

## Zimbabwe Out in the Cold?

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Ray Bush

Acute food insecurity has returned to much of Africa in its acutest form – famine – or is it simply that it never went away because western eyes have focussed too much on the consequences of 9/11, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the continuing US and Iraqi fatalities that blind commentators to Africa's continuing poverty? A food crisis seems most acute in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan where people are at risk from death resulting from illness, malnutrition and hunger. Ethiopia's longest drought in living memory has led to higher than normal incidences of preventable illness like measles and malaria and economic collapse in the Horn, and more generally the failure to promote sustainable economic growth elsewhere in Africa makes immediate famine prevention, recovery and long term resistance to its recurrence seemingly impossible.

International financial agencies declare the significance of sub-Saharan Africa's real GDP growth of 3.0 per cent in 2000 and 2.9 per cent in 2001. Yet the UN millennium goals of reducing poverty and improving access to basic amenities require sustained growth of 7 per cent per annum. And average regional figures mislead. The non oil producing countries suffer worse than the evidence for regional averages suggests and negative growth is more common among poorer countries. Yet the extent of Africa's systemic crisis that continues to undermine recovery is revealed by evidence from the World Bank's old favourites like Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Zimbabwe that languish in economic crisis.

Zimbabwe's continuing political, economic and social upheaval is dealt with in this issue by Chaumba, Scoones and Wolmer. Commonwealth pressure on Mugabe to reform politically and defend basic human rights has left Zimbabwe's dictator using racist language to promote xenophobia and hide behind the coercive and brutal forces of law and disorder. Mugabe's humiliation by the Commonwealth after the announcement that Zimbabwe was to have sanctions continued against it led the President to say his country was withdrawing from the 'Club' he described as an 'Anglo Saxon unholy alliance'. The pity of course was that the Mugabe issue dominated the Commonwealth meeting. It conveniently denied even a limited opportunity to discuss strategies to combat HIV/AIDS, promote growth, social development and poverty alleviation that were not merely a repeat of the international financial agency panaceas for African development.

Whatever the shortcomings of the Commonwealth, and there are clearly many that run deep to its core, the Commonwealth's stance – to seek the end of Mugabe's abuse of human rights – needs applause. The crisis might never have become so intense if the UK, the Commonwealth and Zimbabwe's neighbours, especially South Africa, had acted sooner and in different ways: *inter alia* the UK had delivered the finance to ensure an orderly transfer of land and South Africa and other neighbours had actively criticised the deplorable demise of Zimbabwean human rights. Zimbabweans themselves struggle against tyranny and against the 525 per cent inflation, food and

currency shortage, attacks on opposition politicians and dissent. Organised working class unrest has recently intensified leading to mass arrests of activists. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions for example, has repeatedly called for national strikes, to defend worker interests in the face of nakedly corrupt mis-government and promote political reform. Yet there is little chance of that reform coming quickly as Mugabe's exit strategy, if not unrehearsed has not yet reached a conclusion. ZANU-PF for instance, at its annual conference in Masvingo in December 2003 did not formally debate the succession but rumours abound about whether the President can hang on until 2008 when his current term of office will end.

The article by Chaumba and his co authors explores an under-researched area of Zimbabwe's crisis ridden political economy. It goes beyond a concern of exploring the consequence of land seized from white farmers to explore the fascinating consequences of seizures of *state* owned land and the dynamic interactions between people's livelihood strategies and the political and social institutions that emerge and help structure them on the newly occupied land. They examine new tensions that emerge between the regime's authoritarian nationalism and ethnic politics and the way in which mechanisms for governance among settlers challenge existing state structures. They also document the emergence of a patrimonial politics and the consequences of this for social differentiation and political power. This case study helps understand the fluid and dynamic process of political and economic transformation in Zimbabwe that does not reduce a documentary of the country's crisis to the actions of individual corrupt leaders, or simply the machinations of the international community intent on ridding the continent of the President's malign influence.

There is good and bad news in this issue from Uganda. Tangri and Mwenda explore corruption in that country's military. They document examples of corrupt military procurement and illegal business activities of commanders in neighbouring DRC. They also explore how issues of corruption became increasingly a worry of Uganda's parliament, the press and opposition to the NRM government and how it featured as a contentious issue in the 2001 presidential election. They stress that corruption was possible because politicians, government and the military are insufficiently accountable to the public for their actions. But Brooke Schoepf in an upbeat, although cautious tale, explains how Uganda has had a relatively successful strategy in reducing HIV prevalence from 15 per cent in 1992 to 5 per cent in 2001. At a time when Vatican zealots deny the importance of condoms in preventing HIV/AIDs (but many Catholic priests flout the Pope's concern to promote abstinence instead of improved sexual knowledge and health), Schoepf explores the significant way in which sexual behaviour has been modified and how a vibrant civil society has mobilised education to combat disease spread. She also, however, guards against complacency. She stresses the need for better and improved funding to help improve testing regimes, support for women and the need to improve mechanisms that reduce sexual violence in relationships and not the least among these, those that expose women to HIV infection. She also argues for the need to develop mechanisms that will improve economic wellbeing of women, of the need to establish reforms in rights of inheritance to land and other property that would help provide material support for women. That extra support might help protect the vulnerable against destitution, immiseration and prostitution. In stressing these broader concerns of women's poverty and access to resources she situates debates about reducing HIV/AIDS infection to a fundamental shift in thinking, of the need to situate the causes of disease spread to people's rights, entitlements to wellbeing and to gender equality.

Also in this volume, Deborah Wheeler details the potential and also the contradictions evident in the development of Egypt's information technology strategy. She notes the ambition of building a knowledge economy as a strategy to produce sustained economic growth in the twenty first century and also highlights that while projects attempt to make the information society more inclusive, innovations in the form of a knowledge economy and an information society as they are currently conceived, will widen the gap between rich and poor. And in exploring the case of the use and appropriation of new information and communication technologies by Muslim Mourides in Senegal Guèye notes how the technology acts both an instrument to integrate Touba with the rest of the Senegal and for them to gain a broader international presence.

Finally, we return to the question of oil in Daniel Volman's article on the Bush administration and the security implications of US energy policy. The smokescreen which had characterised US foreign policy is now being unravelled in a series of systematic *global* links between energy supplies and the privatisation of the military. A document published by the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) in July 2003, notes that 'within a generation, Britain will become completely reliant upon energy sources supplied via pipelines from politically unstable countries thousands of miles away ... and will be forced to source supplies from West Africa, the Middle East and the former Soviet Republics ... The UK would have difficulty maintaining the security of its energy sources that are located in pipelines thousands of miles away and that are vulnerable to mechanical failure, sabotage and terrorist attack'. 'If future gas supplies were interrupted' it continues, 'the UK would have major difficulty in keeping the lights on'.

Justification for expansion of US 'bases' combined with a closer integration of joint Marine and Navy, intelligence that began in Iraq, point to the beginnings of a new imperialist agenda:

*Show me where globalization is thick with network connectivity, financial transactions, liberal media flows, and collective security, and I will show you regions featuring stable governments, rising standards of living and more deaths by suicide than murder. These parts of the world I call the 'Functioning Core ... But show me where globalization is thinning or just plain absent and I will show you regions plagued by politically repressive regimes, widespread poverty and disease, routine mass murder and – most important – the chronic conflicts that incubate the next generation of global terrorists. These parts of the world I call the non-integrating Gap ... The real reason I support a war [in Iraq] is that the resulting long-term military commitment will finally force America to deal with the entire Gap as a strategic threat environment* (Professor P.M. Barnett, Naval War College, published in *Esquire* magazine, March 2003).

Corporate strategies transcend boundaries and reinforce the disregard for the rule of international law and basic human rights. And as we have already seen, US budgets for the 'reconstruction' of Iraq will bolster US corporate coffers first, and only later the companies based in other coalition countries. If you did not support the invasion there is little chance of corporate gain from it. The Bush administration in fact has enacted a number of Executive Orders to promote the security of US companies. EO 13303 is rigged to safeguard the corporate entities like Halliburton, Bechtel and Dynacorp. Conflict and the war on terror is clearly good for business. That is perhaps why 'the wars' are likely to last a very long time as the waging of them, in their very many different forms, is an end in itself.

## **CAROLYN BAYLIES**

1947-2003

It is with very great sadness that we report the death of one of ROAPE's most active editors. Carolyn lost her long battle with cancer on 1 November. She joined the Editorial Board in 1980 and was one of the mainstays of the team. Always ready to take on her share, Carolyn was the issue editor of a number of special issues of ROAPE, including our first on gender, democratisation, HIV/AIDS and Cultural Production.

She remained active until the last. Too ill to travel she still wrote a paper for the September ROAPE 2003 Conference in Birmingham. She will be remembered with great affection and will be sorely missed by all of those who knew her. Our love goes out to her husband, Morris Szeftel and to their children, Hannah and Andrew.

A full tribute will be in our next Issue.

# Military Corruption & Ugandan Politics since the late 1990s

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*Roger Tangri & Andrew M Mwenda*

**The paper examines cases of corrupt military procurement in Uganda since the late 1990s. It also considers the illicit business activities of Ugandan army officers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1998. The paper then discusses how military corruption aroused the concern of parliament, and became a matter of importance in the 2001 presidential elections. We argue that the prevalence of military corruption was the result of government and army leaders not being subject to public accountability. Not a single leader has been faced with prosecution or punishment for corrupt military behaviour. We conclude by arguing that military corruption has helped to maintain the National Resistance Movement (NRM) in power, although this has been realised at the cost of building a professional national army in Uganda.**

One of the most notorious areas of corruption everywhere is that concerned with the procurement of military equipment and defence supplies. In the case of the NRM Government, in power in Uganda since 1986, it has been mainly since the late 1990s, when the government began acquiring more and larger military hardware mainly through third parties, that the buying of arms became so seriously tainted with corruption. A number of major tenders were entered into for aircraft, guns, and tanks as well as items such as food rations and uniforms. These deals invariably involved bribes and kickbacks and also massive overpayments from which army officers, top government officials, and middlemen profited.

Senior military officers and their civilian business associates have also profited whenever military operations have had to be conducted to combat insurgencies threatening Uganda's security. For instance, Ugandan soldiers have been deployed in neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since August 1998 in order to clear the border areas of hostile rebel forces intent on destabilizing the NRM Government. But Ugandan military involvement in the Congo was extended well beyond the border security zone. By most accounts, the Uganda Peoples Defence Force (UPDF) advanced into areas of eastern Congo to profit financially from the plunder of natural resources. Indeed, the Congo has proven to be a veritable treasure trove for a small number of high-ranking army officers who, together with their civilian business partners, have become rich from smuggling and resource plunder.

In this paper we document cases of corrupt military procurement as well as the illicit business activities of top military commanders engaged in military operations against rebels in neighbouring DRC. We also consider how military corruption, especially from the late 1990s, aroused the concern of parliament, the press, and the political opponents of the NRM Government as well as how the whole issue became a matter of some importance in the 2001 presidential elections. We argue that the prevalence of

military corruption has been the result of government and army leaders not being subject to public accountability. Not a single leader has been faced with prosecution or punishment for corrupt military behaviour.

The paper concludes by arguing that military corruption has been used to maintain the NRM regime in power. Corrupt military procurement and economic plunder have benefited key UPDF officers as well as promoted their loyalty to the regime. But military corruption has also impaired the building of a professional national army turning it into a partisan instrument of the NRM government.

## **Arms Purchases**

From the mid-1990s, the NRM Government became concerned about controlling insurrections in northern and western Uganda. It began to modernise and re-equip the armed forces, and hoped that by deploying more and better weapons the military would prove more effective in combating rebel activity. But the process of acquiring defence equipment created many opportunities for military corruption resulting in a number of cases of serious corruption in the area of arms purchases. Corruption in military procurement was to have a deleterious impact on the ability of Ugandan soldiers to put down the rebels.

### **MI-24 Helicopter Gunships<sup>1</sup>**

In 1996 the NRM Government decided to buy Russian helicopter gunships because of their potential effectiveness against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) which, with Sudanese backing, had been waging an armed campaign against the Ugandan regime since 1988. Various interests began to lobby to supply the helicopters to the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF). Among them was a Kampala businessman, Emmanuel Katto (his wife was a sister of the Ugandan Chief of Defence Staff, General James Kazini), who contacted his overseas partners in a company called Consolidated Sales Corporation (CSC) about the possibility of supplying the UPDF with the gunships. He also contacted Kwame Ruyondo (a foster child of President Yoweri Museveni) employed at Caleb International, a company owned by Museveni's younger brother, Caleb Akwandenaho (popularly known by his *nom de guerre*, Salim Saleh). In mid-1996, Ruyondo conveyed information about CSC offering to sell MI-24 gunships to Major-General Salim Saleh who was at that time commander of the counter insurgency operations against the LRA in the north.

Subsequently, Salim Saleh discussed with President Museveni the matter of CSC providing the helicopters to the Ugandan army. As Minister of Defence, Museveni agreed to give CSC the contract to supply UPDF with four second-hand combat helicopters. No bidding process occurred. Instead, Museveni directed officials of the defence ministry in October 1996 to acquire the four gunships through CSC.<sup>2</sup> CSC offered Saleh a commission of some \$800,000 (Wakabi, 2000b).<sup>3</sup> It also paid Ruyondo a similarly large commission. A judicial commission of inquiry into the purchase of the helicopters later reported that the 'inducements offered to Ruyondo and Saleh jeopardized transparency', 'eliminated healthy competition', and 'guaranteed contractual terms that favoured' CSC rather than the government. It recommended criminal prosecution of Saleh, Katto, and Ruyondo (GOU, 2003). Eventually, CSC was paid \$12.2 million by the Ugandan Government for four helicopter gunships but it actually purchased them for \$4.7 million from a company in Belarus, a former Soviet Union republic. (Some interviewees say that the government paid \$6.5 million for two helicopter gunships).

In May 1997, the Ministry of Defence sent Colonel Kiiza Besigye, the chief of logistics and engineering, as head of a team from Entebbe military air base to Belarus to carry out a pre-shipment assessment of the gunships. Besigye reported that the planes had not been overhauled and that the logbooks were in Russian. He recommended that the contract be amended to provide for the overhaul of the helicopters. He also advised against the purchase of the gunships through intermediaries such as CSC, which he described as a 'dubious' company without direct access to the manufacturers of the helicopters. Buying through intermediaries, Besigye warned, was much more expensive than buying directly from the manufacturers.

Besigye's warning notwithstanding, the defence ministry contacted CSC and a new amended agreement for the supply of the helicopters – containing specifications derived from Besigye's report – was concluded. Several months later in July 1997, CSC informed the government that the gunships had been overhauled as provided for in the contract and were ready for inspection before being sent to Uganda. Once again a team headed by Besigye and including Emmanuel Katto visited Belarus in October 1997. The Belorussian intermediaries produced logbooks in English and convinced the Ugandan team that the planes were airworthy. Besigye reported that although they had not actually inspected the gunships, the logbooks suggested that the planes were in order, and that the Ministry of Defence should accept them.

CSC delivered two helicopters in March 1998. Two more were expected shortly afterwards. (In fact, they were never sent to Uganda and have remained in Minsk, Belarus). CSC also provided technicians to assemble them. But to the surprise of the CSC proprietors, the gunships proved not to be airworthy. They had clearly not been overhauled and the logbooks were different from those that Katto and Ugandan defence officials had seen earlier. The Belorussian intermediaries had duped CSC. CSC invited the manufacturers from Belarus to come to Uganda, and it was then discovered by Ugandan officials that the cost of the helicopters had been grossly inflated. Salim Saleh, who had in the meantime become presidential advisor on defence and military affairs (essentially overseer of the Ministry of Defence) informed President Museveni about the defective helicopters. He also confessed to having been offered a commission from CSC to expedite the contract in Katto's favour, and proposed to return it as well as resign from the ministry. Museveni forgave his brother – as it was 'his partners who gave us bad helicopters' – and directed Saleh to use the commission earnings for military operations against rebels in northern Uganda (Wakabi, 2000b).

The gunships have, however, remained grounded at Entebbe airforce base. And the Government has lost over \$12 million on the deal (or, by some accounts, at least \$6,545,275).

### **MIG-21 Jet Fighters, 100mm Anti-aircraft Guns & T-55 Tanks**

Concerned about Sudanese bombing in the north, the Ugandan government decided to acquire jet fighters to carry out border patrols as well as to force down Sudanese bombers. In late 1998, the Ministry of Defence contracted an Israeli businessman based in Kampala to purchase jet fighters for the military. No tendering or bidding process took place. Eventually, four MIG-21 jet fighters were supplied – old and outdated Soviet-made planes with a limited bomb carriage capacity as well as malfunctioning radar guidance systems. Their fuel tanks were also too small for purposes of flying from Gulu airbase to as far as Juba in Southern Sudan and return to base without refueling. Moreover, two of the jets delivered to Entebbe military base

had only one wing (Mukasa and Ochieng, 1999). It was, however, difficult for the Government to take the Israelis to court for supplying inappropriate planes. The agreement that was signed was vague as well as informal (Wakabi, 2000d). Some \$50 million is alleged to have been spent on these planes by the defence ministry. They were said to be grossly overvalued; a more reasonable price was estimated to be \$10 million. In November 1999, the Government contracted another Israeli businessman to take the warplanes to Israel's state-owned Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI Enterprises) for upgrading as well as remodeling. The jet fighters that the Ugandan government eventually acquired were therefore considerably more expensive than if they had been purchased new directly from the manufacturers (*The East African*, 2000).

But even before the jet fighter scandal, Ministry of Defence officials had contracted a consortium headed by an Israeli businessman to buy anti-aircraft gun to shoot down Sudanese planes. The consortium bought these guns in North Korea. They were second-hand Russian-made 100mm anti-aircraft guns. They turned out to be obsolete. They were brought to Uganda without being refurbished and without mechanical defects being corrected. In December 1997 and January 1998, the guns were taken to the north where they proved malfunctioning; they were junk. They failed to shoot down the Sudanese Antonov bombers operating in the north. Once again, the Government was unable to sue the consortium as the agreement concluded between the two parties was an informal understanding and therefore not actionable in court. And, as with other military hardware, the Government paid a highly overvalued price for the guns.

Yet as if these cases had not provided sufficient warning to the Government about being cautious in procuring military supplies through middlemen, in December 1998 the Ugandan army took delivery of a consignment of 62 tanks which were to be used to intervene against Sudan. They turned out to be obsolete Russian T-55s, all but eight of which were not operational on arrival in Uganda. Once again, Israeli and Ugandan businessmen were a conduit for the shipment of the hardware. In early 1998 they arranged the sale with the defence ministry and reportedly received \$4 million in commission payments while the total cost of the deal was \$28 million, at least four times above the market price for outdated tanks (Blair, 1999). In order to make the tanks serviceable, they had to be reconditioned at much cost by four Israeli mechanics.

### **C-130 Hercules**

In 1975, the Ministry of Defence bought a C-130 Hercules plane which was hardly used over the next twenty years. In December 1995 the Hercules had a fire after landing at Cairo airport. Four companies bid to repair it. All four bidders were listed by the manufacturer as competent to repair the plane. Eventually, the Hercules was taken to France to be repaired by a company, which had not even submitted a bid. A Swiss company, AVISTO, was paid \$12 million to carry out the repairs which was much more than the \$1.8 to \$2.6 million estimated repair costs of the original four bidders (*The Monitor*, 1999). That the cost of repairs was highly inflated is evident from estimates of an overhauled C-130 costing some \$6 million. Moreover, the repairers came to Entebbe and collected the spare parts for the C-130, which had been stored there since 1975. These parts were valued at some \$900,000.

Repairs were finally completed in May 1998, and the C-130 flew several times between Entebbe and Kisangani and other destinations in eastern Congo transporting military personnel, food and materiel. However, the plane soon developed problems and was grounded for at least half a year. Engineers and pilots working at Entebbe

airforce base informed President Museveni about the C-130. In a report to the President, they provided details of the 1995 fire, the inflated costs of repairing the plane, and the current technical problems it was experiencing. In particular, they showed how senior defence officials had acted against the national interest by allowing hugely inflated repair charges. The President did not respond to the report.

In 1998, Rwanda and Uganda invaded the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Publicly this was said to be for security reasons. Both countries wanted to clear their border areas with the Congo of rebels trying to destabilise their governments. Both countries' armies occupied large areas of eastern Congo and also installed a joint occupation of Kisangani. The transportation of military personnel and supplies from Uganda to DRC was a lucrative business earning the transporters huge profits. Top defence ministry officials and Salim Saleh were in competition for this air transport business. When the C-130 Hercules was grounded, Saleh's Air Alexander which had a Boeing 707 made large profits ferrying soldiers and equipment.

However, a businessman, Andrew Rugasira, came onto the scene with a Russian-made Ilyushin-76 cargo plane owned by a Ukrainian company called UCA which had been involved in relief work in Ethiopia. Rugasira's VR Promotions in partnership with UCA offered, in September 1998, to do the air ferrying for the Ministry of Defence at prices which seriously undercut those which Air Alexander was charging. Rugasira's rivals alleged that he was a front for defence officials, and they attempted, unsuccessfully, to block Rugasira from the lucrative air transport business. The defence ministry continued to charter the Russian-made Ilyushin-76 and Antonov-12 planes even after the C-130 Hercules was repaired and in sound mechanical condition. Indeed, according to documents made public in mid-2001, defence paid Rugasira an exorbitant \$4,486,805 between October 1998 and March 1999 to transport soldiers and military equipment to and from the DRC.<sup>4</sup>

## **Plundering Congolese Resources & Military Criminalisation**

Senior Ugandan army officers have been involved in smuggling resources – timber, coffee, diamonds and gold – from the DRC to Uganda. Top military commanders, however, have had a history of using war situations for private profit. While in charge of operations against the LRA rebels in the north, Major-General Salim Saleh is alleged to have awarded his own company a Ushs 400 million (\$400,000) monthly tender to supply UPDF with commodities in Gulu. And a number of other officers pursued their commercial interests much more actively than fighting the war. In the view of critics, they even refused to talk seriously with the rebels because they wanted to prolong the war from which they were benefiting.

In war-torn Congo, Salim Saleh's private business activities also came under severe criticism. His Congolese business ventures came to prominence following the September 1998 crash of a plane in the Rwenzori Mountains along Uganda's western border with the DRC. The accident killed Lt-Colonel Jet Johnson Mwebaze (a brother of Brigadier James Kazini, chief of staff of the UPDF) and four others, all of whom had business links with Saleh or were his business partners. The plane was on a clandestine gold-buying mission with a million dollars in cash on board. A journalist reported in *New African* (London) in May 1999 that the 'mission was on behalf of the Israeli firm, Efforte Corporation, in which Saleh had substantial shareholdings' (Sebunya, 1999). The tragic incident revealed how heavily involved Saleh was in transporting gold from eastern Congo to Uganda as well as how gold was usually classified as military cargo to avoid payment of customs duties. Indeed, military

officers and their civilian business associates had been transporting goods illegally into Uganda with impunity. In May 1999, the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) protested army officers smuggling Congolese resources into Uganda while the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) criticised unlicensed aviation operators operating from Entebbe to eastern Congo in contravention of CAA directives. An opposition parliamentarian, Aggrey Awori, decried 'powerful and well-connected individuals' for flouting CAA and URA regulations but remaining untouched. He also declared that the wives of 'highly placed officials' – including Mrs Joviah Akwandenaho who owned an aviation firm, Air Alexander, which she had bought from her husband Salim Saleh – were responsible for the continued smuggling (*The New Vision* (Kampala), 18 August 1999).

