid and Development Initiatives, are to be commended for the effort involved.


The clumsy title of this book gives it a rather dry and offputting aspect (not enhanced by a dull cover), but the aim: 'to increase the visibility of such women micro-entrepreneurs by bringing their concerns into the arena of research as well as policy and programme review' is overdue, given the significance of this type of labour in formal and informal sectors throughout the world. Although a number of case studies are reviewed (India, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Costa Rica, Peru) the first two chapters and the extended introduction attempt to conceptualise and contextualise the phenomenon by relating it to the wider gender issues of women in their societies. In Chapter 1 Irene Tinker relates these issues to the notion of the ‘Human Economy’; this is followed by van der Wees and Romijn in a wide-ranging discussion on entrepreneurial characteristics and women. The book concludes with three chapters on credit, technology and training. The overall approach is in the WID tradition, and as such directs
itself to the more immediate survival problems of the vast number of women who are engaged in non-formal trading activities in Africa as elsewhere. A worthy study but somewhat dull in its approach.


Any exercise of this nature is bound to be highly selective and even idiosyncratic with the editor setting himself (in this case) up to be knocked down by those whose favourite theme has been omitted. Corbridge is not going to avoid this, though his selection of readings make an interesting combination. The book has six sections: Thinking about Development, Agrarian Change and Rural Development, How Poor people Survive, Urbanisation and Industrialisation, The Global Political Economy, and New Directions in Development Studies. Each section has an extended preface by the editor and is followed by a comprehensive list of further readings. The flavour is indicated by the list of contributors to the first section: Hoselitz, Frank, Booth, Deepak Lal, and Escobar, while those of the final section include only the World Bank (on infrastructure), Susanna Hecht (on environment in Amazonia), Adrian Leftwich (on governance and democracy), and Nancy Scheper-Hughes (on state violence).

The section on The Global Political Economy is fairly limited with Boyce on coconuts in the Philippines, Bauer on aid and Streeten on structural adjustment, though there is also a chapter on multinationals by Elson in the section on Industrialisation.

The disparate nature of a number of the articles means that students will need careful guidance from lecturers in selecting counterbalancing reading from other sources and in reminding them of historical trends in the literature. There is a clear gap in the area of cultural studies, which the editor admits, but also in gender, both in terms of content and contributors. Of the twenty seven chapters only six are by non-Anglo-Saxon authors. All extracts are from first world publishers of books and journals. There is little either on the social aspects of development or on the more technical economic aspects. Many, however, will find this a useful book in stimulating student debate.


A detailed review of the workings of the first ten years of the Land Act of 1979 prefaced by a historical and comparative study of the background to its introduction. Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland are interesting in the Southern African context as having escaped the more direct forms of ‘social engineering’ with respect to land that was implemented in South Africa, and have retained their own significant ‘customary’ sector subject to control through area chiefs. The solidly entrenched nature of chiefly power is highlighted as Franklin shows how those aspects of land legislation in Lesotho which are designed to by-pass their power through greater commodisation have been largely ineffective, with the Land Act having its greatest influence in peri-urban areas. Even larger commercial farmers who are interviewed in this book have not made significant use of the Act.

The book shows how land is fundamental not only to those who directly work it and depend on it for a substantial part of their livelihood, but also as an underpinning
to the social and political construction and retention of power, where it becomes an arena of struggle between the incumbents of the post-colonial state and 'traditional' elites, themselves inheritors of a largely colonially constructed polity. Internationally too, the privatisation of land use is seen here to be a crucial input into the 'development' process. The secondary title of the book is more indicative of its contents than its main title — it is more concerned, that is, with politics than with law, and has thus a general interest which extends beyond that of Lesotho alone.


There are a number of interesting and useful chapters here which not only consider the 'post-cold war challenges' but also critically review the cold war legacy, especially in countries like Angola and Mozambique and in the Horn. The introduction, Chapter 1, by John Harbeson provides an overview of the entire post-independence period. Chapter 2 by Crawford Young brings the colonial heritage to the fore while in Chapter 3 Thomas Callaghy refers to the 'new neo-colonialism' with its conditionality and increased dependency. Other chapters of interest are by Harbeson on Ethiopia and Eritrea, J. Herbst on the regional impact of South Africa in Southern Africa, Guy Martin on Francophone Africa, and Davenport on relations with the European Union. These are well known US 'Africanists' writing from an academic 'political science' base. Other contributors include Herman Cohen, assistant secretary of state of Africa under the Bush administration, in a chapter on political and military security, and Larry Diamond of the Hoover Institute in a chapter much of which describes the activities of the National Endowment for Democracy.