In an April 2001 report by a United Nations panel of experts (as well as in a second revised report in October 2002), the Ugandan military was accused of plundering Congo's wealth. It was alleged the UPDF had advanced into the mineral rich areas of eastern Congo to enable its officers to become involved in the plunder of minerals and timber. Salim Saleh and Brigadier James Kazini, the overall commander of Uganda's military mission in the DRC, were named as the two behind various companies exploiting Congo's natural resources (United Nations, 2001, 2002). One of the Congolese rebel groups, the RCD-ML, also accused individual Ugandan army officers of committing economic crimes in the Congo, and ordered the disbanding of Trinity Investments Limited (TIL) following a probe of the company's operations. Salim Saleh and Ugandan businessman, Sam Engola, was involved with TIL, as was, reportedly, Brigadier Kazini. The company was alleged to have imported goods into DRC without paying customs duties to the rebels as well as exported gold, timber and coffee without paying taxes. According to investigations conducted by the rebels, they had been losing about a million dollars a month since TIL was founded in November 1999 (*The New Vision*, 8 June 2000; 23 November 2000).<sup>5</sup>

Commercial interests as well as commercial rivalries were also an important factor behind clashes between Rwandan and Ugandan troops in the Congo in 1999 and 2000. High-level military men and their civilian business partners engaged in trade in the DRC found that by the late 1990s their businesses were facing stiff competition from Rwandan traders. According to informants, it was partly to counter Rwandan business influence that Salim Saleh persuaded President Museveni to become involved militarily in the Congo in 1998. On 12 October 1998, the semi-official Rwandan *The New Times* attacked Saleh saying that he had reduced the UPDF in the Congo 'to a thieving gang'. UPDF officers were accused of plundering Congo's riches rather than fighting the war. Disagreements between the Rwandan and Ugandan militaries partly over control of Kisangani and partly over rival business activities erupted in armed confrontation between the two erstwhile close allies three times in 1999 and 2000. Many Ugandan soldiers were killed in these clashes. At a meeting with Museveni in August 2000, army returnees from the DRC claimed that one reason for the Ugandan military fiasco with Rwanda was that 'some senior UPDF officers made mistakes because they were concerned with their selfish economic gains' (Mucoori et al., 2000). This was echoed in another statement issued by junior army officers who called for an inquiry into allegations that 'very high ranking army officers and politicians have indeed benefited from this senseless war at the expense of our comrades'.<sup>6</sup>

Two other incidents of violence and death accompanying business dealings by army officers are worth mentioning here. In 1997, journalists obtained copies of bank statements regarding the accounts held at the Gulu branch of Uganda Commercial

Bank by the 4th division of the UPDF as well as its commander, Colonel James Kazini. The division's account was shown to be almost empty while Kazini's personal account was running a turnover of some Ushs 800 million (\$750,000) per month as a result of division funds being paid into it (*The Monitor*, 22 July 1997). Kazini is apparently a distant cousin of President Museveni's wife, and State House issued a statement rebutting charges of any impropriety and claiming the division's money was being spent legally. However, according to informants, Kazini was using the money to conduct his business activities. When the divisional paymaster, Lt. Gerald Osele, protested about the illegal use of the money as well as its slow rate of repayment, he was found dead shortly afterwards. The official military view of the death was that the paymaster had committed suicide after being unable to account for substantial funds. But the paymaster's close relatives were insistent that he had been killed on the orders of 'a senior officer' because, in the words of a parliamentary select committee on defence, 'he had refused to 'cooperate' with his bosses in embezzling soldier's funds' (Parliament of Uganda, 2001).

Three years later, the paymaster for Ugandan troops in the DRC disappeared with Ushs1.68 billion (approximately US\$1 million) meant for salaries of soldiers. The official military view was that Captain Dan Byakutaga had embezzled the money and fled to Dubai. But a number of our informants reported that his disappearance had been 'organized' by high-level officers among whom was mentioned Brigadier James Kazini, the overall commander of Uganda's military mission in the DRC. It was well known to many soldiers that Kazini as well as Salim Saleh to finance their trading activities in minerals and timber in eastern Congo were using money meant for UPDF salaries. It is alleged that because Kazini began to make commercial losses and was unable to repay army funds that Ugandan soldiers in the Congo did not receive their pay for nearly three months in 2000. Some interviewees provided evidence that it was the need to cover up these losses and theft of soldiers' wages that made it necessary for the army paymaster to disappear. Indeed, on 25 August 2000, a Kampala weekly, *Uganda Confidential*, published an article accusing Kazini of gross corruption and also for being behind the disappearance of Captain Byakutaga.

### **Further Military Corruption**

In March 1999, after a process of competitive tendering, a South African Company, Kramer Trade and Technology (KT&T) won the right to supply Ugandan troops in combat areas with food rations. The huge consignment of food was shipped from South Africa to Mombasa and then brought by train in 42 containers to Uganda where it was stored at an army barracks in Jinja. But when government officials tested the food in July 1999, they established that it had expired, and impounded it. Information from interviews revealed that there had been a bitter wrangle in the military tender board regarding the awarding of the contract. The defence ministry's permanent secretary, Ben Mbonye had supported the South African Company, while some senior army officers had favoured a rival firm to supply the food. Upon losing the tender, the army officers swore that the UPDF would not take delivery of the food. So when the food arrived, the officers rejected it claiming it was expired. They bribed or intimidated officials from the Uganda National Bureau of Standards to issue a report that the food had expired. However, the South African company which won the tender produced evidence that their food had been examined by the South African authorities prior to export, and also by Intertech Services, the company hired by Uganda to conduct pre-shipment inspection. The South Africans, in turn, brought international inspectors to Uganda who confirmed that the food was suitable for

human consumption but the military officers remained intransigent. The South Africans sued the Ugandan government for refusal to pay for food rations worth \$1.48 million that were supplied to the Ugandan army by the firm. After arbitration in England, the Ugandan ministry of defence paid \$2.1million to KT&T for the breach of contract (Wakabi, 2000a; Abbey, 2001b). Another serious consequence of the food fiasco was that during 1999 and 2000, the thousands of Ugandan soldiers inside the Congo went without adequate rations. In Congo's war zones, they also found it difficult to prepare food for themselves. Hungry Ugandan soldiers were routed in the clashes with the Rwandans in Kisangani.

Also in 1998, the Ministry of Defence invited bids from companies, which could supply the Ugandan army with uniforms. Five companies submitted bids. The company that was awarded the contract to supply 60,000 pairs of camouflage uniforms and another 60,000 pairs of plain at a cost of \$1.8 million was fronted by leading members of the Army Tender Board. According to the tender documents seen by the authors, the contract should have been awarded to a British company. When the South Korean firm delivered the uniforms, they were discovered to be far too small for the Ugandan soldiers. The undersize uniforms were never returned to the supplier, and the Ugandan government lost a few million dollars through the deal (Mucunguzi and Mwenda, 2000). Ugandan soldiers that fought against the Rwandans at Tchope Bridge in June 2000 were mostly poorly dressed and their boots were also torn. By all accounts, they looked like a rebel army.

## **Military Corruption & Ugandan Politics**

Serious cases of military corruption occurred in Uganda in the late 1990s. These were prevalent predominantly in the procurement of defence equipment and army supplies but occurred also where the UPDF was deployed in war situations. Most of those involved in diverse corrupt military behaviour were army officers, but senior defence ministry officials and civilian business people also participated. Many of these military and political figures were closely connected – at times related – to President Museveni and his wife. And, indeed, it was President Museveni who was responsible for permitting an environment to emerge conducive to much military corruption by a handful of his relatives and supporters. For instance, at various times the President directed that tenders be awarded to certain companies for arms purchases thus subverting legal procedures and government standing orders that military purchases be subjected to competitive bidding. The judicial commission of inquiry into the helicopter gunships was highly critical of Museveni's role in the purchase of the helicopters as well as in military procurement generally. In 'most cases of classified purchases' reported the commission, it was the president who 'himself identifies the supplier of that equipment'. Moreover, it continued, the 'negotiations of price, quality and quantity are usually concluded between the president and the supplier at this stage' (GOU, 2003; Wakabi, 2000c).

On a number of other occasions, President Museveni refuted claims of corrupt business dealings and embezzlement by his top military commanders. He was particularly vehement in his rejection of accusations contained in the report to the United Nations (UN) in April 2001 that Salim Saleh and Brigadier James Kazini were orchestrating Congo's plunder. By denying the existence of trading and smuggling activities, even when confronted with evidence from his own Ugandan soldiers as well as from the United Nations, Museveni was condoning illegal military behaviour. Indeed, the UN report charged Museveni and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda of being 'accomplices' to the pillaging of Congo's natural resources, especially by failing

to prevent their top military commanders from profiting from the exploitation. Moreover, in the case of each procurement scandal that surfaced as well as the more sinister incidents of deaths of army paymasters, the President only allowed the army to conduct its own internal investigations, the results of which were never made public. Even where the President directed that judicial commission of inquiry be instituted (as in the helicopter deal and on the DRC), their findings were only made public after much donor pressure. Certainly, none of the investigations resulted in the prosecution or punishment of any high-level figures in the UPDF and the defence ministry.

In African countries, the most serious cases of corruption have occurred in those areas of the state (such as defence and security services) which are the least accountable. Similarly in Uganda, despite criticism from parliamentarians, the press and the political opposition, little was done to inquire into controversial defence deals or the illicit activities of army generals or the disappearance of army finance officers. An editorial in *The Monitor* newspaper (22 September 1999) called for 'accountability in the realm of defence expenditure' especially after the fiasco of the MI-24 helicopter gunships. 'Regrettably' it observed, 'defence transactions have so far been largely obscured from scrutiny'. In this regard, the anti-corruption agencies shirked from inquiring into both the military budget and defence procurement issues ostensibly because of national security considerations. The Inspector-General of Government, Jotham Tumwesigye, noted merely that his office was 'not involved in investigating defence expenditure'. And, similarly, the international financial institutions proved highly reticent in investigating Uganda's military affairs. In April 2001, an expert panel of the United Nations chastised the World Bank for failing to point out that Uganda's increased exports of gold and diamonds were principally the result of its incursions into the Congo. The limited extent of accountability and transparency in defence budgets, procurement practices, and military activities in operation zones as well as the indifference to military wrongdoing shown by official anti-corruption agencies and international donors created abundant opportunities for corruption in all of these areas.

Members of the Ugandan Parliament did, however, on several occasions in the late 1990s, attempt to probe procurement of defence supplies as well as UPDF activities in war-torn Congo. But up to mid-2000, pro-government MPs rebuffed all these attempts. For instance, in February 1999, a majority in Parliament rejected a motion put forward by a number of MPs that a select committee be set up to investigate alleged corruption in the procurement of military equipment such as helicopters, tanks, etc. Government ministers were able to convince the majority of parliamentarians that such an investigation would jeopardize national security by divulging sensitive security information.

But in the wake of weapons scandals as well as the disappearance of the UPDF paymaster in the DRC, MPs successfully set up a select committee in July 2000 to probe corruption and mismanagement in the army. Those Government ministers who were urging MPs to drop their plans were 'reminded of the junk helicopter gunships' saga, undersize uniforms affair, malfunctioning tanks fiasco and expired rations scandal'. The ministers were also told of serious parliamentary concern over the loss of salaries of troops deployed in the Congo as well as payroll inefficiencies and lack of payment of gratuities and pensions to former army personnel (Ochieng, 2000). And they were further made aware of the dissatisfaction among MPs that the various scandals remained unresolved, and that parliamentarians held a low opinion of the ability of the army to investigate itself in these matters.

There was much manipulation of the membership of the fourteen-person team appointed by Parliament to probe allegations of corruption, mismanagement, and abuse of office in the military. A number of MPs, including Winnie Byanyima and Norbert Mao – both members of the parliamentary defence committee – protested what they saw as the unrepresentative nature of the select committee membership as well as that some members ‘knew next to nothing about defence matters’. In attacking the composition of the select committee – of which they were not chosen as members – they argued that the Government had ‘nominated people who were boot-lickers of the system’ and that this ‘undermined its ability to carry out informed research and submit an impartial and accurate report’. For Norbert Mao, the probe team was ‘a whitewash right from the word go’; and he provided a damning verdict on the parliamentary probe: ‘first junk tanks, then junk choppers and now from all indications, a junk investigation by parliament’ (Luganda and Tegulle, 2000). As the names of the members of the committee were read out in Parliament, they were accompanied by much heckling of the Speaker. Eventually, in May 2001, the select committee produced a report, which focused on trivial matters rather than the more serious allegations of military corruption.

Colonel Kiiza Besigye, a senior military assistant to the Minister of State for Defence, caused a stir in November 1999 by sending an article to the press which described the Movement leadership as ‘corrupt ... dishonest, opportunistic and undemocratic’ (Besigye, 2000). Several officers in the UPDF expressed support for Besigye’s press statement. Brigadier Matayo Kyaligonza (a Historical Member of the National Resistance Army (NRA) which had fought the five-year bush war, which brought the NRM to power) was reported as saying that the NRM had ‘diverted from our original motive’ and that ‘some people have tended to become too corrupt’. Besigye had also joined the NRA and had been Museveni’s personal physician in the guerrilla war. After the NRM came to power in 1986, Besigye had held several ministerial appointments before re-joining the army in 1989, first as a battalion commander and, subsequently in 1995 as the chief of logistics and engineering. He was therefore knowledgeable about military deals and decisions, and it was this firsthand understanding that made him increasingly critical of the NRM leadership. Especially as chief of logistics, Besigye had become concerned about the tenders regarding military procurement. In 1998, he had applied to leave the army after criticizing top military and political persons at meetings of the Historical Members of the NRA. In 1998, as well, he had married Winnie Byanyima who was a member of the parliamentary sessional committee on defence and an outspoken critic of the NRM leadership.

It was not surprising therefore that President Museveni and most other top brass in government and the army began condemning Besigye for publishing his 1999 statement. They also accused him of ‘promoting tendencies injurious to the good order of the army’. They called for an army court to try him. As commander-in-chief of the UPDF, President Museveni directed that Besigye be court-martialled for statements critical of the UPDF; and the military started proceedings to prosecute him. This decision to try Besigye in a military court sparked off protests by sections of his Rukungiri home community. ‘Who actually is a friend of the Movement?’ asked the Secretary to the Rukungiri Development Committee: ‘Thieves or a critic?’ Delegations from Rukungiri went to State House to meet President Museveni who decided to suspend the impending trial while consultations were pursued with Besigye’s supporters. Various meetings were held, and it was agreed that Besigye write a letter ‘regretting the controversy’ his statement had caused. In September 2000, Besigye handed in a letter of apology whereupon Museveni called off the court-

martial and Besigye was discharged from the UPDF on October 20. Just over a week later, Col. (Rtd) Besigye declared his intention to contest for the presidency in 2001. He stated that he had decided to stand against a fellow member of the NRM as well as a former comrade, President Museveni, because despite the latter's considerable achievements, he was no longer the appropriate leader to take Uganda into the future. According to Besigye, a new leadership was needed to help the country resolve various problems, including those of 'pervasive corruption in government'. Besigye particularly regretted Uganda's military involvement in the war in the DRC. Neither the army nor the leadership of the NRM had been adequately consulted in the deployment of troops in the Congo, and this 'engagement has diverted resources from development and destroyed our image', he declared. Besigye argued that UPDF intervention had not been undertaken to safeguard Uganda's security interests 'but rather enable a few Ugandan leaders to blatantly tap Congolese natural resources to benefit themselves'.

Besigye directed many of his attacks towards government and military corruption. At a meeting with veterans of the bush war, 'who fought to bring us to power [and who] still sleep in huts', he pointed to top officers putting up storied houses in Kampala and elsewhere, and inquired 'where are these people getting all this money' from for house construction. He attacked President Museveni in particular for failing to curb rampant corruption among army officers. 'The real problem is lack of political will to fight corruption at the highest level of government', he said, and cited the example of the President forgiving his brother after Salim Saleh confessed to being offered a commission in the helicopter deal. In his manifesto for the presidential election, Besigye declared that there would be no amnesty for the corrupt and all public officials who had embezzled state funds since 1986 would be apprehended. He also pledged, if elected, to stamp out high-level corruption in government and especially the UPDF. But, if 'Museveni stayed on for five more years', Besigye predicted that 'Uganda would win the world cup of corruption'.

The presidential elections of March 2001 were hotly contested. They showed Museveni and Besigye as political adversaries as well as bitter foes. Museveni launched personal attacks on Besigye, even claiming that his former comrade-in-arms had AIDS. The elections also saw violence with Besigye's supporters being arrested, harassed, and intimidated by state security forces. A parliamentary select committee probing election violence later cited the UPDF as the chief perpetrator of the intimidation in the 2001 presidential elections. The violence and electoral fraud that occurred marred Museveni's re-election as President of Uganda. But perhaps as important for Uganda's political future was that the reputation of Uganda's political leadership was severely tarnished by numerous revelations of corruption in government and military circles.

## **Conclusion**

In Uganda – as in other African countries – military procurement of goods and services as well as military campaigns and operations against rebels have been fraught with corrupt opportunities. The actions of government and army leaders in military affairs have rarely been subject to much public accountability and scrutiny. As a consequence, incentives for military corruption have been high and military matters have been permeated by much fraud, abuse, and criminal behaviour. Corruption scandals have dogged procurement processes as top leaders have used their virtually unfettered discretionary authority to manipulate tenders for private profit. Military operations have also been corruption-prone. Checks on field

commanders have been limited; they have, together with businessmen, engaged in corrupt and criminal actions.

To be sure, parliament and the press in Uganda have sought to hold government and military leaders accountable for their actions in military matters. As in some other African countries, they have undertaken investigations and publicly exposed military wrongdoing. But there are limits to which MPs and journalists can tilt at the windmills of power through revelations of improper defence deals and military abuse. Some have been bought off while others have been harassed and threatened into silence. And not a single army officer, senior civil servant or top government minister (as well as their civilian business associates) has faced prosecution or punishment for their alleged misdeeds.

In addition, local anti-corruption agencies and external donor agencies have been distinguished by their restraint in becoming involved in matters pertaining to the military. Recently, the International Monetary Fund began urging the Ministry of Defence to open up its classified military accounts to scrutiny and audit by parliament. Such scrutiny could have prevented 'losses incurred in defence procurement' which have cost Uganda 'millions of dollars in shady deals' (Mutumba-Lule, 2001). But such audits of defence expenditure have still to be enforced and, in the meantime, abuses in military procurement continue to occur. For instance, in a case similar to that of a few years earlier, proper procedures were not followed in the purchase of army uniforms in 2002, and, as before, the uniforms turned out to be too small for Ugandan soldiers as well as lacking in parts. Moreover, the local press reported recently that Israeli businessman, Amos Golan, 'who is believed to have high-level connections in Kampala' supplied trucks and jeeps to the army, which appear not to have been overhauled and refurbished.

Yet donor pressure on the government to control military corruption is growing. Donors provide one-half of Uganda's budgetary support, and they have obliged the government to consider guidelines for the auditing of classified expenditures. The donors have also been urging the government to make public the reports of the two judicial commissions of inquiry into the helicopter gunships and the smuggling of Congolese resources. In a sudden about-turn in May 2003, which coincided with a consultative group meeting with the donors, the government released the two reports as public documents. Moreover, the donors have been calling for the recommendations of the two commissions to be implemented, and official comments appear to accept this, although there is only faint hope that the government would prosecute the chief culprits. It is apparent therefore that the donors are aware of the problem of military corruption although controlling it will require addressing wider political issues involving the nature of patrimonial authority and executive power in Uganda.

All of Uganda's post-independence governments have experienced high levels of military intervention in government affairs. Not surprisingly, President Yoweri Museveni has sought to exercise close and direct personal supervision over the army to ensure its loyalty to him as well as his NRM government. Thus when Colonel Kiiza Besigye challenged Museveni and the NRM regime as a serving military officer, and indicated he could mobilize a military constituency powerful enough to threaten their hold over political power then he had to be halted. Besigye's presidential bid was forcibly thwarted in 2001, and since then pro-Besigye officers have been weeded out of the UPDF as well as measures undertaken under the guise of professionalizing the army to turn it into a personal and partisan instrument of the Museveni regime.

Corruption has taken place within the context of this personalization of the management of the UPDF. By seeking to bring his personal control over the army, President Museveni has in various ways undermined the institutions that were meant to govern the work of the military. In particular, formal military procurement procedures have been subverted. Military procurement constitutes an important source of financial resources for whoever controls it. Unlike government procurement tenders, which are subject to scrutiny and audit, especially by the International Monetary Fund, military procurement has been classified and highly susceptible to corruption. Through lucrative deals involving massive overpayments, military procurement has provided the financial wherewithal needed to fund the NRM's political patronage system (such as raising money for the president's election campaign) as well as for high ranking army officers and government officials to be rewarded personally for their loyalty to the incumbent regime. Similarly, military operations to combat rebels in northern Uganda and the DRC have constituted an important means of maintaining the loyalty of the military as well as financing the political needs of the NRM. For example, by permitting military officers to exploit illegally mineral interests in the areas in the Congo occupied by their forces as a means of enriching these officers personally as well as obtaining resources for paying for the NRM's political requirements.

Top army officers – including Salim Saleh and James Kazini – and others possessing close ethnic and personal connections to the political leadership – have figured prominently in many of the corrupt deals. They have benefited personally from corrupt actions as well as raised substantial funds for the president's political projects. Military corruption has thus helped to maintain the NRM regime in power. It was therefore not surprising that when Museveni's presidency was challenged in the 2001 elections, many army commanders campaigned openly against Besigye who promised to fight corruption in the military. Many senior army officers were 'particularly sensitive to any threats to prosecute or follow them up for any commissions or omissions under Museveni' (Aliro, 2002). In fact, military corruption and the threats of arrest and prosecution when President Museveni is constitutionally obliged to leave office in 2006 have propelled the current demands to amend the constitution to remove term limits on the presidency. Many senior UPDF officers and top government officials are concerned about a new political leadership coming to power in Uganda, particularly one, which endangers their personal fortunes as well as their patrons in the NRM government.

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## **Endnotes**

1. We have drawn on articles by Mwenda (2000) and Abbey (2001a) as well as the report of the judicial commission of inquiry into the combat helicopters (GOU, 2003) in writing this section.
2. See President/C- in – Chief (UPDF) Yoweri K. Museveni to Minister of State for Defence, 24 October 1996. A copy of this letter is to be found in Appendix No. 12 of Parliament of Uganda (2001).
3. This figure is mentioned in a letter from Yoweri K. Museveni to Minister of State for Defence, 24 December 1998. A copy of this letter is to be found in Appendix No. 5 of Parliament of Uganda (2001). A judicial commission of inquiry into the purchase of the helicopters declared that Salim

Saleh 'exhibited the highest form of greed, self-interest and corruption, the type that is proscribed under the Prevention of Corruption Act 1970' (GOU, 2003).

4. This paragraph is based on evidence presented to the judicial commission of inquiry into alleged exploitation of wealth in the DRC, Kampala, August 2001 as well as its final report (GOU, 2003a).

5. The Victoria Group was another company run by UPDF officers in the DRC to extract diamonds. In its February 2003 report (GOU, 2003a), the judicial commission set up to inquire into Ugandan involvement in the DRC accused James Kazini and a number of his cronies of being linked to the Victoria Group which was a key conduit for smuggling minerals out of the Congo. Referring to Kazini, the commission declared that 'This officer has shamed the name of Uganda', and recommended that disciplinary action be taken against him.

6. See also 'Rot in the Army: DRC Secrets, Mass Fraud, Scapegoats, etc' (memorandum from Concerned UPDF Junior Officers, ND but mid-2000).

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# Uganda: Lessons for AIDS Control in Africa

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**Uganda has the one of the oldest recognised AIDS epidemics. The first people found to be sick with AIDS in 1982 in southwestern Uganda became infected in the mid-1970s. For several years, Uganda has been widely recognised as the first and most dramatic African success story, with estimated national HIV prevalence falling from about 15 per cent in 1992 to 5 per cent in 2001. This is truly good news! As the epidemic proceeds through its third decade, many observers suggest that Uganda's prevention efforts are a model to follow. What is the situation there, and what can we learn from Uganda?**

Studies find that both prevalence and incidence (the rate of new infections) have declined in some areas and among some population segments (tables in Measure Evaluation, 2003). Ugandan health officials recently warned, however, that prevalence is leveling off, and is likely to be climbing among vulnerable groups (Human Rights Watch, 2003b:4). A number of these remain in the 'high prevalence' range in the UNAIDS lexicon, that is, above 5 per cent, with potential for future increase. Conditions of corporeal and structural violence are certain to spread more HIV infection. Recent estimates for northern areas where violence attributed to the Lord's resistance Army and other groups includes rape, abductions of children, and use of girls and women as 'sex slaves' (Human Rights Watch, 2003a) suggest much higher HIV levels. Mass population displacement exacerbates poverty and risk. Although Uganda's economy is growing, particularly in the southwest, most of the population still lives in absolute poverty on less than \$1 per day. Average per capita GDP is just \$280, with wide disparities on the increase. High levels of debt service and military expenditures constrain public investment and social spending; Uganda ranks 147<sup>th</sup> of 175 on the UNDP Human Development scale (UNECA, 2003). These unfavourable conditions make Uganda's success in reducing HIV rates all the more remarkable. Epidemiological and social science research, nevertheless suggest that more needs to be done to consolidate those gains (Parkhurst, 2002).

What has caused HIV rates to decline? Most observers agree that in the 1990s changes in sexual behaviour in Uganda contributed to lower HIV prevalence. Changes include delayed sexual debut among youth, reductions in partner numbers, increased marital fidelity and condom use in what are defined as high-risk encounters.<sup>1</sup> Some change apparently began to occur in the late 1980s, especially, reduction in partner numbers, spurred by social change. In contrast to governments that ignored the looming crisis, President Museveni and the NRM government were open about AIDS from the time they won power and established peace over much of the country in 1986. While

violent predecessor regimes relied upon centralised, corporatist state institutions, the new government fostered a vibrant civil society of voluntary associations that eventually included more than 1,000 AIDS NGOs. The extent of collaborative social mobilisation is unique in Africa. This exemplary openness created an enabling context for change, with debate, dialogue and action. Rising numbers of deaths frightened many people and, along with the policy of openness, led to frank discussion and considerable culture change (see Mukiza-Gapere and Ntozi, 1995).

When did the decrease in new infections begin? Attempts to infer change in incidence from declining prevalence rates are fraught with difficulty. Incidence is most reliably demonstrated by longitudinal data from large cohorts, with blood samples taken over years of research (Konde-Lule, 1995; Wawer, Serwadda, Gray et al., 1996). Only three such series exist for Uganda and just two of these, from the southwestern districts of Rakai and Masaka, are population-based surveys that began in 1989-90. Most data are from urban antenatal surveillance sites and must be greeted with caution, for prevalence may be much higher in population-based surveys (Kilian, Gregson, Ndyabangi et al., 1999). Thus, while incidence may well have declined in the late 1980s, there is no evidence of this prior to 1992 (Mbulaiteye, Mahe, Whitworth et al., 2002).

Epidemiologists working in Rakai District consider that much of the prevalence decline from 1992 is probably explained by 'die-off', an excess deaths over new infections (Wawer, Serwadda, Gray et al., 1996). Similarly, in rural Masaka, Mulder and colleagues noted the very high death rates due to HIV (Mulder, Nunn, Kamali et al., 1994). Die-off also may explain much of the recent decreases in prevalence in areas affected later.

Both anthropologists and epidemiologists proposed that social and cultural change would have led to lower risk. Rape of women by soldiers, common in the late 1970s and early 1980s, ended with the NRM victory. Increased social stability, and decline in the *magendo* (smuggling) trade probably contributed to reduction in sexual risk, including reduced commercial sex and partner numbers (Obbo, 1989; Bond and Vincent 1991; Serwadda, Wawer, Musgrave et al., 1992; Serwadda, Sewankambo, Mugerwa et al., 1995). Still, in the early years many continued to engage in risky behaviours.

What types of preventive action have stimulated the *most* change, however, is at issue, for there are no data to provide rigorous answers. In this article I ask: What has *not* changed? What are some outstanding obstacles to further reductions in HIV spread? Who are the people least able to exercise protective agency and what are some possible solutions? The context of my concern is a human rights-based approach to AIDS prevention, focused on unequal relations of gender, age and class. In addition to published studies, I include ethnographic data collected in February to April 1992, when I served as an AIDS planning consultant to UNICEF in Kampala, and excerpts from recent interviews. Research in Kinshasa as Director of the CONNAISSIDA Project (1985-1990) provides a comparative focus.

## **The Condom Debate**

The politicised world of AIDS has generated its own alphabet of acronyms, one of which is the ABCs of prevention advice. A is for 'Abstinence', B is for 'Be faithful', C is for 'Condoms', a three-pronged strategy promoted to reduce sexual transmission. While biomedical researchers, WHO and UNAIDS have advocated for an ABC

approach to HIV prevention, moralists, North and South, have opposed condom education on the grounds (entirely without evidence) that knowledge of condom protection fosters 'immorality' and 'sexual promiscuity.' Seidel (1993) and Lyons (1997) analyse earlier discursive struggles in Uganda between the moralising of religious conservatives and biomedical advice.

Similar struggles continue to be waged in the United States around reproductive health issues, with the religious right opposed to safer sex, abortion rights and stem-cell research. Their political strength in the Bush administration has affected US foreign policy. Despite US reviews by the Surgeon General and the Institute of Medicine that recommend elimination of public funding of abstinence-only education, religious conservatives in the US renewed their attack on condom promotion worldwide. At a 30-nation ministerial meeting of the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in Bangkok in December 2002:

*US officials demanded the deletion of a reference to 'consistent condom use' to fight HIV/AIDS and other STDs, and issued an official statement that because 'condoms are simply not 100 per cent effective, [the United States government] promotes abstinence for the unmarried and fidelity for those who are married' as its primary STD prevention strategy (Alan Guttmacher Institute, press release, 25 March 2003).*

After a battle this year, Congress earmarked one-third of international prevention funds for abstinence-only education. President Bush also reinstated a 'gag rule' that eliminates funding for reproductive health providers who offer abortion information using *other, non-US government* funds, thereby ensuring that poor women will be even less likely than before to obtain HIV prevention advice, as well as contraceptive services that can save their lives.

This political context frames debate among anthropologists about 'What Really Happened in Uganda?' Edward Green (2003a), a frequent consultant to USAID, and recently named to the President's AIDS Advisory Council, told the US Congress that religious leaders and faith-based organisations (FBOs) played the major role in the unique 'Ugandan solution' to sexual risk reduction. Green downplayed the role of condoms in Uganda's ABC approach, convinced that HIV incidence began to decline, primarily due to reduction in partner numbers, prior to the national prevention campaign. Green objected that condoms are disliked by Ugandans, are little used and not 100 per cent effective. He termed advice to use condoms a western, technological solution inappropriately exported to Africa, and opposed both condoms and drugs, in favour of 'behavioural change', as though A and B, as well as C, did not require structural and cultural, as well as behavioural change. An Op Ed piece in the *New York Times* (Green, 2003b) attracted attention, and lively debate ensued.<sup>2</sup>

Green is cited by conservatives attempting to dictate policy from a moralist agenda. Several Ugandan AIDS specialists responded. Sophie Wacasa-Monico (2003), a former director of the widely heralded AIDS Support Organisation (TASO), founded in 1987, also testified to Congress:

*I am deeply concerned when I hear people taking a single element of our successful national program – for instance abstinence – out of context and ascribe all our achievements to that one element. They must all be implemented together in order for prevention to work.<sup>3</sup>*

Dr. David Serwadda, a prominent AIDS researcher, and Director of the Institute of Public Health at Makerere, wrote in *The Washington Post*:<sup>4</sup>

*As a physician who has been involved in Uganda's response to AIDS for 20 years, I fear that one small part of what led to Uganda's success – promoting sexual abstinence [and faithfulness] – is being overemphasized in policy debates. While abstinence has played an important role in Uganda, it has not been a magic bullet ... We must not forget that abstinence is not always possible for people at risk ... Many women simply do not have the option to delay initiation of sex or to limit their number of sexual partners (Serwadda, 2003).*

The debate continues, for not only is it impossible to rank the factors that have led to reduced incidence, but ideology often trumps data. I hope to show that support for organisations that promote A and B exclusively is unwise and constitutes a violation of the human rights protocols of international law.

## **Gender, Class & Age**

Gender inequality, poverty and powerlessness were risk factors from the outset. Early analysts of these issues in Uganda include Kisekka (1990), Obbo (1991, 1993a,b, 1995); McGrath, Rwabukwali, Schumann and colleagues (1993), Seidel (1993), and Lyons (1997). Many men blamed women for spreading HIV while denying their own role.

Poor sex workers and their clients are the most vulnerable, but in areas with high background prevalence there are no special 'risk groups'. Epidemiological studies confirmed what women in Rakai District told Obbo: the biggest risk to *most* women is from their husbands, and to girls, from older men (Obbo, 1991). Obbo suggested that risk would follow class lines for men as well as for women, which turned out to be the case (Seeley, Malamba, Nunn et al., 1991). While incidence remained stable in Masaka villages in 1990-1992, those most likely to acquire HIV infection were young women 20-24, and non-Baganda men age 20-44, resident in the sampled compounds for less than 10 years (Kengeya-Kayondo, Kamali, Nunn et al., 1996). I infer this to indicate that, in this area of restricted land access, the most vulnerable men probably were landless, mobile agricultural workers, many too poor to found families, and likely to be clients of the poorest sex workers with the highest HIV prevalence.

Until the late 1990s, infection prevalence and incidence were greatest in young women, due to their increased biological and social vulnerability. This awareness prompted many organisations to take up the National AIDS Control Programme (ACP)/UNICEF<sup>5</sup> recommendation to bring young people to delay entry into sexual relations, and to abstain until marriage. Decreasing prevalence among adolescents is taken to represent lower incidence of new infections, since most might not have been infected long enough to die. Young people told survey interviewers in the late 1990s that they delayed their sexual debut by about a year when compared with 1989. In three urban areas, reported change was more marked, including a two-year delay in sexual debut by 1985 (Asiimwe-Okiror, Opio, Musinguzi et al., 1997). Even if this is not simply a socially acceptable response, it means that half are having sex by 17.5 years, and some begin quite young.

The Ministry of Education, with UNICEF support, introduced a 'family life' curriculum component in government schools in 1989, with sex education stressing abstinence. No mention was made of condoms due to unfounded assertions that this knowledge would encourage youth to become sexually active. The majority of young people *already* were sexually active by 16.5 years, and many began at very young ages. Recent ethnographic research finds 'discrepancies in what school pupils learn and their lived experience of sex'; their risk continues (Olsen, 2002; Kirumira, 2002). Many

girls, especially those from poor families, do not have a choice. Some are coerced by relatives and guardians, and harassed by teachers and older boys. Wealthy 'sugar daddies' offer inducements such as school fees, clothes, transport and treats that poor parents cannot afford (Nyanzi, Pool and Kinsman 2000). AIDS orphans are especially susceptible (Guest, 2001). Fending off advances at school is experienced as psychologically stressful, and absorbs considerable energy (Kirumira, 2002). Older men are more likely to be infected and, in turn seek young girls whom they perceived to be free of HIV. This is evidenced in the epidemiology which showed HIV rates in adolescent girls 3-6 times greater than in boys of the same age.

Reported successful in some areas, especially among girls in secondary school, abstinence protects young women in the years that they abstain. Rupture of the hymen at first intercourse offers a portal of entry for the virus at whatever age. Most will be married to older men, many as second wives. Thus unless adult prevalence is greatly reduced, adolescent women may simply postpone their risk of infection. Despite mass campaigns that began in 1986, national surveys conducted in 1999-2001 found that just 28 per cent of women showed 'sufficient knowledge to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS' (UNICEF 2003:4).

Some 1.5 million Ugandans already may be living with the virus. Only about five per cent actually have been tested and know their HIV status (Epstein, 2001). Estimates of 'discordant couples' among whom only one partner is infected range from 7 to 20 per cent of those 'living maritally', while many more are in 'regular' partnerships of varying duration. Epidemiologists eventually made this explicit, although without mention of the C-word. *'Prevention education should emphasize that any unprotected intercourse, except for mutually monogamous couples with known seronegative status should be considered high risk, particularly in the trading centers'* (Serwadda, Wawer, Musgrave et al., 1992:989, my italics). The next section examines the consequences of policy failures by considering epidemiological evidence of marital risk in Uganda.

## HIV in Marriage

The significance of gender power relations emerges from epidemiological studies of discordant couples. District-wide prevalence in people 13 years and older was about 12 per cent at baseline in 1990, and 33 per cent in the trading towns in Rakai. Nearly 19 per cent of couples had at least one seropositive member in 1990, and nearly half of all men reported two or more sexual partners in the preceding year. Sixty-six per cent of married women whose husbands absented themselves trading or working were seropositive. This rate was similar to that among single women, whereas forty per cent of widowed, divorced and separated women were infected (Konde-Lule, 1995; Serwadda, Gray, Wawer et al., 1995). The gender difference in incidence of new adult infections was substantial: 1.4 per cent of men and 3.1 per cent of women became infected in each of those years, *even as overall prevalence declined*. Incidence did not begin to decline until 1993. Still, in the late 1990s, towns in Rakai District registered 12 per cent of the HIV negative partners became infected.

A study at Kampala's Mulago Hospital found that only 12 per cent of spouses of hospitalised seropositive men were aware of their husbands' HIV+ status (Baingana, Choi, Barrett et al., 1995). Many must have suspected, however, since they stated that they needed to be tested. Despite this, only 5 per cent actually took the test. In Masaka and Rakai Districts, research subjects were offered free counseling, but only 10-20 per cent of seropositive persons in discordant relationships came to the project offices to learn their test results. With AIDS perceived as a death sentence, many do not want to

know. Men often denied that they were the source of wives' infection, refused dialogue with their partners and refused testing. Even after post-test counseling, husbands are more likely to protect themselves from HIV positive wives than the reverse. Seronegative men were likely to repudiate wives when their infection became known, generally because the wife was tested when an infant fell sick with AIDS. Researchers in Masaka found that husbands tended to die first, indicating that they were likely to have been infected earlier than wives. 'Men are twice as likely as women to bring HIV infection into a marriage, presumably through extra-marital sexual behaviour', and women became infected twice as fast as men married to seropositive women (Carpenter, Kamali, Ruberantwari et al., 1999:1083). Discordant couples showed more than twice as much widowhood, separation and divorce as seronegative couples. Male informants in Rakai in 1992 (and in Kinshasa in 1986-1990) said that men die first 'because women are stronger and more able to resist' the ravages of the virus. Some said that this was because menstrual bleeding rids women's bodies of 'bad blood' (field notes, Kasensero, March 1992). This is an old notion recorded by ethnographers elsewhere in east and central Africa. Another old notion re-cycled in the context of AIDS is that elders can rid themselves of impurities accumulated in the blood by having sex with a young, healthy person.

Contrary to a common belief among social scientists, a 1989-90 survey in Kampala and Jinja found that polygynous marriage does not protect women from infection with HIV and other STIs (Carael, Ali and Cleland, 2001). In 1992, leaders of a Muslim women's group in Mbale, Uganda's third largest city, perceived that they were at risk because their husbands had multiple partners (BGS interviews March 1992). About one-third of marriages in Uganda were polygynous according to a 1988-89 survey. While many of these husbands are Muslims circumcised prior to puberty, and therefore might be assumed to be at low risk, circumcision does not protect Muslim men in rural Masaka who drink alcohol (Mbulaiteye, Ruberantwari, Nakiyingi et al., 2000). These men drank in bars where inexpensive casual sex is part of the 'scene' and condom use is low. Alcohol consumption is a risk factor, both for male patrons and for the young women who serve them; men are less likely to use condoms when drunk. While I found no other studies linking alcohol and HIV risk from Uganda, research in Harare demonstrates the links (Mataure, McFarland, Fritz et al., 2002; Fritz, Woelk, Bassett et al., 2002).

Since this review was drafted, a report issued by Human Rights Watch, entitled *Just Die Quietly: Domestic Violence and Women's Vulnerability to HIV in Uganda*, (HRW 2003b), provides interview data on spousal violence and shows how laws and practices that fail to protect the right of women and girls to bodily integrity place them at risk for HIV in this high prevalence region. A study in Rakai District discovered that men who know that they are HIV-positive are more likely to beat their partners than those who do not (Koenig, Lutalo, Feng et al., 2003). Wife-beating is *not* the norm for Africans; for example, in Rwanda it is considered very bad form (interviews, 1987). Nevertheless, seropositive men may take out their anger on partners, especially when drunk. A Kigali study found that 33 per cent of wives with HIV-infected partners reported violence, while only 18 per cent of those with seronegative partners did (van der Straten, King, Grinstead et al., 1995). Risk was related to women's economic powerlessness and low educational attainment, and to men's alcohol consumption.

A majority of both men and women responding to the Rakai survey condoned domestic violence as a 'traditional' practise (Koenig, Lutalo, Zhao et al., 2003). Although forced sex, or 'marital rape,' were not among the listed choices of types of

violence incurred, 17 per cent of women said that refusal of sex was a motive for beatings by husbands. Violence is associated with low educational attainment and husbands' alcohol consumption, both of which are 'risk factors' for HIV infection. Thirty-four of 50 HIV+ women interviewed by Lisa Karanja for the Human Rights Watch report (HRW, 2003a:25) described forced, unprotected sex, while service providers described the practice as 'rampant'. Some husbands insisted on condomless sex even when quite ill. At this time, viral load is likely to be high, facilitating HIV transmission in regular intercourse. Risk to an uninfected partner increases progressively, as 'transmission efficiency' increases with increasing viral load (Quinn, Wawer, Sewankambo et al., 2002).

With up to half of all new infections in Uganda due to infection by steady partners, this is ignored by many FBOs. Instead, discourse about fidelity assures faithful women that they are protected. Not all churches have done this, either in Kinshasa or in Uganda. But many churches and lay elites *did*, and their political power, has contributed to women's risk. Protection of 'regular partners' also has been absent from *most* AIDS prevention interventions, apart from those by TASO volunteers and counselors at HIV testing centres.

## Resistance to Condoms

By now most Africanists have heard the *bons mots* of men's resistance to condoms. Even men who had never tried using them asserted: 'It's like taking a shower in a raincoat', or 'like eating a sweet with the wrapper on', referring to diminished sensation. The uphill battle to introduce condom protection in Africa is not only due to cultural preference for 'skin-to-skin' contact. Evaluation of responses to prevention messages conducted in 1991 in other areas of Uganda found the vast majority of respondents highly skeptical of the practicality of A and B. At the same time, they reported widespread fear of condoms, apparently due to falsehoods spread by some churches, and low condom use, even with casual partners (Uganda MOH, 1991). One rumour reported by focus groups in Rakai, is that condoms can slip off inside a woman during sex and will remain, causing infection and sterility (Konde-Lule, Musagara and Musgrave 1993). Another is that condoms spread AIDS. A third, encountered in visit to a Catholic boys' school in Rakai, is that because the strong taste of *pilipili* pepper can pass through the latex, the HIV can pass, as well (field notes, April, 1992).

Similar objections were encountered in Kinshasa, Dar, Abidjan, Bamako. The ubiquity of these rumors led me to suspect deliberate disinformation countering medical advice spread to reinforce resistance to condoms. Catholic, evangelical and Muslim clerics in Masaka continue to speak of AIDS as 'the wages of sin', and many elders believe that condoms and sex education 'send people down deep into adultery' (Mitchell, Nakamanya, Kamali et al., 2002:212). Many sexually active youth still lack access to condoms and those attending Catholic schools are especially misinformed (Kinsman, Nakiyingi, Kamali and Whitworth, 2001). Farrell (2003) confirms that Catholic clergy continue to spread disinformation using a series of scientific-sounding objections.

In addition to active discouragement, other social factors interfere with acceptance. International epidemiologists advised condoms be targeted to sex workers and their clients, 'core transmitters' with high levels of infection who would spread infection to more than one other person. This is *technically* correct on a population basis – or would have been had high status men with multiple partners also been targeted – at

the outset of the epidemic. By the time AIDS prevention campaigns got under way, however, the epidemic already had broken out into the 'general population'. Focus on prostitution resonated with earlier STD campaigns that promoted condoms as 'protection for men against infected women.' Green (*AN*, 2003) is concerned only about population-level prevention, and dismisses stigmatisation of condoms as a non-issue. However, this association has been a hindrance in many countries, as it increased stigma in marginalised groups and gave many people false reassurance that they are not at risk with partners they define as 'regular'. A young woman in Rakai told Konde-Lule and colleagues:

*If you ask someone to use a condom, he will think that you are very loose or that you are a prostitute and he will go away (1993:681). Introduced in marriage, the request to use condoms, whether by men or women, raises suspicion of infidelity (Kaleeba, 1991).*

*Repositioning condoms as a sign of concern rather than distrust is a tremendous challenge ... especially when many health workers share the same attitudes about condoms (McCombie, 1990:8).*

The problem of prevention in steady relationships in which one partner is (or both are) infected, is complicated by the desire for children. Young brides are expected to conceive rapidly. Not only couples are involved in such decisions, as considerable family pressures may be brought to bear on women to remain married, especially when bridewealth is involved, and for couples to keep on producing children for the lineage. Nevertheless, 23 per cent of Ugandan women report using modern contraceptive technology (UNICEF, 2003), most probably for birth spacing. A nurse in a women's group run by CONNAISSIDA in Kinshasa suggested that couples could use condoms to space births, abandon them when conception was desired, then resume condom use during gestation, lactation, and so on until they desired a new child. The unprotected period could be shortened by targeting the woman's mid-cycle 'fertile period' for non-use. Imperfect protection, the women agreed, is better than no protection at all.

### **Condom Promotion: A Contested Terrain**

ABC was not a unique Ugandan response. Youth abstinence, partner reduction and women's empowerment were components of *international* prevention policy. I drafted the UNICEF/Tanzania's strategic AIDS plan in September-October 1991, the worldwide plan in New York in November/December 1991 and the Uganda plan in February-April 1992. The plans framed AIDS as a development issue and contained all these elements, although, bowing to Vatican pressure, UNICEF downplayed condom education for youth.

The silencing of women and youth was not only a Ugandan problem, but an international one. Not all churches opposed condoms for adults, but many religious and lay leaders *did* maintain this position. In 1987 the Catholic Archdiocese of Kinshasa advised that: 'If you can't abstain, use a condom.' However, on a visit to Africa, the Pope reiterated a ban on condoms, silencing African church officials, and UNICEF, mindful of the Catholic presence on its Governing Board, pursued abstinence only communication. Conservative religious influence made Uganda's National AIDS Control Programme reluctant to conduct vigorous condom outreach and slowed the pace of change. In the early 1990s President Museveni spoke of abstinence and fidelity but still opposed condom publicity (see speech excerpts in Lyons 1992). Eventually, however, the ground shifted. President Museveni overcame

his own religious scruples. He made the difficult choice to allow wider condom promotion by government health educators at national, district and country levels and by many NGOs (Okware, Opio, Musinguzi and Waibale, 2001), despite the power of conservative religious leaders that made the choice risky (Kiwanuka, 2003). One story recounted in Kampala was that President Castro informed Museveni that one-third of NRA officers sent to Cuba for training in 1987 were found to have HIV infection. In 1991, US researchers apparently showed Museveni data that placed prevalence in the army over 60 per cent (Dr. Maryinez Lyons, personal communication, Kampala, March 1992). He embraced AIDS as a security issue, and ordered the military to hold mandatory sex education classes with condom demonstrations. Kiwanuka (2003) recounts:

*Museveni was shown population growth projections comparing the situation with and without deaths from AIDS if HIV continued to spread unabated in Uganda. They say he was staggered by the implications: his army, the police force, the teachers – all institutions – would be decimated. The cost in human life could not be ignored; despite his own religious conservatism, he went on national media shortly afterwards to say that we had a serious problem and to endorse condom use.*

Condom social marketing soon got under way in the cities, with outreach to men in industries and those 'on the move' in the roadside towns along the Trans-African highway (McCombie, 1990). Some NGOs offered explicit sex education, even to youth, and have promoted condoms as part of their programmes. Volunteers from The AIDS Support Organisation (TASO), formed by people affected by AIDS in 1987, went to their communities with prevention information, telling their own stories and providing condom demonstrations. TASO's first director, Noerine Kaleeba (1991:59-61), describes ways that enabled some women to talk about sex and condoms with husbands in a non-confrontational manner with considerable success.