The only African contributor is Ali Mazrui on 'Africa and Other Civilisations'. The absence of other African contributors, of whom there are many possibilities in the US, perhaps says something of the unquestioning view of many of the contributors that US policy and intervention in Africa is fundamentally well-intentioned, as in the chapter by Rothchild on the US and conflict management. Thus even Callaghy's expectation that 'simultaneous marginalisation and dependence are likely to continue and probably increase for most countries' is based on a failure of African politics to shift from 'distributional to productionist logics and forms of behaviour' thus creating a vulnerability in the global trend away from 'embedded liberalism' towards 'malign mercantilism'.


Although it does not often attract attention on the world stage Lesotho is a microcosm of the issues which prevail so frequently amongst the larger players. The election of 1993 followed a seven year period of military control, which itself had close connections with the preceding civilian government of the Basutho National Party. The latter had refused to surrender power in an election in 1970 when the main opposition, the Basutho Congress Party, gained a majority of seats. The return of that same opposition party in a landslide victory in 1993 seems to have been widely perceived as justice vindicated. Throughout
the intervening period the politicisation of the military and the role of the monarchy have left problems for the future of democracy in the country, while the intervention by South Africa and other neighbouring states since 1994 to stabilise the situation is in contrast to the former's previous destabilising forms of intervention, highlighting the dominating influence which South Africa will continue to have in the region regardless of its colour of government.

This book is an extremely valuable account of the factors which led the military to agree to a return to democracy, albeit of the British 'first past the post' variety, of the variables which affected the outcome, and of the problems which the elected government faces in ensuring continuity of democratic processes when both the military and the losing party retain powerful extra-parliamentary constituencies.


The title says it all. This exercise, though intrinsically interesting, makes few concessions to any reader unsteeped in discourse analysis, particularly that of Laclau and which draws substantially on the analysis in Laclau and Mouffe's Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. The coverage and flavour of the book is well indicated by the observation that 'in order to show the non-necessity of the later apartheid hegemony ... it is absolutely crucial to explore the nature of the dislocations of identity and the attempts to re-suture social space during the pre-1948 era’ (p. 13). This the author does in chapters on 'Dislocated Identities: the Failure of Segregationism' (Ch.1) and 'Apartheid as 'Myth' (Ch. 2). The post-1948 period is covered by consideration of the process from 'Myth to Imaginery', an 'Expanding Imaginery', 'Crisis of Hegemony' and 'Competing Myths' (Chs. 3-6). Again, the flavour is captured by the movement from myth to imaginery which involves 'the metaphorisation of the literal contents of particular social demands: that is, a retreat of the concrete demands informing the myth such that it starts to function as a general surface of inscription of any social demand’ (p. 9).

Despite the densely written theoretical discourse of the book the main theme is clear: the construction of apartheid had a unified and unifying logic with its roots mainly in the 1930s and 1940s, in which economic elements were minor, and which eventually collapsed through some combination of conjunctural and organic crisis of its hegemony in the 1980s. As an attempt to escape from economic and political reductionist explanations of apartheid the book is admirable, but the approach is conceptually demanding.


In defining ethnicity as 'a social phenomenon associated with some forms of interaction between the largest possible cultural-linguistic communal groups (ethnic groups) within political societies such as nation states' Nnoli's approach is clearly going to be a pragmatic one and it is in their practical consequences that the interactions of ethnicity, class, democracy and the state are examined. The author recognises not only that ethnic identity and allegiance can often be in a state of flux, but that there may be positive as well as negative outcomes with regard to democracy and development. The experience of Nigeria is treated in some depth in the main chapters,
covering the period 1900 to 1994, with a
useful general introductory chapter and a
conclusion with some prescription for the
future. The latter relies on drawing out
what the author regards as the positive
features of ethnicity such as stability
within a social group, individual security
in an urban commoditised context, pro-
motion of community development and
the advancement of democratic freedom.
The process, in the author's view, in-
volves a reduction in the role of the
centralised state which has been the scene
of so much past abuse.