Creative new approaches were used in the mass media. A newsletter called *Straight Talk* circulated explicit, comprehensive information about sexual and reproductive health to older adolescents from 1993, and sponsored radio talk shows that provided answers to questions posed by young people. The editor said: 'Later we launched *Young Talk* for 10-14 year olds and posted it to every primary school. After a couple of months we sent a package of back issues to the Minister of Education, who's now the Prime Minister, explaining what we do. He wrote back saying he was proud to be involved' (Catharine Watson quoted in Guest, 2001:8).

## **Increasing Condom Use/ Continuing Risk**

As time went on and the toll among teens became known, several Protestant churches in addition to the Anglicans, and even some Catholic religious and lay leaders used the ABC approach in outreach to youth. Emphasis on abstinence and faithful monogamy for both partners was tempered by realism. Reluctance to use condoms has abated in many areas across the continent in population segments generally recognised to be at very high risk. Reported condom use with casual partners rose to 40 per cent among men and 30 per cent among women, nationally, but use with regular partners was very low (DHS surveys of 1995 and 2000 reported in Macintyre, Brown and Sosler, 2001; Singh, Darroch and Bankole, 2003; Measure Evaluation, 2003).

Social acceptability is paramount. While many do not use them consistently, in Bwaise, a poor quarter off Kampala, young, single men whose peers also were users

### **A UNICEF planning visit in 1992 afforded many opportunities to listen to views 'from below'**

Some young people who became aware of their risks were open to experimentation with condom protection. Elders, however, often viewed their sexual activity as illegitimate and therefore, best ignored. At a meeting in Kisenyi, a poor, Swahili-speaking quarter of Kampala, held at the invitation of the Resistance Council (RC-I) Chairman, several elder women objected that making condoms available to youth would encourage them to 'play sex.' One of the teachers assisting Maryinez Lyons asked: *All these children we see in the bushes of the vacant land between this place and downtown Kampala, should they be left to die?* While the vigorous discussion went on, I silently unrolled a condom on my forearm and demonstrated how to leave space at the tip. The gesture, taught to me by Mme. Chirwisa, Director of the Zaire Family Planning Programme in the mid-1980s, demonstrates extensibility of the latex barrier, thereby removing one of men's common objections, and seems more acceptable than the wooden penis used by other projects.

With the authorisation of the RC-I chairman, I had left boxes of condoms by the open rear door. When I gestured to invite them to help themselves, boys and young men grabbed handfuls and scarpereed. We hoped that the demonstration and supplies would familiarise them with their use. This too-brief 1992 meeting was the first opportunity community members had had for face-to-face information, problem-posing and debate with informed professionals.

The RC-5 (Member of Parliament) for Rakai District, the Hon. Emanuel Pinto, took me on tour of his constituency in the high-prevalence district. As members of the grandparent age group, we had no difficulty talking about sex and AIDS. Visits to two Catholic boys' secondary schools led to vigorous discussion with teachers and students. They asked about the many negative rumours they had heard about condoms. Pinto asked me to demonstrate the condom on my arm, knowing that this would provoke laughter and remove one objection before it could be voiced. Because school principals and some teachers were unalterably opposed to condoms, instead of handing out samples, we left the boxes at the open door of the Pajero for the driver to distribute (BGS field notes, April 1992). All supplies vanished.

The officiating woman minister at Kampala's Church of Uganda (Anglican) cathedral spoke of 'ABC' protection, with condoms as a last resort as life-savers for people at risk in March 1992. That same week, I was asked to accompany a lay activist couple who sought a UNICEF grant for an abstinence-only youth programme on a site visit to Mbale, Uganda's third largest town. The husband stated the while married couples could use condoms for contraception, their use by unmarried couples would be 'immoral'. A visit to a church-sponsored sewing class for out-of-school adolescent women was too brief and too formal to break through the students' denial of risk. Most of the young women reported that they had older male friends whom they hoped would marry them. They had not thought about the men's other (previous and concurrent) partners. Still, the wife denied the need for condom education.

A meeting arranged with a small group of leaders of a Muslim women's group sparked animated discussion. My companion was surprised to hear participants make assessments of their own and their daughters' risky situations. They did not share the illusion that their own fidelity would protect them. Most were married to long distance traders and drivers several years older than themselves who had multiple wives, and some believed their husbands visited bars during their travels. The women expressed powerlessness to address safer sex with their men. When one stated that it was high time for Muslim clerics to take on the task of bringing men to protect their wives, a chorus of agreement followed. They decided to go to the clerics in the company of a physician (field notes, March 1992).

were reported most knowledgeable and were the most likely consumers of safer sex (Kamya, McFarland, Hudes et al., 1997). What about reduction in partner numbers? Some young men there reported they foreswore casual encounters entirely, although decline was not significant in men aged 20-24. Women of that age group reported *more* rather than fewer, partners, however.

A recent study of sex workers in Kampala reported nearly 100 per cent condom use with clients (but not with 'regular partners'), while use reported by truckers, traders and the military was found significant. In rural Masaka in 1999, where the research project undertook prevention experiments from 1994, nearly 60 per cent of men and 38 per cent of women in their *rural* cohort who said they had 'non-regular partners' reported using a condom with their last contact (Kamali, Carpenter, Grover et al., 2000).

Sexual diaries kept by women who sold sex in a Masaka trading town in 1998-1999, however, indicated low and inconsistent condom use (Gysels, Pool and Nalusiba, 2002). The women recounted histories of rape, marital instability and lack of partner support for children. Not all women were economically powerless. Some successful businesswomen with bars on the main road can refuse marriage, select their clients, charge higher prices and negotiate condoms with casual partners. Very poor sex workers could not negotiate condoms, partly because they needed each fee they could get. Many had gone in and out of unsatisfactory marriages in an effort to garner support and avoid abuse. The researchers found differences among the men willing to use condoms. Truckers, who had been targeted with condom education all along the Trans-African Highway, were likely to carry their own. With money to spend, they were preferred clients of the entrepreneurial women, and some become 'regular partners'. Poor local clients of the very poor women renting back-street rooms were notably reluctant to use protection. The researchers also identified an intermediate 'class' of sex workers with higher incomes and more frequent, but inconsistent condom use. These interviews were not linked to HIV prevalence data, but other studies show the highest risk is found among the poorest women with the most unprotected episodes, and among their poor clients.

Economic empowerment may not result in negotiating strength in sexual relationships that women wish to maintain. Despite differences in negotiating strength with casual partners, none, not even the 'high class' entrepreneurial women negotiated condom protection with those whom they defined as 'regular partners', all of whom were men with other partners. It is not clear whether these women believed that they were not at risk in these relationships, whether they felt unable to negotiate condoms due to the 'trust' and 'respectability' issues, or whether a combination of these left them in denial. The idea that women have to trust their regular partner remains pervasive. 'Trust is the thing that has exposed most women to HIV – and some men ...' (Kaleeba in Guest, 2001). Gysels and colleagues found that in regular partnerships, condoms were 'acceptable only for family planning,' but they apparently did not make use of this opportunity in their interventions.

Many processes contributed to break down denial, especially among elites. Talking about sexual relationships and AIDS, instead of hiding behind euphemisms, represents a marked cultural change from the taboos mandated by missionaries in the last century. People exercised agency in various ways and to varying degrees, some of which are explored in the next section.

## The Process of Culture Change

Multi-faceted, multi-sectoral social mobilisation took place once the danger became recognised. Sexual risk was discussed in mass media, among peers, and even among some parents and children. High awareness of personal vulnerability and knowledge of ways to avoid infection found fertile ground in critical reflection. Especially among the better-educated and better-off, many made determined efforts to change.

Recent interviews with Ugandan professionals and small business people, some of whom who travel annually between Boston and Kampala, and others conducted on e-mail, indicate that a sea-change has occurred. It is possible for these couples to talk about sex and relationships in ways they could not have imagined a decade earlier. Some, but not all, young adults are faithful to one partner, at least for as long as the relationship lasts. Condoms are now culturally acceptable among many educated, young, employed men and women. They may be used among engaged couples until they take an HIV test prior to marriage and vows of mutual fidelity. This is a strategy for those who have steady incomes and access to testing. Some excerpts illustrate the process of change.

**Following the death of Philly Lutaya, a popular musician who had gone public about his HIV status, urban young people began to take AIDS seriously.** *At first, when Philly first went public, we didn't believe him, one man recalls. We thought he was paid to say he had AIDS in order to scare us young people from playing sex. We only believed AIDS was real after his death. Until that time, we thought it was 'an American Invention to Discourage Sex' (interview, Boston, May 2003).*

**HIV testing is used by steady couples. A young musician whose many cousins have died of AIDS, wrote from Kampala:**

*I have a girlfriend called Sophie. A week ago we went for our last AIDS test, and that's when we stopped using condoms after using them for a year (our relationship is one year old). As a musician, I am very cautious with my life because so many of our musicians have died of AIDS, and, personally, I lost my own mentor to AIDS. So I am very cautious. He talked to me before he died and warned me never to go out with any girl who makes a move [on me] when I am onstage (e-mail, June 2003).*

**A man in his twenties wrote from Kampala:**

*This is very confidential. We lost our dad to AIDS ... Mum always talked to me about AIDS and how our dad died ... That is still fresh in my mind though it is over ten years now. That explains why I am strict with my life ... I believe in having one girl at a go ... About my friends: guys here have more than one girl but they always have condoms. One friend we nicknamed 'ambulance' because he always has condoms in his wallet, he says for emergency. One time he joked 'for emergency call, because I am always there to save your lives.' So, condoms are sold in every clinic, in supermarkets, shops and hawkers have them. Prostitutes in Kampala charge a condom fee if you don't have one (e-mail, Kampala, June 2003).*

**Some people talked about marital fidelity, and about condoms for family planning. Some undoubtedly responded to religious preachments but there is no evidence that moral interdictions were a major part of 'the Ugandan solution'. I asked an informant thirty-year old professional man in living in Boston, raised as a Catholic, whose most recent visit to Kampala was at Christmas 2002, if religious teachings have been helpful? He replied:**

*Churches that forbid condoms have been the biggest stumbling block with respect to AIDS control (e-mail, Boston, May 2003; his mother is a lay Catholic social worker who promotes condoms to youth).*

**A University-educated small businessman in Boston, who visited Kampala and his sugar plantation in Buganda from December, 2002 to February, 2003, reported:**

*The situation has changed. It has become acceptable to discuss such issues. The condom campaigns have helped a lot ... condoms have made the big difference, especially in the last five years. When we began to hear about them then, people said 'No way.' But then so many began dying... Men [now] use condoms with girlfriends and casual partners, and some even use them with their wives... Girls use them with steady boyfriends. They tell them it's healthier for contraception. BGS: Do they suspect the men of having*

**other partners?** *They hope they'll be faithful, but it's human nature...so they don't count on it. BGS: Do men accept that a girl asks them to use a condom?* *Of course they do. It's now considered obscene not to use a condom. If someone says he doesn't use one? Oh, no. People ask their friends: 'How could you do that? You can't be sure.'*

**BGS: Do Adventists say AIDS comes from sin?** *Yes, they do, but gently. That's not what I believe. They tell people to wait until marriage, get a test, stay faithful. Full stop. They do not say, 'If you can't do that, go and use a condom.' I'm telling you that if there were no condoms, everyone would be dead by now! From the schools on down, people are well educated and feel comfortable asking...'*

**BGS: What's best for youth?** *It's best to preach using a condom if you play sex. There's too much denial about. You can't tell them not to have sex, not to want to because no matter what, young guys and girls will play sex; they just won't tell you they are doing it.*

*The trouble with this church thing is that finally there is no embarrassment about condoms, not in the city. But if those preachers have their way, nobody would talk about them, and use would go down. AIDS isn't finished in Uganda, not yet (interview, Boston, May 2003).*

As we found in Kinshasa, some women found they could introduce the subject of condoms to male partners with talk about contraception. This removes the trust issue that interferes with AIDS prevention dialogues among committed couples. With acute awareness of HIV risk, some men have acquiesced without making explicit their past or present multiple partner liaisons, or defensively accusing female partners of infidelity, as so often happens when the full situation is invoked. Multiple partners are no longer a status marker for these men; instead, they have chosen stable relationships and faithful monogamy.

Several informants suggested class differences. Change lags among the poor and in rural communities. Two contrasted the situation prevailing in their middle class networks with that of poor young women in Kampala who seek sexual partners for material support and for access to 'modern' urban entertainment. The class differences incorporate different versions of 'modernity.' The sense of empowerment that has become part of elite young women's identity resonates with other cultural changes linked to both national and global processes. For poor girls, going to a disco and getting a few gifts are about all the modernity they can manage. Some wealthy men still enact their entitlement by consuming the sexuality of multiple women partners.

## Other Changes

Funerals have been shortened and fewer people attend, in order to lessen the expense. In some places they are held during daylight hours, and disco dances are prohibited, as ways of reducing casual sex. Some communities have eliminated traditional widow inheritance on the assumption that husbands who died must have had AIDS and, therefore, their widows are infected. Widows, who then lose their homes and access to land, must find ways to fend for themselves and any children they are allowed to retain. Many migrate to towns where sex work is their only recourse. Kisekka (1990), writing of the late 1990s, pointed to an increased level of domestic violence inflicted by men whose wives succeeded in persuading them to curtail their extra-marital adventures. In other words, responses are in flux, with some positive changes, and others that may have unforeseen negative consequences, particularly for women.

In response to advocacy by women members of the NRM, the government took a number of measures to raise the status of women. These included political leadership

roles for a few, including high visibility positions as cabinet ministers and representatives in Parliament; economic enfranchisement by means of micro-credit schemes for some; and free primary education that increased opportunities for many girls. Keeping all children in school, and teaching the biology of sex and reproduction are crucial, especially since much traditional lore on these subjects interferes with new learning. Apart from fees, however, all other expenses, including uniforms, shoes, supplies and lunches must be provided by the family. Despite notable improvement in enrollment (92 per cent of boys and 83 per cent of girls), only 45 per cent of pupils reached grade 5 in 1999 (UNICEF, 2003). Poor girls' heavy domestic duties, generally far greater than those of their brothers, often limits their actual school attendance, and keeps them from advancing through the grades. Girls whose parents are sick or who are orphaned are most vulnerable. Just 9 per cent of girls and 15 per cent of boys graduated from secondary schools, where fees of US\$30 and more are common (UNECA, 2003). Graduates are the people most likely to live in circumstances that allow them to exercise agency to change their sexual behaviour. Nyanzi, Pool and Kinsman (2000) show how conditions rooted in both 'traditional' and contemporary gender socialization combine to create conditions of high vulnerability.

A study in Fort Portal shows the class differential. Adolescent women in school reported that they began having sex later than their peers in previous years. No delay was reported by unschooled girls, however, nor was seroprevalence lower in this group. Seroprevalence fell most among those with secondary education, who in previous years had been more at risk of infection from older men (Kilian, Gregson, Ndyabangi et al., 1999). A study of young Zambian women underscores the link between changing HIV prevalence and class as, 'prominent decline in prevalence was associated with higher education, stable or rising prevalence with low education' (Fylkesnes, Musonda, Sichone et al., 2001). The researchers conclude that while efforts must continue to further the ongoing process of change in well-educated segments of the population, *much more must be done to avert infection in the most deprived and vulnerable groups.*

One vulnerable segment that has not been researched to my knowledge in Uganda is that of migrant and resident plantation workers, where structural violence increases HIV risk. Uganda had considerable labour migrancy during the colonial period, and export agriculture, the major foreign exchange earner, employs hundreds of thousands of workers today. In 1992, the labour intensive sugar plantations, tea and coffee estates, food and flower farms paid wages too low to support families, and workers generally were abysmally housed. Lonely and separated from their families, migrant men may resort to sex with casual partners, who are often young women migrants or seasonal workers from surrounding rural communities whose wages are even lower. I doubt very much that conditions on the large farms have changed much since my 1992 visit.

Preaching abstinence and fidelity may work with *some* people in this situation, but *most others* need more creative condom campaigns, STI treatment and free condoms as attractively packaged as the social marketing brands that cost about 1,000 U/sh, equivalent to about US\$0.70, as much if not more than a day's pay for a farm worker. They also need facilitated discussions of risk and relationships, and practice in negotiating protected sexual encounters. Raising wages and providing benefits in the export sector is contrary to Structural Adjustment (SAP) recommendations, however, and contrary, also, to the interests of the local bourgeoisie and foreign investoss. This brief review helps to illuminate contradictions between structure and agency in Uganda, and points the way to the need for further change.

## New Prevention Needs

It has taken time for policy makers to come to terms with the facts of a generalised epidemic, one not limited to sex with prostitutes. Although the Ugandan Government is perceived by outsiders as 'gender-friendly,' formal positions do not always translate into consistent advocacy or improvements in the status of women sufficient to empower them to say 'no' to risky sex. Green's optimism in this respect is premature. The Gender Ministry is poorly funded and hesitant to engage in public advocacy. For example, it left advocacy of the Domestic Relations Bill, a codification of family law that would offer women some protection from abuse and destitution, to NGOs.

While women held 24 per cent of seats in Parliament in 2001 (and youth held four), the then female Vice-President campaigned *against* legal reform that would have allowed women to inherit land and to retain rights to property their labour helped to acquire. President Museveni has opposed both this and the Domestic Relations legislation, citing 'tradition.' Stripping widows of land and other property on the grounds of 'tradition' is a violation of their human rights. These are critical issues across the continent, particularly where deaths leave destitute many widows and orphans (field notes, Rwanda, 1996; Cote d'Ivoire, 1997). Cast out of their husband/fathers' extended families, while husbands' brothers take the property, they become vulnerable in their turn. Uganda's new Land Reform law omitted provisions for women's inheritance and joint ownership of property that have helped to acquire.

Furthermore, the government 'has ignored the role of violence, and in particular, unwanted sexual relations in marriage, in exposing women to HIV infection' (HRW, 2003:2). Many policy-makers believe that couple relations are private matters, and culturally too complex for interventions to succeed. Few men are prepared to institute policy measures to respond to the risk to girls and women coerced or enticed into sex. Violence is not only a problem for families, however. Under international law, governments are responsible for the protection of women's bodily integrity. Once they agree to abandon the notion that wife-beating is a time-honoured tradition, however, the HRW reports show ways for them to think outside the box. It recommends that the government address gender inequality across the board with a rights-based approach to laws, advocacy and support for programmes currently undertaken by NGOs with meager resources. The HRW report could be replicated in many countries across the world, including the US and UK.<sup>6</sup> These failures make it premature to speak of 'empowerment' with respect to women in the context of AIDS.

In Uganda and elsewhere in Africa, access to testing is limited and most people do not know their HIV status. Even among those who are tested, most do not learn their status, and few communicate with partners. Women's fear of repudiation, and knowledge that they will not have access to life-prolonging treatment also keeps many people from learning their serostatus. Knowledge that they can be treated and remain healthy for many years is an incentive to be tested. Treatment lowers viral load and greatly reduces the likelihood of sexual transmission. Thus it provides an effective means to protect seronegative partners. The demonstrated relationship between treatment and prevention underscores the need to provide wide access to anti-retroviral drugs (Farmer, 2003). Pilot projects across Africa report that, contrary to expectations of skeptics, patient compliance with treatment regimens is excellent.

One demonstration project in Kampala reduced antiretroviral treatment cost to \$350 per year, but half of those to whom it was offered on a trial basis dropped out as a result of inability to pay. Extended families may collect funds to pay for treatment, but

over time, resources dry up (Mogensen, 2002). Most people require free treatment, the only just and ethical practice now that it is possible to prolong life and prevent transmission. At present only about 10 per cent of those in need have access to antiretroviral therapy, and even medications for opportunistic infections are in short supply. For these reasons, gains made in combating the AIDS epidemic cannot be taken for granted, but must be consolidated and extended.

President Bush announced commitment to furnish \$15 billion for AIDS prevention and treatment over the next five years in 14 hard-hit countries, 12 of these in Africa. Five billion of this is supposed to be new money; the rest has already been allocated for AIDS or will be shifted from other health and development programmes. No new money was requested from Congress this fiscal year, and of the \$3 billion authorized, only just over half has actually been appropriated. Just \$200 million would go to the UN's Global Fund, far short of the US share commensurate with GDP. It will require substantial pressure for Congress to appropriate even this amount, yet the Global Fund has dozens of favourably vetted requests unfunded.

The US justifies its low allocations by citing African countries' alleged lack of absorptive capacity, and delay in establishing a new AIDS bureaucracy in Washington to oversee expenditures. At the same time, however, funds have not been allocated to increasing the capacity of public health systems to deliver quality care. This specious circular argument has been heard since the mid-1980s. Low absorptive capacity justified low allocations while promising demonstration projects (including CONNAISSIDA) were considered too costly and too labour-intensive to bring up to scale. Reluctance of South Africa's government to engage fully with AIDS receives wide negative publicity, but the US hides behind a favourable public relations barrage.

## Conclusion

Uganda's good news *is* remarkable. Nevertheless, even 5 per cent national adult HIV prevalence means that more and better prevention is needed. Social data help elucidate the epidemiological findings: some population segments remain at very high risk. Unequal power relations and poverty determined by the structure of the wider society, and by international economic and aid policies limit the possibilities of many highly motivated poor women and men to alter their behaviour. Many more have other overwhelming worries. Low intensity warfare continues in the north. The economy is fragile. Hundreds of thousands living in poverty have no access to palliative medicines, and only about 10 per cent of those in need of antiretroviral treatment currently obtain it. Uganda has a long way to go in creating conditions of equality for women, for youth and for poor men and by the same token, in definitively controlling HIV/AIDS.

Restricting condom promotion is contrary to Uganda's national interest, given the immense burden constituted by health expenditures, orphan care and by the shortages of trained labour and agricultural producers. Not enabling people to avoid HIV in marriage or steady partnerships is not merely timid, short-sighted policy. It is a human rights violation of major proportions. It is not simply a matter of allowing some groups to stress A and B, while others propose A, B and C. Capitulation to moralists' use of AIDS to advance a political agenda hardly represents 'cultural sensitivity.' Religious leaders who *actively oppose* condoms, who refuse to allow

others to promote condoms as *part* of the solution contribute to the likelihood of infection within marriage, and among youth, as well as among 'core transmitters' and those in conflict zones. These are among the many with little control over the conditions of their lives because social structures create limits to their agency. Similarly, restriction of prevention and treatment to 'traditional' or 'non-technological' means, is not culturally sensitive but politically expedient. Because they seek to undermine growing cultural acceptability of condoms, I am opposed to funding such groups for *prevention* activities; their contribution can be limited to patient care and orphan support. Instead, mass media communications that model ABC changes in culture and social relations need to be reinforced by scaled-up interpersonal support from trusted professionals, informed peers, and respected elders. There is urgent need to reach the poorest and most deprived groups, who remain at highest risk. Prevention must be coupled with broad, equitable access to treatment. Making the different parts of an AIDS control programme compete for insufficient funds is a way to see HIV incidence and prevalence rise. There is too much tragedy in Uganda and elsewhere to let this happen. At stake is a rights-based development agenda that will affect the lives of millions of Africans, and others in the developing world.

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## Endnotes

1. For example, the survey by Moodie, Katahoire, Kaharuzza et al., (1991); reviews of data contained in the 1995 *Demographic and Health Survey* (DHS) by Macintyre, Brown and Sosler (2001) and in the 1988, 1995 and 2000 *DHS* surveys by Singh, Darroch and Bankole (2003 at [www.agi-usa.org](http://www.agi-usa.org)); also *Measure Evaluation* (2003).
2. A summary of the debate and critiques by Feldman, Kiwanuka and Schoepf appear in the *AIDS and Anthropology Bulletin* 15(2), of May 2003. AIDS and Anthropology Research Group website [aarg@creighton.edu](mailto:aarg@creighton.edu); texts at <http://puffin.creighton.edu/aarg/prevention.html> from March through September, 2003. Also see *Anthropology News* (AN) September, 2003:5-6), with a reply by Paul Farmer (p.7).
3. At <http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/hearings/03202003Hearings832/Mukasa-Moniko1378>; Now director of the AIDS Program at the Global Health Council in Washington, a chapter-long interview with her appears in *Guest* (2001).
4. At [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A61981-2003May15.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A61981-2003May15.html).
5. 'ACP' is the acronym for the Uganda national AIDS Control Programme.
6. *The American Journal of Public Health*, July (2003) carries new studies men's of violence against domestic partners in the US and elsewhere. A report, 'Suffering in Silence: Human Rights Abuses and HIV Transmission to Girls in Zambia', appeared earlier (HRW, 2002); Rwanda's new constitution addresses both land and domestic violence issues (Charles Mironko, personal communication, July 2003).

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# The Bush Administration & African Oil: The Security Implications of US Energy Policy

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*Daniel Volman*

**'It's been reliably reported,' former US Ambassador to Chad Donald R. Norland announced during a House Africa Subcommittee hearing in April 2002, 'that, for the first time, the two concepts—'Africa' and 'U.S national security'—have been used in the same sentence in Pentagon documents.'**<sup>1</sup> When US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs Michael A. Westphal held a press briefing that same month, he noted that **'fifteen per cent of the US's imported oil supply comes from sub-Saharan Africa' and that 'this is also a number which has the potential for increasing significantly in the next decade.'** This, Westphal explained, is the main reason that Africa matters to the United States and why **'we do follow it very closely,'** at the Pentagon.<sup>2</sup> And during his July 2002 visit to Nigeria, US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Walter Kansteiner declared that **'African oil is of strategic national interest to us' and 'it will increase and become more important as we go forward.'**<sup>3</sup> While American interest in oil and other strategic raw materials from Africa is not new, the Bush Administration's decision to define African oil as a **'strategic national interest' and thus, a resource that the United States might choose to use military force to control is completely unprecedented and deeply disturbing.**

## Bush Administration Energy Policy & African Oil

This new attention to African oil is a direct consequence of the Bush Administration's new strategy to ensure US national energy security. The administration's new strategy is based on the conclusions of the May 2001 report of the president's National Energy Policy Development Group, chaired by Vice President Richard Cheney and known as the Cheney Report. According to the report, the only way to satisfy the growing demand of American consumers and producers for energy and maintain American prosperity is to ensure that the United States has reliable access to increasing quantities of oil and natural gas from foreign sources. Without more oil and gas, President Bush warns, the United States will face significant threats to its economic well-being and its national security.

While most public attention has been focused on the implications of the new strategy for the expansion of oil exploration and drilling within the United States, the Cheney Report itself makes clear that most of the additional oil that America wants will have to come from abroad. At present, the United States gets about 53 per cent of its petroleum requirement from foreign sources; by 2020, according to the Cheney

Report, that figure is expected to rise to 62 per cent because overall US oil consumption will continue to rise.<sup>4</sup> This means increasing America's oil imports by 50 per cent, from 11.5 million barrels per day in 2000 to 17.7 barrels per day over the next two decades.<sup>5</sup>

The Bush administration has explicitly characterised this reliance on imported oil as a threat to national security. 'On our present course,' the Cheney Report warns, 'America 20 years from now will import nearly two of every three barrels of oil—a condition of increased dependency on foreign powers that do not always have America's interests at heart.'<sup>6</sup> Of particular concern to the Bush administration, according to the Cheney Report, is the 'policy challenge' posed by the 'concentration of world oil production in any one region of the world' (i.e. the Persian Gulf region).<sup>7</sup> The Persian Gulf has long been an area of turbulence and war, which have led to the periodic interruption of oil exports, and concerns about US access to oil resources has only been fueled by the events of 11 September 2001 and the outbreak of the war with Iraq in March 2003. 'To meet our long-range energy needs,' Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham told the House International Relations Committee on 20 June 2002, 'we must expand and diversify our sources and types of energy. To assure energy security, we need to maintain a diversity of fuels from a multiplicity of sources.'<sup>8</sup> So, as a matter of policy, the Bush Administration will encourage greater oil production throughout the world to enhance the diversity of sources for oil available for import and to make sure that American industries and consumers (particularly car owners) can get cheap and reliable supplies of oil.

This emphasis on diversity has led the Bush Administration to devote its attention to several other oil-producing areas, the Caspian Sea region, Latin America, and 'of particular note' to Africa. Thus, the Cheney Report declares that, 'greater diversity of world oil production remains important,' most 'notably through deep-water offshore exploration and production in the Atlantic Basin, stretching from off-shore Canada to the Caribbean, Brazil, and West Africa.'<sup>9</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa, the Cheney Report observes, 'holds 7 per cent of world oil reserves and comprises 11 per cent of world oil production,' and 'is expected to be one of the fastest-growing sources of oil and gas for the American market.'<sup>10</sup> In 2000, the Cheney Report states, African countries provided 14 per cent of total US oil imports' (equivalent to the per cent provided by Saudi Arabia);<sup>11</sup> but by 2015, according to the US Central Intelligence Agency, West Africa alone will supply 25 per cent of America's imported oil.<sup>12</sup> Of particular significance is the fact that 'many West African streams are lighter, higher-valued crude oils that are tailor-made for US East Coast markets and are able to offer an alternative to Middle Eastern supply sources.'<sup>13</sup> In its efforts to promote greater diversity in oil supplies, the Bush Administration is focusing its attention on six African countries: Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Chad, and Equatorial Guinea.

In 2000, the Cheney Report notes Nigeria 'exported an average of 900,000 barrels of oil per day to the United States, out of its total production of 2.1 million barrels of oil per day;' and 'has set ambitious production goals as high as 5 million barrels of oil per day over the coming decade.'<sup>14</sup> This constitutes 9.7% of US oil imports and made Nigeria the 5<sup>th</sup> largest crude oil exporter to the United States, behind Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Canada, and Venezuela. The country has estimated proven oil reserves of 22.5 billion barrels and approximately 65% of its main crude oil is what is known as light and sweet (oil that is easy to pump and refine because it is more fluid and has a low sulfur content). Along with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (the state-owned oil firm), companies with major interests in Nigerian oil include the American firms ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco, Anglo-Dutch Shell, the Italian firm

ENI/Agip, and Franco-Belgian TotalFinaElf. The country has resolved disputes with Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé over the division of oil production in contested maritime border regions, but refuses to accept the 10 October 2002 decision of the International Court of Justice awarding control of the nearly all of the disputed Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon. This dispute has led to several clashes between Nigerian and Cameroonian troops in recent years and remains a potential flashpoint for war.<sup>15</sup>

The Cheney Report observes that in 2000, 'Angola exported 300,000 barrels of oil per day out of its 750,000 barrels of oil per day of total production to the United States, and is thought to have the potential to double its exports over the next ten years.'<sup>16</sup> In fact, according to the US Energy Department, 'Angola's oil production will increase to levels of 2.1 million barrels per day by 2010, almost tripling current levels, and to 3.3 million barrels per day by 2020.'<sup>17</sup> Therefore, 'there is a long-term strategic value to Angolan crude oil supplies that should not be underestimated.'<sup>18</sup> Angola is the ninth largest supplier of imported oil to the United States and the second largest non-OPEC supplier outside the Western Hemisphere. The leading foreign oil companies operating in Angola in association with the state oil company, Sonangol, are the American firms ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco, and the Franco-Belgian company TotalFinaElf.<sup>19</sup>

'Other significant exporters to the United States,' the Cheney Report remarks, 'include Gabon and the Congo-Brazzaville.'<sup>20</sup> Gabon (which left OPEC in 1996) is sub-Saharan Africa's third largest oil producer and exported about 140,000 barrels of oil per day to the United States in 2001, accounting for over 46% of Gabon's crude oil production. The country's proven oil reserves have increased to 2.5 billion barrels in 2002 and are composed chiefly of the more desirable light and sweet variety. Major oil companies operating in Gabon include Anglo-Dutch Shell, Franco-Belgian TotalFinaElf, Italian ENI/Agip, and the American firm Amerada Hess.<sup>21</sup> In March 2003, Gabonese paramilitary police occupied the island of Mbagne, a tiny territory in the oil-rich waters in the Bay of Corisco that has been claimed by both Gabon and Equatorial Guinea since 1970.<sup>22</sup> The Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville) is sub-Saharan Africa's fourth largest oil producer and while most of its exports are destined for France, it exported 38,000 barrels of oil per day to the United States in 2001. The country's estimated proven reserves stand at 1.5 billion barrels and are generally of the medium-to-light and sweet type. Franco-Belgian TotalFinaElf and Italian ENI/Agip dominate oil production in Congo-Brazzaville, but the American firms ChevronTexaco and ExxonMobil are partners in the development of several oilfields.<sup>23</sup>

In Chad, two American firms – ExxonMobil (40%) and Chevron (25%) – and Malaysia's state-owned Petronas (35%) are investing 3.7 billion to develop major oilfields in the Doba Basin in the southern part of the country and to build a pipeline to carry the oil through Cameroon to a storage and off-loading facility near Kribi on the Atlantic coast. Construction of the pipeline will be completed in 2003 and, when the oil begins to flow soon thereafter, Chad will be able to export 225,000 to 250,000 barrels per day.<sup>24</sup> In recent years Equatorial Guinea has also become a major exporter of oil from offshore deposits. Production reached 181,000 barrels per day in 2001, of which almost two-thirds was purchased by the United States. Four American companies 'ExxonMobil, Marathon Oil, Amerada Hess, and Ocean Energy' dominate oil production and exploration in Equatorial Guinea.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, there is no doubt that the Bush Administration wants America to regain access to Sudan's oil. Crude oil production in Sudan averaged 227,550 barrels per day in 2002; the country's oil output could surpass 300,000 barrels per day in 2003, with plans to reach 450,000 barrels per day by 2005. And Sudan's estimated proven reserves of crude oil stood at 563 million barrels, as of January 2003. At present, US law prohibits American trade with Sudan, as well as investment by US businesses in the country and all business dealings with the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (the international consortium of companies currently extracting oil from Sudan). Along with the Sudanese national firm Sudapet (5%), the consortium is made up of the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (40%), Malaysia's state-owned Petronas (30%), and the Canadian firm Talisman Energy (25%). In October 2002, Talisman agreed to sell its oil assets in Sudan to Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, the Indian state oil company, and in March 2003, Talisman announced that it still expected to complete the sale, despite months of delay.<sup>26</sup>

The Bush Administration is now making a concerted effort to promote a negotiated settlement of the civil war in Sudan, which would make it possible for American oil companies to return to the country. President Bush appointed former Senator John Danforth, an influential Republican and an old friend of the president, to be his special envoy to Sudan in a move intended to give new life to the negotiation process being undertaken by the Intergovernmental Authority for Development under the leadership of Kenya. With Ambassador Danforth's involvement, the government in Khartoum and the leadership of the Sudan People's Liberation Army has reached a partial ceasefire and are now moving toward agreement on a framework peace agreement, although vital issues 'including the distribution of political authority, the application of *sharia* law, and the distribution of revenues from oil exports' remain unresolved. Oil is not the only reason for the administration's efforts to end the Sudanese conflict. But it is certainly one of the main factors 'along with the pressure from human rights groups, African-Americans and Africanist activists, right-wing groups with an interest in US policy toward Islamic extremist governments and toward China, and Christian churches and missionary organisations' that got President Bush's attention.<sup>27</sup>

## **US National Security & African Oil**

As a result of the Bush administration's strategy of increasing oil imports and ensuring that the United States has access to as many sources as possible, thus, African oil is now seen in Washington as a 'vital national security interest' of the United States. Achieving the goals of the administration's energy policy, including that of maintaining and expanding access to African oil, will be central preoccupation of the entire Bush Administration, but they obviously have a particular significance to the Defense Department. What then is the Pentagon doing now to ensure that African oil will continue to flow to the United States?

One possibility now being considered is to assign responsibility for Africa within the Defense Department to a new Africa Command. At present, responsibility for Africa is divided between the European Command (which is primarily responsible for military operations in Europe, but is also responsible for operations in north Africa and most of sub-Saharan Africa), the Central Command (which is responsible for operations throughout a wide region stretching from Afghanistan and Pakistan in the east to Egypt, Sudan, and the Horn of Africa in the west), and the Pacific Command (which is responsible for operations in the Indian Ocean. This means that Africa is neither a focus of attention for either command nor a priority for their staff officers,

whose career prospects depend upon their service in the protection of American interests in other parts of the world. A new Africa Command would have direct authority over military units that are currently dispersed among the other commands, just as was done in 1980 when the Central Command was created in response to growing concern about access to Persian Gulf oil in the wake of the Iranian Revolution. 'I know it's been discussed,' Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael A. Westphal disclosed at his April 2002 press briefing, and 'I've actually engaged in a couple of discussions' about creating a separate Africa Command.<sup>28</sup> Consideration of an African Command will continue, but the prospects for its creation in the near future appear slight, due to the inevitable bureaucratic resistance from the other commands and the scarcity of funding and resources at a time when the Pentagon is preoccupied with developments in the Middle East, the Korean Peninsula, Central Asia, the Philippines, Colombia, and Venezuela.

In the immediate future, therefore, the attention of Mr. Westphal and other Defense Department officials will be engaged chiefly with efforts to strengthen the security forces of oil-producing countries and enhance their ability to ensure that their oil continues to flow to the United States. It is doing this through three main channels. The first of these is the sale of arms to African governments through the Foreign Military Sales program and the Commercial Sales program. The second is the provision of military training and education programs both in Africa and in the United States for African troops and officers through the International Military Education and Training program, the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance program (the successor to the African Crisis Response Initiative program created by the Clinton Administration in 1997), and the African Regional Peacekeeping Program. Finally, the Pentagon is conducting joint military exercises with military forces throughout the continent in order to train local forces and to enhance the ability of US forces to engage in military operations in Africa.

As the chart below indicates, the principal target of US military assistance programs is Nigeria, the country that is America's most important source of oil imports from sub-Saharan Africa. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 (1 October 2002-30 September 2003), the Defense Department intends to sell \$4.5 million worth of arms to Nigeria (funded by low-interest US loans for which repayment is generally waived) along with another \$12.6 million worth of military equipment that will be sold directly to Nigeria by private US arms-producers under licenses issued by the State Department. The Pentagon also plans to give nearly \$1 million worth of military training to Nigerian troops at military facilities in the United States through the IMET program, an amount that will cover the costs of training some 200 Nigerian officers in a wide variety of combat operations and administrative functions; this is the second largest IMET program for sub-Saharan Africa, exceeded only by the IMET program for the Republic of South Africa. The Pentagon also proposes to give military training through the IMET program to significant numbers of military officers from all the other major oil-producing countries of sub-Saharan Africa: Angola, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. And two of these countries – Angola and Gabon – are expected to buy substantial amounts of US military equipment from private US arms-producers under licenses issued by the State Department.<sup>29</sup>

The Bush Administration has worked vigorously to promote these security relationships at a series of high-level meetings between American officials and African political leaders and government representatives. On 4 June 2002, US Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham appeared before the Third US-Africa Energy Ministers Meeting in Casablanca, Morocco. 'All of us here face one overriding energy challenge:

energy security,' Secretary Abraham declared. 'We all agree that we must have plentiful, reliable and affordable supplies of a mix of energy sources, produced both at home and abroad,' because 'energy security is essential to economic growth and prosperity.'<sup>30</sup> When Assistant Secretary of State Walter Kansteiner traveled to Africa on 21-26 July 2002, the two countries he visited were Nigeria and Angola. During his visit to Nigeria, he met with President Olusegun Obasanjo to discuss oil production and cooperation on counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, and other security matters. Kansteiner denied reports that the United States was pressing Nigeria to leave OPEC, proclaiming that 'it was never raised' and 'it's not for us to weigh in on that.'<sup>31</sup> But 'what we did discuss was how the Gulf of Guinea writ large, from, you know, Côte d'Ivoire to Angola, how it is continuing to provide additional barrels per day to the United States, and as we look in the future, West Africa will probably play an increasingly important role in providing the United States with imported oil.'<sup>32</sup> And he publicly announced, 'African oil is of strategic national interest to us.'<sup>33</sup> In Angola, Kansteiner met with President Jose Eduardo dos Santos for talks on oil production and other topics, including the food crisis in southern Africa. On 3-11 October 2002, Assistant Secretary Kansteiner traveled to four countries, two oil-producing states – Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe – and two other west African states – Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea – threatened by conflict and regional violence. And on 5 September 2002, during his three-nation tour of Africa, Secretary of State Colin Powell visited Angola and Gabon, both important oil-producing countries, after attending the UN conference on sustainable development in Johannesburg, South Africa.<sup>34</sup>

When President Bush went to speak at the United Nations on 13 September 2002, he took the opportunity to meet with the presidents of eleven African countries: Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, South Africa, and São Tomé and Príncipe. Along with topics such as corruption, investment, HIV/AIDS, and conflict resolution, President Bush took the opportunity to discuss America's need for energy security with the heads of state of four current oil-producing countries (Chad, the Congo Republic, Cameroon, and Gabon) as well as those of two countries that could become important producers in the future (São Tomé and the Democratic Republic of Congo).

In advance of the talks, President Fradique de Menezes of São Tomé confirmed that President Bush and he would be discussing the possibility of increased cooperation in security matters. In recent months, São Tomé has repeatedly been mentioned as a potential site for a major new military base that would be used by the US military. In July 2002, General Carlton Fulford, deputy commander of the US European Command, visited the country for talks on security cooperation. In October 2002, Assistant Secretary Walter Kansteiner declared after visiting São Tomé that there was no question of building a US base there, although the administration was thinking of providing patrol boats to build up the country's maritime and customs controls and would be supplying other types of security assistance as well. 'There are no plans to set up US military installations in São Tomé. In fact, there are no plans to set up US military installations anywhere in Central or West Africa, so there were no discussions *per se* on that.'<sup>35</sup> However, when São Tomé and Nigeria settled a dispute about the division of oil production in a contested maritime border region, Nigeria pledged to fund the construction of a deep-water port in São Tomé and Prime Minister Maria das Neves has indicated that the facility will be made available to the United States for use as a 'sheltering port.'<sup>36</sup> And in May 2003, NATO Supreme Commander, US General James Jones told defense correspondents that 'the United States plans to boost is troop presence in Africa and, specifically, that 'the [aircraft]

carrier battle groups of the future and the expeditionary strike groups of the future may not spend six months in the Med[iterranean Sea] but I'll bet they'll spend half the time going down the West Coast of Africa.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the Bush Administration has expressed interest in expanding its small training program for the country's naval forces. 'Nothing specific is on the table right now,' stated Theresa Whelan, the director of the Pentagon's Office of African Affairs, but 'it is true that we do have legitimate security interests in ensuring that the offshore oil is protected and that the states that own those offshore rigs are able to protect them, so we have discussed the possibility of providing limited amounts of assistance to the coastal navies of such states.'<sup>38</sup> These plans may have been put in question, however, by the recent military coup in São Tomé.<sup>39</sup>

To further bolster the ability of African military forces to protect access to oil resources, the Bush administration is in the process of transforming the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) – the program created in 1997 by the Clinton administration to enhance the ability of African troops to participate in peacekeeping operations – into a new, 'more robust' program to be known as the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) program.\* The transformation process began in December 2001 and continued through March 2002; in May 2002, the ACOTA program of military assistance and training began operating and the Pentagon is now recruiting new partner countries. The new initiative will provide 'more robust training and assistance relative to the likely threat environment,' including training in 'convoy escort, logistics, protection of refugees, negotiations, robust force protection, and command and control.'<sup>40</sup> It will also provide 'basic equipment appropriate to the full range of peace support operations, such as a comprehensive communications package, portable electric power generators, mine detectors, night vision devices, portable light sets, and water purification units.'<sup>41</sup> The Pentagon is requesting \$10 million to fund the new project in Fiscal Year 2003.<sup>42</sup> According to Greg Engle, the Director of the Office of Regional and Security Affairs at the State Department, 'we're moving ahead with Ghana, with Senegal . . . we're going ahead with Kenya, with Botswana. Ethiopia has indicated interest in going ahead. We're in discussions with the South Africans to build a program for that country and also with Nigeria.'<sup>43</sup>

According to a US government official in Kenya speaking on condition of anonymity, the new scheme will constitute a more aggressive, military-style training initiative and will likely involve more training with weapons. It will include training of the sort that the Pentagon provided to Nigeria in 2000 through 'Operation Focus Relief (OFR)' to enhance their ability to intervene in the civil war in Sierra Leone. 'What we're looking at is something that retains the peacekeeping mission of ACRI and combines it with the military training component of OFR,' the official stated.<sup>44</sup> In FY 2003, the Pentagon has also requested to spend \$30 million to fund the Africa Regional Peacekeeping program. This program will be used to assist ongoing peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Burundi, and on the Ethiopian-Eritrean border. Perhaps the most important proposal contained in the Pentagon request, however, is to use some of the money to supplement Defense Department funding of the US European Command's 'Operation Shared Accord.' Through 'Operation Shared Accord,' the European Command will sponsor yearly sub-regional peacekeeping and disaster response exercises jointly with troops from African countries.<sup>45</sup>

All these programs are intended to bolster the capacity of African military forces to protect oil production and transportation facilities from any conflict that might

disrupt oil shipments. But many oil fields lie in contested territory, as noted above, and most oil-producing countries are experiencing serious internal unrest. This is especially true in the case of Nigeria, which is by far the most important country from Washington's vantage point, where the dispute with Cameroon over control of the Bakassi Peninsula remains unresolved and where sectarian conflicts, political violence, and ethnic strife in the vital Niger River Delta area continue to escalate and spread.<sup>46</sup> It is clear that Washington would prefer to rely on Africans to ensure the free flow of oil, thus avoiding the need for any direct American military involvement, much less military intervention. However, the United States is also preparing for the day when American troops may be sent to Africa by conducting military exercises in Africa.

In February 2002, for example, 2,100 US Marines from the 13<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit aboard the amphibious assault ships USS Bonhomme Richard and USS Pearl Harbor were redeployed from the Indian Ocean – where it was participating in the war in Afghanistan – to East Africa to conduct three weeks of joint maneuvers with Kenyan troops on that country's coast, including helicopter operations and amphibious landings. In April and May 2002, two US Navy hospital ships, the USS Dallas and the USS Minneapolis, conducted the regular West African Training Cruise and Medical Outreach Program mission, spending two weeks stationed off Togo and Ghana. In August 2002, US military medical personnel and Special Forces troops held a two-week long medical training exercise, known as MEDFLAG 02, in Entebbe and Sorotti, Uganda. And in September 2002, 200 US Air Force personnel went to the Waterkloof Air Force Base in South Africa to participate in the first bilateral training exercise with South African forces. And in December 2002, 300 Marines from the 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit, Navy explosives experts, and Kenya troops took part in exercises at Manda Bay on the Kenyan coast that included an airfield seizure scenario and combat engineering.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, the Bush Administration is now engaged in an unprecedented effort to shift the forward lines of its existing overseas deployments deep into oil-rich regions of the world, specifically into Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa. While the deployments will be small, in terms of numbers, they will pave the way for the establishment of equipment stockpiles and periodic training exercises for American troops. In addition, the United States will make major improvements to local airfields and other military facilities to prepare for future operations. In North Africa, Pentagon officials are looking at bases in Algeria, Morocco, and possibly Tunisia. South of the Sahara, they are examining the prospects for using bases in Senegal, Ghana, Mali, and Kenya. According to Marine General James L. Jones, head of the US European Command, the Pentagon was seeking to acquire access to two kinds of bases. Some would be forward outposts that could house up to a brigade (made up of 3,000 to 5,000 troops) and 'could be robustly used for a significant military presence.' Others would be prepared locations where Special Forces, Marines, or Army units could be moved quickly in times of emergency. As General Jones explained, 'we're trying to come up with a more flexible basing option that allows more engagement throughout our area of responsibility.' According to one Pentagon official, the United States could increase its troop strength to as many as 5,000 to 6,500 troops at up to a dozen bases.<sup>48</sup> The Bush Administration has also reached access agreements allowing American troops to use airfields in Senegal, Uganda, Ghana, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Zambia, and Namibia, and is discussing access agreements for the use of airfields in Nigeria, Benin, and Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>49</sup> In the coming years, thus, the Bush administration will be strengthening American military ties with Africa (particularly with oil-producing countries) and ensuring that US troops are ready to

launch operations throughout the continent.