*Power of Development* by Jonathan Crush

The essays in this book, a number of
which derive from a panel on 'Discourse
and Development' at the annual meeting
of the Canadian Association of Geogra-
phers in 1991, provide a useful summary
of recent efforts to deconstruct 'develop-
ment' as a Western discourse. To some
readers this may sound off-putting, but
for the most part the contributors write
clearly, and offer valuable insights by
placing 'developmentalism' within its
broader cultural and historical context in
the West, enabling us thus to better
appreciate its hegemonic infusions. A
comprehensive introduction by the edi-
tor is followed by a section on 'Histories
of Development' with chapters by Cowen
and Shenton (on the invention of devel-
opment), Watts (on the crisis of develop-
ment), Doug Porter (on some of the
implications of development discourse),
W. M. Adams (on environmentalism) and
Fiona Mackenzie (on a feminist view).

The middle chapters apply this critical
approach to specific case studies: on
disasters by Ken Hewitt, Egypt by Timo-
thy Mitchell, population by Gavin
Williams, South Africa by Chris Tapscott
and Asian urbanisation by T. G. McGee.
The concluding section has chapters by
Arturo Escobar on the role of new social
movements in a 'post-development era',
by Kate Manzo in an interesting discus-
sion on black consciousness, by Jane
Parpart on gender, post-modernism and
development, and a final more personal
statement by Nanda Shrestha on 'becom-
ing a development category'. While all
make for interesting reading it is notable,
in view of the subject matter, that all but
one (Tapscott) stem from universities in
North America, Britain or Australia, that
all but two are by men and that most are
by authors with anglo-saxon names.

*Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Af-
rica and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*
by Mahmood Mamdani (1996), Uganda
(Fountain), South Africa (David Philip),
London (James Currey). ISBN 9970-02-
090-0.

In this interesting volume Mamdani con-
nects late colonialism with the present
via the analysis of rural-urban dynamics
in contemporary Uganda and South Af-
rica. These two societies are not so
different as is often assumed in that
Mamdani sees the apartheid state as a
continued form of classical colonial (or
bifurcated) state, and the current at-
ttempts in both countries to extend de-
mocracy to traditionalised rural areas as
hidebound by a similar institutional past,
thus challenging the exceptionality of
South Africa. Following an extended
introduction in which he sets out his
theoretical position (covering civil soci-
ety, customary authority, and decentral-
ised despotism in the African context)
there are four largely historical chapters
on the mechanisms of colonial rule,
which provide an essential underpinning
to his discussion in Part II of resistance
and migration. The fact that resistance
has been so often expressed through
'tribal' channels is unavoidably predetermined by the parameters established by the ruling power — producing what Mamdani calls 'the other face of tribalism'. A chapter on rural resistance is followed by one on 'the rural in the urban' in which an extended focus on migrant workers in South Africa is contextualised by regarding them as 'free peasants in an urban industrial setting' thus casting the migrant worker as 'the locus of all major social contradictions'. His concluding chapter stresses the importance of seeking ways to link the urban and the rural in the process of democratising both.

Throughout, Mamdani seeks 'neither to set the African experience apart as exceptional and exotic nor to absorb it in a broad corpus of theory as routine and banal ... but to underline (its) specificity' (p. 13). The result is a fine balance that is both stimulating, in reminding us of the importance of history, and provocative, in that, for example, he sees Uganda and South Africa as 'the paradigm cases today'.
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**Books Received**

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*Brown, Douglas & Marcelle*, Looking Back at the Uganda Protectorate: Recollections of District Officers. Published by Douglas Brown, 64 Gallop Road, Dalkeith 6009, W. Australia.


*Engberg-Pedersen, P Gibbon, P Raikes & Lars Udsholt* (eds), Limits of Adjustment in Africa. James Currey, 0-85255-152-5, £16.95.


*Goheen, Miriam*, Men Own the Fields, Women own the Crops: Gender & Power in the Cameroon Grassfields. Eurospan Uni-
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