## Conclusions

Does this mean that Washington will use military force to make sure that African oil continues to flow to the United States in the event that insurgents, civil wars, other internal conflicts, or conventional wars between African states threatens to disrupt it? This seems unlikely in the immediate future, if only because Washington has so much unfinished business in the Middle East to absorb its attention: the military occupation of Iraq, continuing operations in Afghanistan, and the crisis in Israel/Palestine. In the longer term, however, it appears that this is a real possibility, especially since African oil supplies will become ever more important to the United States over time. Washington is already committed to use military force to ensure the steady flow of Persian Gulf oil to the United States. 'An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States,' President Carter proclaimed in his State of the Union address in January 1980, '[and] will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.'<sup>50</sup> As African oil supplies become ever more vital to the United States, the prospects for direct American military intervention are sure to rise/mount.

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# New Politics, New Livelihoods: Agrarian Change in Zimbabwe

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**In the last four years Zimbabwe has featured prominently in headlines around the world. An ongoing radical land reform involving the seizure of largely white-owned commercial farmland has dramatically altered the physical landscape. Alongside this, a new political terrain has rapidly unfolded with new actors and new institutions. Tensions between authoritarian nationalism and ethnic politics, between a militarised, modernist order and 'traditional' religion and authority have created a complex political mosaic, made up of multiple and overlapping identities and positions. This is a confusing and dynamic landscape populated by actors as diverse as entrepreneurial war veteran 'security guards'-cum-protection racketeers, militant ZANU(PF) youth brigades, and marauding elephants possessed by chiefly spirits. Focusing on the farm occupations and 'fast-track' land reform around Sangwe communal area in Chiredzi district, southeastern Zimbabwe, this paper attempts to make sense of this seemingly chaotic landscape. It explores the new patterns of social differentiation and the emerging lines of political authority, and investigates the impact of these changing circumstances on people's livelihoods.**

In the first section we provide a brief overview of the nature of livelihoods and patterns of political authority in Zimbabwe's communal areas in the post-Independence period leading up to 2000. This is followed by a detailed account of the recent land occupation process in two areas of Chiredzi district: Fair Range Ranch and Gonarezhou National Park. We examine the composition of the new settler communities; trace the ways in which new livelihood opportunities are differentiated by age, gender and wealth; and explore contrasting motivations for land occupation. We then investigate the emerging power relations in the new resettlement areas by examining the accommodations and tensions between four axes of authority: war veterans, new committee structures, traditional authorities and new local elites. Finally we ask how these emergent institutions and power relations are articulating with changes in the national and local state.

## **Communal Area Politics in the 1980s & 1990s**

The land occupations and fast-track resettlement from 2000 were superimposed upon a complex layering of politics, land and livelihoods in rural Zimbabwe, shaped both by colonial history and post-Independence interventions. With Independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a highly skewed land distribution, with the majority black

farming population being confined to the former 'reserves' (later Tribal Trust Lands), most of which were located in the marginal agro-ecological zones.

These areas were renamed 'communal lands' in 1982 but, beyond a shift in nomenclature, nothing much changed. In the early 1980s various attempts at resettlement were encouraged by the new government, but the extent of these were constrained by constitutional limitations (under the Lancaster House agreement), bureaucratic delay and funding shortages. By the end of the 1980s, the government had resettled some 52,000 households and purchased 2.7 million hectares (around 16 per cent of commercial farmland). Settlers were moved to a range of different 'scheme' types under a series of technocratic models. These were seen as separate from the communal areas with resettlement farmers expected to develop independent full-time farming operations, often far from their original homes. In parallel with the formal resettlement schemes, informal resettlement occurred in the decade after Independence, on under-populated communal areas, state land and commercial farms (Palmer, 1990; Moyo, 1995).

Despite these movements, the former reserves remained largely crowded areas with poor agricultural potential, where livelihoods continued to rely on mostly dryland farming, livestock keeping and remittance incomes from circular migration to towns, farms and mines. Independence brought some infrastructural development (roads, irrigation and water schemes, etc.) and considerable investment in agricultural extension, basic health services and education. Changing access to markets also helped agriculturalists in the higher potential zones (Rukuni and Eicher, 1994).

But in places like Chiredzi district, the basic pattern of 'reserve' life, established in the early part of the century, was maintained. Most people remained poor, although some were richer than others, particularly those with access to livestock and remittance income (Cousins et al. 1992). Patterns of differentiation in the 1980s and 1990s were very much determined by external factors, notably the major droughts of the early 1980s and 1990s, which devastated cattle populations, and the changing fortunes of the economy, particularly following the implementation of the structural adjustment programme from 1991 (Scoones et al. 1996). This saw a major downturn in economic fortunes for many, especially those who relied upon remittance income from relatives living in town. With a small upturn in the late 1990s, the trend since has been inexorably downwards, exacerbated by the economic and political crisis of recent years (Jenkins and Knight, 2002; Alwang et al. 2001). Combined with these factors, HIV/AIDS has had a major impact on the demography and livelihoods of communal area populations, particularly from the mid-1990s. This has changed household structures, reducing key sections of the farming labour force, and resulting in an increasing number of female or child headed households (Kwaramba, 1998).

By the late 1990s, a lack of employment opportunity, constraints on farm labour, a growing ill-health burden, smaller land areas (and evidence of effective landlessness), combined with a severe lack of capital and draft power, constrained and marginalised many people, particularly in the dryland areas of the country such as Chiredzi district. Of course this pattern was not universal, and some people did well from the structural adjustment era, making money on new business ventures. Others benefited from political patronage of various sorts, while others had relatively secure jobs outside the communal areas. Still others reinvested in the communal areas, restocked their herds, hired labour and were farming with some success. But, overall, there was a detectable trend of increasing differentiation, as well as increasing marginalisation of those at the bottom end of the socioeconomic scale.

Independence also brought a new national political order. This in turn translated into new forms of governance at the local level. In the early 1980s, party cells, following the pattern established during the liberation war, were set up in the villages. With the Prime Ministerial decree of 1984, a new decentralised system was installed in parallel to the party cell structure, with village, ward and district committees, which were to form the basis for development planning and administration. These committees were superimposed on a system of 'traditional' authority, involving chiefs and headmen. This 'tradition' had been shaped by colonial intervention, and many such authorities had collaborated with the Rhodesian regime, making them illegitimate in the eyes of the new government and party officials.

Through much of the 1980s and 1990s, then, two parallel systems of authority existed side-by-side. In some places they worked well together, with former headmen becoming Village Development Committee (VIDCO) leaders or councillors. In other situations they were at loggerheads, with younger more politicised 'outsiders' (who were not part of chiefly lineage groupings) being in conflict with the 'traditional' authorities. Such conflicts were widespread and often incapacitated the new structures which, despite the promises of government, never received much devolved power or resources, and failed in many instances to establish their legitimacy. In the late 1990s, the VIDCOs were effectively abandoned to be replaced by a hybrid form of administration that brought the 'traditional' authorities back in. The Traditional Leaders Act was a significant move in confirming this direction and the recommendations of the Land Tenure Commission of 1994, put forward the idea of village assemblies, with significant roles of chiefs and headmen.

With the move to a developmentally oriented form of administration in the mid-1980s and a shift back to reaffirming traditional authority in the 1990s, the role of the ruling party in rural affairs was in many ways diminished. Until the late 1990s, there was no significant opposition politics, and party officials remained unconcerned since they were guaranteed mass electoral support for ZANU(PF) and the President in most rural areas outside Matabeleland. While party organisation at the local level persisted, the effectiveness and reach of this waned significantly from the early 1980s onwards.

In the discourse of development and politics in Zimbabwe, the communal areas were seen as separate, much as they had been in the colonial era. These were areas where the project of modernising development was being attempted through agricultural extension, grazing schemes, forestry projects, irrigation schemes and so on. But these were also areas where welfare support was regularly required, particularly in times of drought, with huge state investment in food-for-work projects, drought relief handouts and recovery input packages. Despite the 1988 Rural District Councils Act, which attempted to integrate the commercial farms, resettlement areas and communal lands in one unitary council, the communal areas were seen as distinct – geographically, economically, socially and politically. The real action was to be seen elsewhere – in the urban centres, on the commercial farms and in the wildlife areas. As the socialist rhetoric of the early 1980s transmuted into the neoliberal discourse of the 1990s, the talk was of foreign exchange earning abilities, commercial viability, export earning capacity and so on. As long as President Mugabe maintained his compact with the public to prevent starvation and to provide free food in times of drought, then they would vote for him. Party and government officials could divert their attention elsewhere and join the accumulation bandwagon, cashing in on land deals and the fruits of the neoliberal economic order.

But by ignoring the poverty and marginalisation of the communal areas – by pursuing a strategy of often misconstrued and inadequate separate development (or welfare support) – a large proportion of the population missed out on any potential gains. Moreover, the structural inequality and poverty were not being dealt with through land reform or other redistributive measures; such demands were consistently ignored both by government and donors. The economic crunch of the late 1990s, combined with the other shocks and pressures discussed above, caused many communal area people to feel increasingly disgruntled. This gave rise to a series of increasingly politically-charged demands from the late 1990s by war veterans (most of whom had been simply communal area residents since demobilisation in the early 1980s), urban workers (now effectively organised in unions) and, in some parts of the country, other communal area groups (under various banners ranging from the new churches to spirit mediums).

Thus, by the beginning of 2000, a pattern of poverty, marginalisation and increasing differentiation could be seen in many communal areas. Combined with this a growing political concern about the lack of progress in developmental (and particularly redistributive) terms was being expressed as people faced greater and greater hardship, at the same time as others were clearly enriching themselves. The social, political and economic containment of the communal areas, with their separate status was beginning to be undermined. Twenty years after Independence, the continuation of the colonially imposed pattern of separate development and gross inequality could not, many argued, be maintained. The fruits of an alternative development paradigm based on neoliberal economic dogma were not being realised, and the political elite seemed no longer to care. The powder keg that was Zimbabwe's inheritance from Britain and the Rhodesian regime was ready to go off.

### **Post-2000 Shifts: Farm Occupations in Chiredzi**

February 2000 heralded a dramatic change in the physical and political landscape in rural Zimbabwe as a large number of farm 'invasions' occurred across the country. This was not the first time these had occurred since Independence, but this time they were far more large-scale and widespread. In the vicinity of Sangwe communal area in Chiredzi district almost without exception all the large-scale commercial farms were occupied. These were principally cattle and game ranches and included properties in the well-known Save Valley Conservancy and the Malilangwe Conservation Trust. The large-scale poaching of wildlife accompanying these invasions gained widespread national and international media coverage (e.g. 'Wildlife die in African Crossfire', 'Zimbabwe's Killing Fields', 'Zimbabwe's Shame', 'A Holocaust Against Our Wildlife').<sup>2</sup> However, invasions were not confined to white-owned freehold farms and conservancies. The state-owned Nuanetsi Ranch and a portion of Gonarezhou National Park were also occupied, as was a smallholder irrigation scheme in Sangwe communal area itself. The Anglo-American and Tongaat-Hullet owned irrigated sugar estates at Hippo Valley and Triangle near Chiredzi were initially largely avoided.<sup>3</sup>

In this area there were a complex range of motivations for the farm occupations, ranging from the political to the sacred. However, a key role was played by the former fighters in the liberation war belonging to the Provincial War Veterans Association. The provincial and district chairmen of the Association spearheaded a rolling sequence of land occupations beginning in February 2000 – to varying degrees articulating with local land claims and campaigns by local politicians. The fluid and

complex nature of these occupations is revealed by looking at the sequence of events in two places: Fair Range Ranch and Gonarezhou National Park.

Fair Range Ranch, formerly a cattle and game ranch, is situated a short distance from Chiredzi town on the Mutare road, directly between Gonarezhou National Park and Save Valley Conservancy. Until 1957 the area was known as Matombwe and was inhabited by people under Chief Tsovani who were evicted to make way for the ranch. In February 2000 a group of war veterans visited the ranch owner and informed him that they would be resettling people on part of his ranch. He immediately contacted the police but was told that it was a political matter with which they could not get involved. A base camp was soon established by the war veterans on the edge of the ranch initially using tents provided by the army. This camp was occupied by a fluctuating, but relatively small, number of people (50-176) in the period leading up to the June 2000 parliamentary election.<sup>4</sup> The farm occupation, here as elsewhere, at this stage was regarded as much as a political demonstration and symbolic event (designed to draw attention to the need for land) as a permanent claim for that particular ranch. Yet these settlers went to great lengths to employ the criteria and techniques of formal land use planning in Zimbabwe to peg self-contained 50 hectare (ha.) plots (Chaumba et al. 2003). After the election there was a drop in the number of occupiers followed by further fluctuations as the ranch owner attempted to negotiate with the war veterans' leaders and prospective settlers shuttled between different base camps in the area. But in August and September 2000 – following the formal announcement of the government's fast-track land reform programme – there was a massive influx of new settlers onto the property. This was accompanied by fire-setting, stock theft and mutilation, poaching, wire theft and the barricading of roads.

By October the provincial chairman of the War Veterans Association had overruled a directive from the District Administrator instructing people to move off the property and people were busy clearing land, de-stumping and building brushwood fencing, and bringing in draft animals in preparation for ploughing with the rains.<sup>5</sup> In January 2001 the ranch owner – whose cattle were now interfering with the settlers' new fields – was ordered to move all his cattle off the property. In May 2001, land use planners from Agritex (the national agricultural extension service, now AREX) came to peg the ranch formally as an A1 scheme.<sup>6</sup> Seven villages were established in Fair Range, each with 50-75 households. Each household received 25 ha., with 6 ha. arable land, a homestead stand and a share of communal grazing. Soon after, the District Development Fund (DDF) had sunk three boreholes and was starting to provide tillage assistance to a few lucky farmers and the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) provided input packages on credit. By January 2002 a rudimentary primary school had been built alongside one of the boreholes with the labour and financial contributions of the settlers; four teachers had been recruited and 163 children enrolled.

In the run up to the March 2002 presidential election, Fair Range Ranch, like other occupied or formally fast-tracked farms, was firmly ZANU(PF) territory and a no-go area for the opposition. The up-coming election cast a shadow over the perceived tenure security amongst the settlers – many fearing that an opposition victory, or even a ZANU(PF) victory (once the grandstanding was over) would result in their eviction. This, coupled with the fact that the 2001-2002 harvest was a write-off countrywide due to drought, led many of the settlers to drift back into the communal areas or further afield in search of work and food. But they, in the main, were at pains to maintain their claim to their new plots, leaving family members behind. Mugabe's electoral victory, and renewed rhetorical support for radical land reform, encouraged new settlers to

apply for land in Fair Range and there is a long waiting list of plot-seekers. The occupation of Gonarezhou National Park is different from other land occupations in Chiredzi district in one important respect – it is an ‘invasion’ of state-owned, rather than privately-owned, land. The contested portion of land is the ancestral home of the Chitsa people. It has twice been designated as a game reserve only to be deproclaimed to allow tsetse fly control operations involving the shooting out of large game, removal of large trees and eviction of the Chitsa people. In 1975 the land was designated as part of the national park and they found themselves permanently unable to return when the new nationalist government in 1980 reaffirmed the status of the national parks rather than returning alienated land. During the 1980s and 1990s many continued to utilise this portion of the national park illicitly to poach wildlife and to drive their cattle in for valuable ‘poach grazing’ (Wolmer et al. forthcoming).

In May 2000, after a large number of commercial farms in the area had been occupied, the district war veterans’ leadership, with the encouragement of a local councillor, turned their attention to the grievance of the Chitsa community. This community was now largely based in Wards 4 and 5 of Sangwe communal area bordering the park. There was no shortage of people willing to join the occupation and reclaim the ancestral land. The settlers claimed a 20 kilometre-deep strip running along the northwestern end of the park, separated from the rest of Gonarezhou by the Chilunja Hills. This proved to be a strategic choice. The land claimed was the former tsetse hunting zone or ‘State Land’ – clearly differentiated from the national park on older maps – and therefore the settlers were able to play up the ambiguity of the park boundary.

As on Fair Range, the occupation was initially conceived of as a symbolic demonstration. The settlers set up camp just inside the park boundary in tents provided by the army. They also went to the length of pegging out and allocating ten ha. plots, although these were not cultivated in 2000-2001. The numbers of settlers at this stage fluctuated from tens to hundreds. There was also a massive increase in poach-grazing as settlers and communal area dwellers took advantage of newly available grazing land – this despite an official ban on cattle entering the park because of the risk of veterinary disease.

In late 2000 the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM) was able to enforce the removal of the majority of the settlers – leaving a very small number (approximately ten) maintaining a symbolic presence in the base camp. Most of the settlers moved back to the communal area or to base camps on nearby ranches. At this stage the settlers’ leaders approached provincial and national ZANU(PF) bigwigs including Vice President Msika and the Provincial Governor. After visiting the area the governor then unilaterally gave the settlers the go-ahead and ordered Agritex to start planning for formal fast-track resettlement – apparently without the knowledge of the Minister of Environment and Tourism, and raising strong objections from DNPWLM.<sup>7</sup> However, in contrast to most farms designated for resettlement, there was no legal challenge and the land-use planning went ahead relatively fast. By May 2001, Agritex had planned ten villages along a former tsetse fly control team track. They had allocated separate arable plots and a communal grazing area. In total, provisions were made for 750 settlers on 520 plots covering 11,000 ha..<sup>8</sup> There was an immediate massive increase in settlers, and fields were de-stumped and cleared in preparation for the 2001-2002 season. However, due to a combination of drought and elephant crop raiding, most settlers had drifted back to communal areas by mid-2002.

The dynamics of these two case studies are not, of course, necessarily the same as elsewhere in Chiredzi district (see Marongwe, 2001; Wolmer, 2001), and there are certainly differences in the experience of the occupations in the southeast lowveld to elsewhere in the country. In particular, occupations in the southeast lowveld tend to be of cattle and game operations, which employ relatively few farm workers on extensive, low value land. However the massive and relatively rapid transformation in the rural geography of Chiredzi district following the farm occupations and fast-track resettlement poses a range of important questions relevant to understanding the current situation in Zimbabwe generally: Who are these settlers? Where have they come from? Why have they come? And what livelihood strategies do they draw on?

## **New Communities & Citizens**

Whilst recognising that there has been a range of different dynamics at play in different areas, we want here to focus only on the two places we have introduced: the former Fair Range Ranch and the occupied portion of Gonarezhou National Park. The occupiers/settlers in these areas represent a broad spectrum of people of varying ages, ethnicities and degrees of wealth. They include men and women, communal area farmers and urban employees, Christians and spirit mediums – all with contrasting motivations for being there. However, it is possible to identify certain patterns. Here we combine a broad-brush picture of these patterns with selected vignettes illustrating particular people's experiences.

In both places the majority of the settlers are men aged between 25 and 40. Young men are less likely to own land in the communal areas (or, if they do, it is small and/or has poor, unproductive soils). In moving into the new resettlement areas, they often leave their families behind. Young men tend to want land *per se*, rather than particular patches of land.

Elijah,<sup>9</sup> for example, is 28 years old and unemployed. His parents died during the liberation war and their land was shared between him and his brothers leaving him a very small amount. At the instigation of the local councillor and despite being admonished by opposition party supporters that it was merely an electoral ploy, he applied for land in Gonarezhou National Park. He registered his name with the councillor and paid Z\$20 for a certificate<sup>10</sup> and received a five ha. arable plot. Like most of the settlers, he was very unsure about the security of land tenure in the national park – fearing that the army would sooner or later chase settlers away – holding onto his small amount of land in Sangwe communal area as an insurance policy.

Very few young, unmarried women have settled in Fair Range or Gonarezhou. There was, however, a significant minority of female-headed households. In Fair Range there were approximately 7-9 in each village of 50-75 households. Many of these were widows and divorcees who lacked land in the communal area. Movement onto the new resettlement areas was an opportunity to escape the social sanction and stigmatisation found in communal areas. It is quite common for widows and divorcees to be accused of witchcraft and causing the death of husbands (particularly in AIDS cases) and are sometimes even chased away by their in-laws. Resettlement provides an opportunity to start anew and might provide new livelihoods opportunities.

Loveness, for example, is 20 years old and originally from Maronda communal area in Mwenezi District. Her husband was a long-term labour migrant in South Africa. Her

in-laws chased her away from their home when she had a relationship with another man and got pregnant. She moved in with her sister in Chiredzi where she became an active member of the ZANU(PF) women's league and was amongst the first to settle on Fair Range. She admits to working as a prostitute in the resettlement area – raising money to purchase goods in South Africa for resale. As she puts it: 'I do not care [what other people think] as I now have my plot here and I am taking care of my children ... I no longer bother my sister and I am now independent'. Similarly Florence, 24 years old and divorced, settled on Fair Range with her parents who spend most of their time working in Chiredzi. She sells sugar, beer, clothes and cooking oil in Fair Range and is training as a health assistant with a view to working as a village health worker in the resettlement area. As she puts it: 'sometimes you need that freedom. It's like starting a new life in Fair Range.'<sup>11</sup>

A small number of women have received plots in their own right because of their political connections. For example, Grace received a plot in Village 10, Gonarezhou from her brother – a councillor. She already had three ha. in the communal area, but has not abandoned it as her primary homestead because there are not yet any shops, clinics or schools for her nine children in the resettlement area and access to water is limited. It is very hard maintaining the two homesteads because it is a four-hour walk to and from the new settlement which leaves little time and energy for preparing and cultivating the new fields. She did, however, plant fruit trees and employ people to de-stump and clear the fields and planted two ha. of cotton. Initially she was visiting the fields every three days to check for elephant damage but, having encountered elephants on the path one day, she has been too scared to return.<sup>12</sup>

Another key pattern in terms of the composition of the settlers is that there is a markedly skewed wealth distribution with high numbers of the relatively rich and the relatively poor. This skewed wealth distribution can be illustrated by using livestock ownership as a proxy for wealth. Village 1 in Fair Range, for example, has 59 households (332 people), of which only seven households own cattle. Similarly in Village 5, only four out of 60 households have cattle.<sup>13</sup> Those that do own livestock in the resettlement area point to the shortage of adequate grazing land in the communal area as a major motivation for resettlement. Owners of large herds in communal areas also often encounter problems when their cattle destroy neighbours' crops. Ownership of draft animals (whether cattle or donkeys) is also a significant financial asset in Fair Range due to the relative shortage of draft animals, which provides plenty of opportunities for hiring out the animals to other settlers in return for cash or work in kind (and hence establishing patron-client relationships). The relatively wealthy, livestock-owning settlers – particularly if they have more than one wife and large families – are able to manage at least two smallholdings simultaneously continuing to cultivate their communal area plots, while extensifying their arable fields on the new land. They are also able to establish patron-client relations by lending out livestock in long-term arrangements (*kufiyisa*) in return for labour.

A Base Commander on Fair Range who brought 15 head of cattle onto the farm was able to cultivate over three ha. in the 2000-2001 season, as well as hiring out his cattle for others to plough with. His relative affluence has also enabled him to invest in other entrepreneurial activities, such as operating a shabeen selling beer from his house on the resettled ranch. Another entrepreneur has lost no time in moving his grinding mill to Fair Range.

An additional indicator of wealth in rural Zimbabwe is having formal, full-time employment. Of the 59 households in Village 1, Fair Range, 16 have permanent

employment, five describe themselves as 'part-time builders', and 38 depend on farming, and other informal diversified livelihood activities.<sup>14</sup> Many of the salaried settlers live in Chiredzi town and visit their plots after work or at weekends. They keep their cattle on Fair Range in the care of herd boys or – if lacking cattle – are able to hire draft power and labour. Solomon, for example, runs a tailoring business in Chiredzi. He owns a house in the town, a pick-up truck and rents his business premises where he employs two people. He has a six ha. plot in Fair Range with one permanent worker. He comes over on weekends to check on progress and to sell clothing (from his business) and essential commodities such as salt, sugar and cooking oil to settlers. He also provides various other services to settlers, ranging from transport to the Grain Marketing Board depot, to delivering newspapers, to the use of his cell phone. For Solomon, the primary rationale for acquiring new land in Fair Range was to gain unimpeded access to these market opportunities (war veterans and youth militia strictly police access to the area by non-plot holders).<sup>15</sup>

Money and livestock alone, however, are insufficient criteria to secure access to plots without political connections and a pro-ZANU(PF) reputation. War veterans and party members tended to have first choice of plots and it is commonly perceived that 'war vets are choosing places where there are black soils and giving mountainous places to ordinary people.'<sup>16</sup> One councillor, and member of the District Land Committee, who already had 12 ha. of arable in the communal area, has been able to accumulate a number of prime plots (of fertile soil) in Gonarezhou, as well as Essanby and Mkwasine ranches – some registered in his children's names.

Many of the poorer settlers who lack livestock tend to be the people who also lack adequate land in the communal area. They have little to lose and a lot to gain by moving into the new resettlements. The government's promise of support with inputs and tillage makes their draft power and capital constraints seem less daunting. There are also income-earning opportunities to be had working as part-time labourers for relatively wealthier fellow settlers, particularly in the process of de-stumping and clearing fields (in essence constituting a new class of informal 'farm workers'). There are also more illicit opportunities in the new resettlement areas. Most obviously, poaching game to sell meat locally is a very popular activity. In the climate of relatively lax law enforcement, there are also opportunities for theft and sale of other resources belonging to commercial farmers, including cattle (which are sold locally for meat or driven to Mozambique), sugar cane, fencing wire and firewood.

Joseph, for example, is aged 68, with one wife and eight children and is one of the poorer settlers on Fair Range. An 'outsider' having grown up in South Africa, he had no land of his own and was renting just two acres in Sangwe communal area – his family having none to give him. Being very poor he usually had to plant late in the season because he first needed to work preparing other people's fields in order to earn money for seeds. He joined the farm occupations immediately and is one of very few people to uproot entirely from the communal area, moving his family and all his belongings in a rented cart. During the 2000-2001 season he managed to grow only 1 acre of sorghum. He has received no tillage assistance from the DDF, but received some maize seeds from GMB. Due to the drought-ravaged 2001-2002 season he now survives by gathering mopani worms for sale in Fair Range. He also moves around Fair Range and Sangwe communal area doing part-time work in return for maize.

The ethnic composition of the settlers is rather different in Gonarezhou and Fair Range. The large majority of the settlers in Gonarezhou are Shangaan, with a relatively small number of Ndau and Karanga/Zezuru. In Fair Range, Shangaan-

speakers are outnumbered by Shona-speaking Karanga/Zezuru and Ndaou. The most straightforward explanation for this is that it simply reflects the ethnic composition of areas immediately bordering these settlements. Gonarezhou borders the Shangaan dominated Wards 4 and 5 of Sangwe communal area, whilst Fair Range is close to the multi-ethnic town of Chiredzi. However, this pattern also reflects the existence of particular land claims rooted in communities' historical experience and social memories and throws into contrast two distinct ideological justifications for claiming land. There is, first, a nationalist argument about land as a resource for the people and, second, an argument akin to the South African concept of 'land restitution'.

The nationalist land discourse expounded by ZANU(PF) is one that emphasises land as a marker of sovereignty. Land reform is about returning land stolen by whites to 'the people'. This discourse enables any black Zimbabwean to claim land anywhere in Zimbabwe and is particularly useful to those claiming land in an area in which they have no specific historical claim.<sup>17</sup> The restitution discourse, by contrast, emphasises returning 'home' to particular pieces of land that are symbolically important to communities or individuals. These are often the sites at which ancestors are buried that are still landscapes of meaning and memory and are the location of traditional ceremonies such as rainmaking. In Gonarezhou, as we have seen, the (Shangaan) Chitsa people have a grievance about their alienation from a particular piece of land – and their subsequent removal from the protective sphere of their ancestors and lost rights to hunt and farm. In Fair Range, this restitution discourse has been less evident.

This throws up certain tensions: where is 'home' (*kumusha*)? In one sense, returning to the space of one's ancestors is going home. But settlers in Gonarezhou, for example, still also refer to Sangwe communal area as their home: 'this weekend I'm going home'. They also have forefathers buried there as well. There is no one 'home' – and there need be no contradiction necessarily in referring to both the communal and resettlement area as home.

There is an age differential as well as an ethnic differential in the degree to which people subscribe to nationalist or restitution discourses on land reform. The young – who have no experience themselves of being evicted from ancestral land and less involvement in traditional ceremonies and beliefs – are more commonly motivated by the need for land as a resource, rather than the need to exercise an historical claim. For these people it is gaining good agricultural land with secure tenure that is the priority – irrespective of where that land is, although there is an obvious preference for land close to one's communal area 'home'.

Tapiwa, aged 30, is a good example of such a person. His parents died when he was young and he was brought up by his grandfather and then an older brother. In the early 1990s he worked at a flea market in Harare, then briefly in Mozambique and on a ranch in KweKwe. In 1996 he 'border-jumped' to work illegally for a construction company in Pretoria – and was arrested and deported in 1997. At this stage he came back to live with his grandmother in Sangwe and – having decided to make a go of farming – enrolled for a 'Master Farmer' training course. However, he lacked land of his own (or any livestock) and was quick to join the farm occupations in 2000, seeing them as a long-awaited opportunity. At first he joined the settlers on Fair Range Ranch. But the occupation of Fair Range was not immediately followed by officially planned resettlement, which would potentially involve more secure tenure, and he moved to Mkwesine Ranch in April 2000 where pegging had started. But at Mkwesine there were clashes between the ethnically Ndaou Gudo community, who neighboured Mkwesine and saw it as 'theirs', and the Shona and Shangaan-speaking settlers.

Tapiwa also perceived that this occupation was more concerned with hunting than agriculture. Driven away he moved to the base camp on Malilangwe. However, after political representations were made at a high level, the settlers on Malilangwe – a well-endowed game ranch – were told to move out; so he ended up back on Fair Range Ranch. He was allocated 25 ha. but the maize he grew in the 2000-2001 season was trampled by the former rancher's cattle. During the early 'demonstration' phase he had to work hard to establish his political credentials to the war veterans – contributing to rallies, drills and *pungwes* (night-time gatherings). In May 2001 Agritex came in and pegged the ranch and he was formally allocated a new plot.

Notwithstanding the relative lack of interest in the restitution discourse by some ethnic and age groups, local politicians in Chiredzi have recognised its power as a campaigning tool and a further strategic logic to justify farm occupations. To an extent this has partly blurred the distinctions between nationalist and restitution political discourses. At campaign rallies in the run up to the parliamentary and presidential elections, politicians superimposed local grievances and land claims on a broader nationalist discourse (of suffering at the hands of whites in the liberation war for land, etc.). In particular these politicians have emphasised the especially brutal liberation war history of the southeast lowveld: the forced relocation of the population into 'protected villages', and the way in which the guerrillas lived side-by-side with wild animals in the bush, protected by local ancestral spirits. As one young settler put it:

*I came here because I wanted to avenge my parents' death because they were killed by whites during the liberation struggle – just because they had cooked for freedom fighters.<sup>18</sup>*

The use of local grievances and ancestral histories to bolster nationalist politics has a long history in Zimbabwe. In the southeast lowveld, the nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo, who was interned in Gonakudzingwa Restriction camp near Gonarezhou National Park, was able to make good use of these to bring the local population to the brink of revolt in the 1960s (Wright, 1972; Wolmer, 2001).

However, the politicisation of local land claims is not always a boost to ZANU(PF) narratives. In the case of the Gonarezhou National Park occupation there is no white landowner to attack. Nor can colonial authorities be blamed when the current government has insisted on maintaining the land as a national park. It is the Department of National Parks and the ministers and provincial leaders who have issued conflicting statements causing confusion who are, in large part, blamed for the situation. Indeed, the government has received considerable criticism from war veterans for not solving the 'land question' earlier.

In Fair Range and Gonarezhou there are a range of different people settling for different reasons: new pioneers, 'weekend farmers', businessmen, poachers, politicians, widows accused of witchcraft amongst others. The following section explores the power relations between these actors and the new institutional and political dynamics of the resettlement areas and Chiredzi district more broadly.

## **New Power Relations, Politics & Institutions**

The social relations of the new 'communities' of settlers are key to any new political dynamics. There are continuities and changes with the social relations typically found in Zimbabwe's communal areas – both are significant. As we have described, these new communities are constituted by people from a mix of ethnic groups, various

areas of origin – both urban and rural and from different districts and provinces – and have a markedly skewed wealth distribution. Superficially the settlers are united only by politics. This new mix has implications for service delivery in the resettlement areas. As an agricultural extensionist complained: ‘We have a new client who we don’t know.’<sup>19</sup> Yet the experience of rapid resettlement has provided a variety of opportunities for new social relations to be formed, in turn bringing about political and institutional reconfiguration. Here we explore this by examining four axes of power and authority: war veterans, committees, ‘traditional’ authority and new elites.

## War Veterans & Militarised Space

A key feature of this new political dynamic is the role played by a rejuvenated movement of veterans from the guerrilla struggle for independence in the 1960s and 70s. Having languished in relative obscurity for 17 years since Independence, the war veterans’ movement suddenly came back to the fore in 1997. In 1980 approximately 20,000 of the 65,000 strong guerrilla armies (ZANLA and ZIPRA) were integrated into the national army, whilst the remainder were demobilised on frugal pensions and encouraged to form cooperatives or return to their communal area homes. In 1989 the Zimbabwe Liberation War Veterans Association was formed as a platform to lobby for compensation and increased pensions (Chitiyo, 2000; Human Rights Watch, 2002). In 1997, after mounting pressure from this association, it became the government’s most serious political threat. Mugabe capitulated and announced a generous package for veterans, including a one-off payment and a monthly pension for life and promised further disbursements. Now owing the government a favour, and riven by faction fighting, the veterans were successfully co-opted by ZANU(PF) who desperately needed an ally (Chitiyo, 2000). As a *de facto* military wing of the party they were used to great effect to campaign in the 2000 and 2002 elections. Irrespective of whether the war veterans occupied farms spontaneously in 2000 or with government encouragement their involvement was essential to the process. They were also symbolically tremendously useful as they personify the rhetorical link between the farm occupations and the ‘unfinished business’ of the liberation war, so important to ZANU(PF)’s renewed sense of militant nationalism and talk of a ‘Third Chimurenga’ (Raftopoulos, 2001; McGregor, 2002; Sachikonye, 2002). The War Veterans Association and ZANU(PF) have deliberately echoed the language and symbols of the liberation war, including: reviving the former enemies (Rhodesians and imperialist, mainly British, aggressors); slogans, *pungwes*, *mujibas* (youth auxiliaries), *chimbwibo* (women supporters/cooks), ‘sell-outs’, and the creation of a new cadre of youth brigades.<sup>20</sup> Even some of the guerrilla tactics, such as arson and stock theft and mutilation, were revived on the occupied farms. Much has been made of the distinction between ‘genuine’ and non-genuine ex-combatants, but in a sense this is less relevant than the fact that, regardless of provenance, the veterans became key political players at the national, provincial, district and micro levels in Zimbabwe; and Chiredzi district is no exception.

In Chiredzi district, as we have seen, the provincial and district chairmen of the War Veterans Association spearheaded a rolling sequence of land occupations after February 2000. A number of properties were occupied in sequence leaving behind a core of ‘demonstration’ occupiers in a base camp on each who were instructed to report back to the district leadership.<sup>21</sup> The organisation of these base camps reveals a highly militarised organisational structure, perhaps unsurprising given the experience of their leaders – the ‘base commanders’ (or in some cases even ‘platoon commanders’). The base camps took on the semblance of a military camp (indeed

tents were actually provided for the Fair Range and Gonarezhou camps by the army). The inhabitants were segregated by gender (men and women were not allowed to be seen together after seven p.m.); they deferred to the orders of the base commander; followed a strict timetable involving morning and evening roll-calls; attended numerous meetings, briefings and *pungwes*; were forbidden to talk to outsiders; and were deployed as sentries to guard against 'infiltrators'. Youths even received military-style drills. Only the state-owned newspaper was allowed in the camps – this was delivered to the base commander for free and translated into Shangaan by the village youth secretaries. As an Agritex official involved in pegging Fair Range saw it: 'there is tough administration there, base commanders act like kraalheads, there is a lot of discipline, tough leaders and kangaroo courts.'<sup>22</sup> Some women from the Fair Range base camp caught sleeping with farm workers, for example, were beaten.<sup>23</sup>

Even after the demonstration phase of the farm occupations gave way to formal, technically planned, fast-track resettlement (see Chaumba et al. 2003), there was still a militarised flavour to the settlement on Fair Range. Settlers were expected to come back from the fields to attend meetings at a moment's notice. Each household had to contribute to a travel allowance fund for the Base Commander to attend meetings higher up the chain of command at the district, provincial and national levels. The war veterans also got the first choice of land allocations during the pegging (20 per cent of the land was officially reserved for them), followed by those who had shown their allegiance by being present in the demonstration phase.

The militarised nature of the farm settler communities was part of a broader pattern of militarisation of Zimbabwean society during 2000-2001. Another aspect of this was the training up of youth militias countrywide. This was the brainchild of the late Minister for Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation, Border Gezi. In the wake of the 2000 parliamentary election there was a realisation in ZANU(PF) that most youth supported the opposition and were influencing their parents. The resulting youth brigades were intended to re-educate the 'lost' youth to 'instil unbiased history of Zimbabwe'<sup>24</sup> and also to be an aggressive campaigning body for the party and foot soldiers in the farm occupations. In Chiredzi North constituency three training camps were established where young men between the ages of 15 and 30 (coerced or offered financial inducement to join) received instruction on 'the land issue in Zimbabwe: why imbalances must be corrected',<sup>25</sup> and were given intensive training in military drills and weapons handling. This was similar to the training some youth had already been receiving on the occupied farms during the demonstration phase (above). The training was conducted by one of the war veteran base commanders from Fair Range. Youth militias subsequently manned roadblocks, forced people to produce ZANU(PF) cards, sourced meat and food from commercial farmers and campaigned vigorously, and sometimes violently, for ZANU(PF).

This was thus an intensely politicised arena. For a settler even to be seen talking to a known opposition activist would be enough for that person to have to flee from the area for their own safety.<sup>26</sup> Access to land in the new resettlement areas was also highly politicised: to participate in resettlement and gain land you have to be ostensibly ZANU-ised; land is expressly not for opposition supporters.<sup>27</sup> Preferably you had to have a proven history of support for the party – those with a well-known MDC (Movement for Democratic Change opposition party) activist as a family member would be very unlikely to receive land. Indeed, the political affiliation of a land applicant was a crucial aspect of their interview as one Base Commander explained:

*People coming in to get land from other areas have to comply with the following. They approach the Village Chairman of the village they intend to settle. Then the Village Chairman accompanies them to the Base Commander for an interview. The Base Commander asks them the following questions: name, where from, which party they belong to, where have they been all along? [They must bring] a letter from their sabuku [village headman], chief and councillor from where they are from [saying] why they have decided to leave their place and why they want to settle here. If the Base Commander is satisfied he writes a supportive letter to the DA [District Administrator] and the Land Committee – and writes the potential plot number. Then they will be issued with a certificate of occupancy.<sup>28</sup>*

Discrimination in settler selection is aided by the fact that no records of deliberations of the reasons for selection or rejection are kept, and there is no provision for appealing rejected applications (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

### **New Village Authority Structures**

In its own way the sudden emergence, seemingly from nowhere, of an integrated top-down system of governance in the new resettlements is as striking as the dramatic physical transformation of the landscape. This new pattern of authority is characterised by a very hierarchical committee-based structure and has parallels with the decentralised party cell and development committee structure of the 1980s (above). The crucial difference is that, whereas previously the separate cells and committees were meant to separate politics from planning and administration, there is now no such pretence. As well as reinvigorating cell and branch party structures, ZANU(PF) has kept a firm controlling hand on the new committees at provincial, district and village levels.

The most important of these new committees are the Provincial and District Land Committees. These were established after an edict came down from the Minister for Local Government and Housing. These were to be chaired by the Provincial Administrator (PA) and District Administrators respectively – the logic being that PAs and DAs, as civil servants, are more likely to be ZANU-ised than some suspect council CEOs (Chief Executive Officers). However, in practice, even this was not enough, and ZANU(PF) politicians and war veterans wield the power on these committees. The Masvingo Provincial Land Committee is effectively chaired by the governor or ZANU(PF) provincial chairman; and the Chiredzi District Land Committee by the district war veterans' leader. Despite the fact that the district land committee is physically located in Chiredzi RDC (Rural District Council) the council has very little input (see below). Alongside the DA and the District Chairman of the War Veterans Association its members include: traditional leaders, the CIO (Central Intelligence Organisation), police, army, and officials from the social welfare, health and veterinary departments.

A new committee structure has also rapidly been established on the fast track resettlement areas. In Fair Range, for example, a war veteran Base Commander is responsible for seven villages. He is supported by a 'Seven Member Committee' with members drawn from the villages to include women and youth league member's and representatives of the traditional leadership. Each village has a committee with a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, vice secretary, treasurer, 'security' member (usually a war veteran responsible for guarding against 'infiltrators'), and an 'ordinary' committee member. In Fair Range, the Village Chairmen tend to be relatively young men appointed by the Base Commander. These are people who

showed themselves to be energetic and loyal to the war veterans and the party during the demonstration phase. These committees in turn report to an 'Overall Committee' for the ranch, chaired by a Shangaan-speaking *sabuku* from Sangwe communal area related to the paramount chief.

This, then, is very far from anarchic or chaotic, as it has been portrayed in the media. It is a tightly disciplined, autocratic, hierarchical authority structure. But are these village committees the 'viable community organisations' needed – according to the United Nations Development Programme – 'to ensure the sustainability of new settlements' (UNDP, 2002:24), or are they part of an 'infrastructure for rural violence and intimidation that subordinates development plans to political ends' (Human Rights Watch, 2002:4)?

## **New Traditionalism**

These new bureaucratic (committee-based) and militaristic authority structures coexist and overlap with so-called 'traditional' authority in interesting ways. This is partly a continuation of an ongoing conflict of authority in rural governance in Zimbabwe. Since the 1999 Traditional Leaders Act, ZANU(PF) has renewed attempts to co-opt traditional authorities into the party having learnt from the experience of Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) of the dangers in attempting to dismiss them. The Act provides for salaried chief and village headmen posts and could be argued to serve as part of the state's attempt to extend its hegemony deeper into rural areas at a time of political discontent.<sup>29</sup> Chiefs and headmen are back – but only on ZANU(PF)'s terms.

Traditional authority lends legitimacy to the government's ongoing anti-colonial rhetoric which posits 'African' culture and heritage in opposition to the mental colonisation of Western Christian civilisation.<sup>30</sup> And, as we have seen, land claims rooted in the grievances of particular chieftaincies who were alienated from their ancestral land carry a particular salience. During the land occupations in Fair Range and Gonarezhou, and other farms in Chiredzi district, the settlers were at pains to consult the local chiefs, elders and traditional healers on the location of graves and sacred areas. Rainmaking ceremonies (*marombo*) were conducted and *chisi* (days of rest) observed. Traditional healers even provided medicines to scare away snakes and other dangers lurking in the bush. As one war veterans leader explained:

*The chief is called whenever a place is invaded to appease ancestral spirits and to tell them that we have come back. The chief appoints someone to do the cleansing.*<sup>31</sup>

This quote is revealing in one respect: the chief is only informed after an occupation. In this respect, to a certain extent it appears that the war veterans have usurped chiefly authority. This war veteran also said:

*Our aim as war veterans is to get land and allocate it to people. We called the chief to appoint a *sabuku* in the resettlement areas.*<sup>32</sup>

And even more explicitly:

*We as war veterans, we work hand-in-hand with traditional leaders, as long as they toe the party line ... We want chiefs who support our programmes and party and we do not want those who work with the enemy.*<sup>33</sup>

Not all settlers agree with this approach. As one put it:

War veterans do not believe in the importance of culture and that's why they want to politicise the issue of chieftainship and can go to the extent of labeling chiefs as opposition supporters. They have actually tried to impose their own chiefs. They say they liberated the country and no one should question them when they do something wrong. Their argument is that they went to war, fought to liberate all the people from colonial rule and therefore they are their own masters.<sup>34</sup>

The war veterans and not chiefs call the shots with regard to where and when the land is occupied and to whom it is allocated. Theoretically chiefs will appoint *sabukus* in new resettlement areas<sup>35</sup> but, in practice, only when called upon by the war veterans. Similarly, the chief, or chief's representative (often traditional healers), has been called upon to witness the allocation of land and be present at ceremonies in the resettlement areas. One chief in Chiredzi district attempted to go beyond merely witnessing land allocation to reintroduce traditional land categories in the new resettlement areas:

I was telling them [the war veterans and councillors] a portion of the land in the new fast track schemes should be reserved for *zunde remambo* [chiefly collective field/granary] or else two to three families be moved into the new areas and their land taken by the chief for this concept.<sup>36</sup>

But these plans have been resisted or ignored by the war veterans and land committees. There is thus a contradiction between a simultaneously reinvigorated and disempowered chieftaincy. But as we shall see, traditional authority and beliefs continue to be taken very seriously and cannot always be straightforwardly co-opted by war veterans and ZANU(PF).

## **New Elites & Policy Entrepreneurs**

A further important grouping to have exerted power in, and derived power and assets from, the recent round of land reform in Chiredzi district – to an extent overlapping with the war veterans, new committee members and traditional leadership – are a 'new elite'. These are 'big men' (usually men) with assets (such as cash, tractors, pickups or pensions), often educated, urban-based professionals. They are not necessarily 'local', but have good local political connections. These are a 'new' elite in the sense that they benefited from the economic liberalisation and the patronage politics of the 1990s. Their recent acquisition of land has, particularly on the larger (A2) plots in Mkwazine Ranch and Hippo Valley estate, opened up new channels of patronage with patron-client relationships based on credit provision, tractor sharing and hiring of labour. There are non-agricultural entrepreneurial opportunities too as seen by the war veteran providing 'security' against poaching for the Save Valley conservancy, the grinding mill and *shabeen* owners and the sellers of domestic commodities in Fair Range.

The activities of these people can of course easily become controversial. One Chiredzi businessman – who also happens to be a senior provincial figure in ZANU(PF) – used his political muscle to 'buy' nine plots in Mkwazine ranch already allocated to settlers and sent them eviction letters. He has now run into problems with the War Veterans Association, as the settlers have resisted eviction.<sup>37</sup>

Many of these new players are war veterans themselves – relatively asset rich because of the payments and pension since 1997 and now, in some cases, in a position ripe for commercial advantage. The Base Commanders have been able to extract meat and

money, game and fencing wire from commercial farmers whose land they have occupied. There have also been frequent negotiations between commercial farmers and Base Commanders over reparations to be paid when farmers' cattle have destroyed settlers' crops. In November 2001, a settler was shot dead by a game guard on Fair Range, and the war veterans negotiated for compensation of head of cattle, Z\$80,000 and funeral expenses to be paid.

Some have been able to exploit their position on the land committee to their own advantage – acting with assumed authority, but taking advantage of the situation to pursue a personal agenda, as was observed of one Chiredzi Land Committee member:

When you fast-track, others get ahead. Other groups were faster than council. We delegated someone from the [council] Natural Resources committee, but he did not report back. It was a blessing in disguise for himself.<sup>38</sup>

[He is] on the land committee in his personal capacity. He has his own personal interests, he does not report back to council. Council is in the dark.<sup>39</sup>

A lot of this new politics is in the form of 'back stage' deals and negotiations between commercial farmers, MPs, councillors and other actors. This is a complex web of 'deal-doing' with scope for enrichment and power for asset-rich opportunists with influence in the party and local connections.

## **Tensions Between Different Power Bases**

These axes of authority have accommodated and tempered each other, but there are also tensions and fractures evident in the way these power bases interact. War veterans, ZANU(PF) politicians, chiefs, businessmen and government administrators have all come into conflict with each other at various stages – as the political allegiances linking them have been strained and broken or refashioned.

The ongoing tension between the new political authority of the war veterans and the old political authority of the chiefs and ancestors outlined above is revealing in this regard. This tension has thrown up dilemmas that are yet to be resolved. A vivid illustration of this was in the Gonarezhou resettlement area at the end of 2001. Not long after the ten villages had been established and people had begun to plough their fields, five of the villages started to be regularly 'attacked' by an elephant which tore down thatching and mud and pole walls, destroying over 30 huts, and chasing people from their fields. As the District War Veterans' Association leader admitted, this was a deeply worrying development and it 'has prompted us to ask questions why this is happening – only one elephant is destroying, yet there are many elephants in Gonarezhou.'<sup>40</sup> The conclusion drawn was that the ancestral spirits of the area must be very angry because there was something about the occupation that was not done correctly – causing offence. The avenging elephant had been sent by the ancestral spirits. The war veterans, via the chief, called in an elder who had moved away to Mozambique to perform the appropriate cleansing ceremony, but it appeared to make no difference and the elephant persisted with its destructive intent.

The situation is further complicated by party political conflicts which implicate the chiefs.<sup>41</sup> As we have seen, ZANU(PF) has been keen to get the chiefs on board and provided various inducements accordingly. On the other hand, perceived support for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) by the chiefs has been actively punished or resulted in their sidelining by government. The paramount chief

in Sangwe is a case in point. He is accused of being an MDC supporter because his son is a well-known MDC activist and he testified in a High Court case brought by the MDC challenging the ZANU(PF) parliamentary election win in Chiredzi North. In March 2001 this led to him being thrown out of the District Land Committee by the Provincial Chairman of the War Veterans' Association.<sup>42</sup> The paramount chief has been sidelined by MPs, councillors and war veterans and has had to go to the length and indignity of calling in a councillor to witness his councils to combat rumours that he is campaigning for the MDC. Perhaps unsurprisingly he has not received or applied for any land in the land reform process.

This, in turn, overlies a power struggle between the paramount chief and a headman who claims the position for himself. The headman is a vocal ZANU(PF) supporter and thus has the support of the ZANU(PF) MPs, councillors and war veterans. Presented as a 'chief' by district war veteran leaders, he has been a key ally in negotiations with central government over the contested Gonarezhou resettlement. The war veterans argue that he should be granted paramountcy by the Ministry of Local Government because of his commitment 'to the interests of landless blacks'. As one war veterans' leader puts it:

He is that kind of a chief who stays in the communal areas unlike ... [the paramount chief]. So ...[the headman] has experienced the shortage of land in the communal areas unlike ...[the paramount].<sup>43</sup>

This dispute has been brought to a head by the physical expansion of chiefly constituencies resulting from the occupation and resettlement of new areas. The war veterans informed the headman that he could appoint sabukus in Gonarezhou. He appointed three, but these were annulled after three weeks because of the intervention of the chief who claimed only he had the authority to make the appointments.

All this is layered on the fraught politics of ethnicity in Chiredzi district. There is a perception among some in the Shangaan community that the land reform process is a land grab by the majority Karanga-Zezuru population, associated with an imposition of cultural dominance, which some politicians have not been averse to exploiting.<sup>44</sup> As Tapiwa puts it:

The problem now is that Fair Range has accommodated more foreigners because of its proximity to Chiredzi town. These foreigners include top businessman in Chiredzi who have other plots in Buffalo Range, Hippo valley and Gonarezhou. They drive to all these areas urging pegging and bribe pegging officers. [We] the Shangaan people now feel cheated and disenfranchised. They are complaining that they have now been dotted all over now resettlement schemes in Chiredzi. They need to bind together, but the programme has to take their culture into account. They want to be resettled along tribal lines in order to them to keep on upholding their norms and values.<sup>45</sup>

The fact that de facto these new authority patterns have put a lot of power into the hands of politically powerful big men who have sometimes been able to run personal quasi-fiefdoms independently of government has also led to tensions. These include the provincial governor going it alone over the Gonarezhou resettlement to the chagrin of the Ministry of Environment of Tourism;<sup>46</sup> the MP for Chiredzi South attracting the censure of the District Land Committee for sanctioning 'unofficial' farm occupations;<sup>47</sup> and a provincial ZANU(PF) official evicting settlers to acquire farms for himself (above).

In the current context chiefs, politicians, war veterans, settlers, businessmen and others hold more than one subject position simultaneously. The blurring and uncertainty between these positions can be exploited by opportunists at all levels.

## **New Arrangements with the State**

Finally we ask how these new emergent local institutions and power relations are articulating with the changes in the national and local state? It should already be evident that war veterans, chiefs, settlers, civil servants and the party are bound up in complex interwoven relationships that are more complicated than simple co-option. In Chiredzi district a number of trends can be observed.

One is the rapid emergence of a new loop of governance that, to a large extent, bypasses orthodox local government. To a remarkable extent, particularly in the early stages of the farm occupations, the War Veterans' Association and party structures supplanted the Rural District Council as the loci of district authority. According to one councillor:

*There was a period when war vets would do what they want. They were not controllable – they would report right from the district officers up to their patron [the President].<sup>48</sup>*

Even more explicitly the Vice-Chairman of the District War Veterans Association told us that:

*We have tried to make sure that each line ministry lure someone with a party history. In fact, we have recommended to the national [war veterans'] body that we deploy some of our members in every government department and if possible Rural District Councils. We found this necessary because some of our efforts to get land were being thwarted by non-partisan government workers who defied orders from us. Some workers have been transferred for lacking patriotism.<sup>49</sup>*

In some parts of Zimbabwe the assault on the power of the RDCs was a very literal one as war veterans invaded and closed down councils – sacking officials for being 'MDC supporters'. In Masvingo Province this happened in Zaka, Chivi and Mwenezi districts;<sup>50</sup> however, Chiredzi RDC was spared closure by the war veterans. This might be accounted for by the fact that, during most of this period, Chiredzi RDC had no substantive CEO or DA. The Acting DA was also acting as an ex-officio CEO. This meant that, in contrast to some districts, the RDC executive was perceived as relatively weak and not a threat to the power of the politically appointed (i.e. ZANU(PF)) DAs. The party war veterans were able to exert considerable influence without 'sacking' the RDC. They did this through their de facto control of the District Land Committee which emerged as the most powerful institution in the district. The RDC had, in a sense, been collapsed into one committee and the DA, as nominal chairman, was under strict instruction to listen to the war veterans.

As we have seen, certain politicians have been able to carve out a great deal of power. The Provincial Governor, in particular, has had massive degree of influence in the designation of farms for resettlement and in the selection of settlers. He was able, for instance, to 'instruct' Chief Chitsa to get his people to occupy Gonarezhou and Agritex to peg it.<sup>51</sup> However, this power has backfired when he personally has been blamed by settlers for the delisting of properties and evictions – and labelled a sell-out.<sup>52</sup> ZANU(PF) MPs and councillors walk a similar tightrope. They currently have a close relationship with the war veterans, traditional leaders and local entrepreneurs, but are very conscious of having not lived up to expectations and demands in the past.

Perhaps unsurprisingly these developments have left the technical and bureaucratic branches of the state marginalised in many respects.<sup>53</sup> Although Agritex officials, for example, have been busier than ever pegging resettlement plots they are confused: 'We need to know who is reporting to who. The authority structure is very unclear'.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, a RDC official complained that:

We are losing revenue. Occupiers are refusing to pay tax. ... As council we are not directly involved. The whole thing is being run by the DA's office. We gather information only through the grapevine.<sup>55</sup>

Different sectors appear fragmented and confused with little co-ordination between, for example, Agritex, the Department of Veterinary Services and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management. This confusion is paralleled at the national level, with mixed messages and repeated changes of policy issuing from different departments – as for example in pronouncements on land reform in the conservancies (Wolmer et al. forthcoming). In a state of heightened politicisation of the local state and suspicion of educated personnel in rural areas, most officials are wary of speaking out too openly.

A final point to make is on the role of civil society organisations in the new resettlement areas. The striking fact is that they are largely absent. These spaces fall outside of the realm of NGOs working in the communal areas. This is partly for political reasons: NGOs tend to be identified by war veterans and ZANU(PF) supporters as 'opposition' who should keep out of resettlement areas (see Human Rights Watch, 2002; NGOs working with farm workers, for example, have been ejected from farms or threatened); and partly because – notwithstanding the village committees – these new areas are yet to have a formally recognised administrative structure with which NGOs can engage.

## Conclusion

The events surrounding the farm occupations in Zimbabwe's lowveld since 2000 have created new livelihood opportunities and new spaces of authority, recasting conventional understandings of the role of the 'state', 'civil society' and 'traditional' authority in Zimbabwe. The tensions we have highlighted between authoritarian nationalism and ethnic politics, between a militarised, modernist order and 'traditional' religion and authority have created a complex political mosaic, made up of multiple and overlapping identities and positions. In the resettlement areas this new politics has been made manifest in new institutions structured around a hierarchically organised series of committees, linked into a new loop of governance, often by-passing existing state structures. On top of this, opportunities for a patrimonial politics have emerged, as certain actors have taken advantage of the fluidity, dynamism, and sometimes apparent chaos of recent times.

As we have seen, the resettlement areas are populated by a wide range of actors, with different motivations, origins, identities and livelihoods. While there is continuity with the patterns of social and economic differentiation found in the neighbouring communal areas, there is also change. The resettlement areas are providing opportunities for the landless poor to engage in farming, for business people to expand their markets, for single women to escape abusive social strictures and for others to find temporary work as agricultural labourers. In the case of the former Fair Range Ranch, the composition of this population is highly skewed in terms of access to resources – both material and political. This is creating a new pattern of livelihood

opportunity based on new political, social and economic ties that have the potential to recast Zimbabwe's dualistic legacy of racially divided communal and commercial spaces and actors. This, then, is a thoroughly politicised landscape in which settlers and non-settlers, whether they like it or not, have to negotiate relationships with new patrons and enter into new institutional arrangements if they are to sustain or improve their livelihoods. What the livelihood opportunities in the new resettlement areas will be in the future is, of course, unknown. The current situation is in flux, subject to the ongoing micro-politics of local negotiations and social networks, combined with the playing out of conflicts over party politics, ethnicity and identity. However, what is certain is that this new political and institutional milieu will be very different to what went before. Understanding these new contexts and processes, as this paper has attempted to do for a limited area over a short space of time, is an essential task for any concerned with the future of rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

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## Endnotes

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1. *The Observer*, 12 November 2000, 'Africa Environment and Wildlife', February 2001, Greenline, No. 19, *Zimbabwe Standard* 1 October 2000

2. However some of their cattle and game sections were occupied and there was ongoing labour unrest during the farm occupation period. In November 2001 portions of Hippo Valley Estate were being pegged for 'A2' settlers (see below).

3. Data compiled from interviews with settlers and Commercial Farmers' Union 'situation reports' (<http://www.samara.co.zw/cfu/news/sitrep.htm>).

4. 'Fresh invasions hit Masvingo' *Daily News* 21 August 2000; 'Thousands in fresh farm invasions in Masvingo' *Daily News* 21 September 2000, and CFU situation reports.

5. Two broad models for resettlement were defined during this period. The A1 model is based on allocations of individual arable and usually communal grazing, with village settlements. The A2 model assumes a small-scale commercial production unit, with farm and business plans.

6. In particular there was concern about impact of this on the Transfrontier Park scheme linking Gonarezhou with Kruger National Park in South Africa and Coutada 16 hunting reserve in Mozambique; and fears of a Foot and Mouth disease outbreak; see 'Invasions threaten peace park' *Mail and Guardian* 1 November 2001; 'No people were resettled in game park, says Nhema' *Daily News* 13 July 2001.

7. See: 'Gonarezhou demarcated for resettlement' *Zimbabwe Independent* 11 May 2001; 'State approves resettlement of 600 families in the Gonarezhou' *Daily News* 8 September 2001.

8. Pseudonyms have been used for all named interviewees.

9. The certificates state: 'This serves to certify that the above named has permission to occupy stand no \_\_\_; under Gonarezhou Farm and is permitted to put up residential structures and carry our farming activities under Chiredzi RDC as per conditions set out the land fast track resettlement allocation form.'
10. Interviews, Fair Range 24 June 2002.
11. Interview, Village 10, Gonarezhou 13 December 2001.
12. Interview with settler, Village 5, Fair Range 10 December 2002. It is, of course, possible that some settlers have left cattle in the communal areas – and are not yet willing to bring them onto the resettlement area, because, despite the prevalence of grazing, they are afraid of predators and disease and the lack of watering points.
13. Interviews, Village 1, Fair Range 26 January 2002.
14. Interview, Fair Range 24 June 2002.
15. Interview, Village 10, Gonarezhou 13 December 2001.
16. This nationalist land discourse is frequently invoked by President Mugabe. Typically he writes: '*Land remains a principal and loaded marker of frontiers of our being, both as individuals and as sovereign nations; a marker whose utility and symbolism runs the whole gamut, right down to the common man and woman in the village. For us life comes from, flourishes on and ultimately ends in land. Our loss of it through colonial conquest went deeper in meaning than the mere loss of a means of production. It amounted to the loss of our being*' (<http://www.zimbabwepeoplefirst.com>).
17. Interview with settler, Gonarezhou 20 November 2001.
18. Interview with Agritex officer, Masvingo 17 November 2001.
19. One white farmer in Chiredzi, ingeniously but unsuccessfully, claimed war veterans status for himself because he had fed guerrillas on this farm. This he contended should prevent his farm from being resettled.
20. Interview with District Chairman of War Veterans Association 29 October 2001.
21. Interview with Senior Agricultural Extension Officer, Chiredzi 21 November 2001.
22. Interview with Fair Range settlers, 3 December 2001.
23. *The Herald* 28 January 2002.
24. Youth Brigade Training Manual
25. Interview with Base Commander, Fair Range 10 February 2002.
26. Further evidence for this elsewhere in Zimbabwe is supplied by Human Rights Watch (2002).
27. Interview with Base Commander, Fair Range 10 February 2002.
28. Chiefs' and headmen's allowances were also substantially increased in the run up to the 2000 and 2002 elections and promises of vehicles and secretaries made. This parallels the colonial era tactics of conferring a territorial rather than an ancestral definition of authority on chiefs, and paid co-option by the state.
29. Promoters of 'traditional' Zimbabwean culture, such as the Heritage Foundation, have gained great exposure in the state-owned media.
30. Interview with senior member of War Veterans Association, Chiredzi, 29 October 2001.
31. Interview with senior member of War Veterans Association, Chiredzi, 29 October 2001.
32. Interview with senior member of War Veterans Association, Chiredzi, 24 June 2002.
33. Interview, Village 1 Fair Range, 16 June 2002.
34. Section 29 of the Traditional Leaders Act provides that any area of resettlement land may be brought under the authority of a communal area chief (UNDP, 2002).

35. Interview with chief 9 December 2001.
36. 'Zanu PF official defies order to surrender plots', *Daily News* 13 May 2002.
37. Interview, Councillor, Chiredzi District 20 November 2001.
38. Interview Chiredzi RDC 22 November 2001.
39. Interview with senior member of War Veterans Association, Chiredzi 29 October 2001.
40. 'Chiefs have a role in land distribution' *Sunday Mail* 22 April 2001; 'Chief attacks land reforms' *Daily News* 24 October 2001.
41. 'War vets besiege district administrator's office' *Daily News* 14 March 2001.
42. Interview with senior member of War Veterans Association, Chiredzi, 24 June 2002.
43. 'Tribal clashes on farms' *Zimbabwe Independent* 14 September 2001.
44. Interview, Village 1, Fair Range, 16 June 2002
45. 'Zim's wildlife falls prey to politics' *Zimbabwe Independent* 3 November 2000.
46. 'Baloyi at odds with land committee', *Daily News* 18 July 2001.
47. Interview with Sangwe communal area Councillor 14 December 2001.
48. Interview with Vice-chair, District War Veterans Association, Chiredzi, 28 June 2002.
49. See McGregor (2002) for an analysis of this process in Matabeleland.
50. Interview with Sangwe Communal Area Councillor 21 November 2001.
51. 'Invaders defy order' *Daily News* 9/10/2001. And see '30 000 occupy Nuanetsi Ranch' *Daily News* 19 June 2001; 'Govt denies plans to open Nuanetsi Ranch for resettlement' *The Mirror* 20 July 2001.
52. Yet surprisingly the formal and technical tools of land-use planning continue to have considerable purchase (see Chaumba et al. 2003).
53. Interview with Agritex officer, Harare 14 November 2001.
54. Interview, Chiredzi RDC 22 November 2001.

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# New Information & Communication Technology Use by Muslim Mourides in Senegal

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*Cheikh Guèye*

**Historically, Senegal has gambled heavily on the potential of New Information & Communication Technologies (NICTs). Indeed, in an environment dominated by oral communication, state-controlled radio broadcasting has been a tool for the reproduction of power (Sagna, 2000). What, then, would be the social and political impact of liberalising and transnationalising the audiovisual media, as well as of ending state control over tools of mass propaganda? The national telecommunications company (SONATEL) undertook a bold initiative, beginning in 1985, to develop the country's telephone service. The resulting system, which was implemented gradually and consists of an all-digital fiber optic network, provides a national coverage which is second to none in West Africa. SONATEL continues to modernise its basic network, providing expanded teleservices and facilitating development of the information superhighway. In the last three years alone, there has been an extraordinary increase in the number of minutes Senegalese have spent online. This revolution in ICTs provides a foundation for a 'civilisation of the universal', to use Léopold Sédar Senghor's phrase, and poses a major challenge for Senegal's increasingly urban, internationally-oriented society.**

*L'information et la communication constituent des enjeux forts pour la société sénégalaise, permettant le contrôle du pouvoir et des hommes. Les notions de frontière, de citoyenneté, d'encadrement évoluent aujourd'hui plus vite qu'avant et des groupes socio-économiques nouveaux sortent de l'ombre ou se réinventent sous l'influence des Nouvelles Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication (NTIC). La pénétration progressive des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication au Sénégal depuis le début du siècle s'est faite essentiellement par les villes. Leur succès en milieu urbain est lié à la conjugaison de leur forte capacité de mise en réseau à celle de la ville.*

*La nouvelle révolution des TIC qui fonde et accélère la formation d'une « civilisation de l'universel » (d'après l'expression de Léopold Sédar Senghor) constitue un enjeu important pour l'avenir du Sénégal et pour celui d'une société sénégalaise de plus en plus urbanisée et de plus en plus tournée vers l'extérieur. Touba, ville religieuse et deuxième centre urbain du pays, a été le lieu d'observation de la relation urbanisation croissante-appropriation des NTIC. Son urbanisation fulgurante est, contrairement à Dakar où le rôle fondateur de l'Etat est primordial, le résultat d'une prise en charge volontariste d'une confrérie religieuse musulmane qui a joué au début du siècle un rôle de remplacement des structures sociales traditionnelles de la société wolof, ethnique dominante au Sénégal. La confrérie mouride qui*

représente aujourd'hui plus du 1/3 de la population sénégalaise est un puissant groupe socio-religieux connu pour son dynamisme agricole et commercial, son enracinement, son internationalisation croissante et sa capacité d'adaptation aux innovations. Elle s'est ainsi largement projetée sur les espaces conquis et sur ceux de la ville qui sont des chantiers permanents où la production urbaine modernisante est un instrument d'auto-promotion sociale et religieuse. Le Mouridisme semble être l'exemple d'une société à forte identité locale mais qui se transnationalise et suit le mouvement de la mondialisation en domestiquant les NTIC. Il invente ainsi une forme de religion migrante dont les reterritorisations multiformes renouvellent les symboles et les recomposent sans cesse.

*Le choix de Touba pour appréhender les termes d'une appropriation particulière des NTIC au Sénégal et notamment par les sociétés urbaines sénégalaises est à la fois pertinent et provocateur. En effet, si Touba est un laboratoire et un analyseur intéressant de l'urbanisation croissante de la société sénégalaise et de la construction parallèle d'une ou d'identités translocales du fait de sa diasporisation accélérée dans le monde, il demeure également le point d'ancrage fort d'une confrérie qui a des valeurs et des pratiques qui même si elles se transforment en se diffusant n'en restent pas moins singulières et conservées. Sous ce rapport, les analyses qui seront faites dans cette étude vaudront sans doute en partie pour la société sénégalaise dont les Mourides constituent plus du 1/3, mais elles révéleront également la singularité de la confrérie mouride.*

Touba, the country's second-largest city, and a major religious centre, is useful for observing the intersecting forces of increasing urbanisation and NICT use. Touba's development is the result of an initiative undertaken at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Mouride Muslim sect, whose aim was to replace traditional social structures associated with Senegal's dominant ethnic group, the Wolof. More than a third of all Senegalese are Mourides, who constitute a powerful socio-religious group known for its agricultural and commercial activities, its deep-rooted traditions, its increasingly international orientation, and its capacity for adaptability and innovativeness (Guèye, 1999). The choice of Touba as a site for studying the appropriation of NICTs in Senegal is both appropriate and provocative, for while Touba serves as a laboratory for analysing Senegal's increasing urbanisation and the parallel formation of translocal identity, it is also home to a sect whose values and practices, while changing under the influence of that diaspora, have retained their singular character.

In today's increasingly networked society, *globalisation* and *identity* are 'two opposing forces ... struggling to remake our world and our lives' (Castells, 1999:11). Associated with the first of these forces are the following:

*A specific form of organization: networks. The flexibility and instability of work, and the individualization of labor. A culture of virtual reality created by a diversified system of media that communicate with each other and have universal penetration. And the transformation of the basic material dimensions of life, space and time: network society is a place of flow and of 'non-temporal' time, which are an expression of its dominant activities and governing elites (Castells, 1999:11-12).*

In apparent opposition to such economic globalisation is identity, which manifests itself more strongly than ever, defying cosmopolitanism, 'in the name of cultural individuality and individuals' control over their life and environment' (Ibid). Relatedly, territory is a theoretical framework derived from the geographic projection of a society's structures and values. It is an identity-based concept, carrying legal, social, cultural and emotional significance, often defined by the sense of belonging

and by the emergence, within it, of collective representations. My hypothesis is that NICTs constitute new territory to be conquered by Mourides; the desired and actual projection of *marabout* society – its political functioning, its cultural and religious realities, and its economic dynamism – into an ever-expanding space, both in Senegal and abroad, makes ‘territory’ an appropriate term of reference and basis for analysis. The limits that can be placed on territory depend, however, on the dominance of the society and the extent to which it controls geographic space. The appropriation of territory may be ethnic, religious, linguistic and/or political in nature, or may be based on other values or identities. Territory can be continuous or discontinuous, material, virtual and/or ideal. NICTs constitute territorialising tools that weaken or eliminate constraints on the realities of distance and space. They transform territory, and can themselves constitute a territory for a given group. The utility of the notion of territory lies in the fact that it is seen not only as a reality, but also as a quest, a utopia. Mourides appear to be an example of a group that, while possessing a strong local identity, becomes transnational and follows the trend toward globalisation by harnessing NICTs. They are thus inventing a form of migratory religion in which new territorialisation is constantly renewing and reshaping the religion’s symbols (Bava and Guèye, 2001).

### **The Urban Element: a Successful Innovation for the Mourides**

Although the Mouride brotherhood has created a presence for itself in rural Senegal, its territory encompasses an urban component that includes, above all, the country’s cities. Mourides have managed to gain a foothold in the city while maintaining links among themselves and with their *marabout* ‘executive corps’, thus belying the pessimism of observers who believed that the ‘urbanisation movement is not designed in a way that makes things easy for sect leaders’ (O’Brien, 1981:21). At present, Mourides control both informal trade and the transportation sector, with the latter reportedly representing close to 60 per cent of GDP and employing roughly 640,000 individuals, of whom 45 per cent are in Dakar. A study of the mechanisms by which Mourides appropriate NICTs must therefore address the use of these technologies by the informal sector in Senegal’s cities.

ICT use has become an integral part of Mouride strategy for challenging the influence of the majority Tidiane sect, with Mouride upward mobility becoming a dominant model in Senegal’s urban environments and elsewhere. Radio and television have played a central role in this endeavour, functioning as the mouthpiece of the sect’s spiritual head, the *khalif*, during the massive mobilisations, which are so indispensable to the sect’s large-scale collective celebrations. Such events provide a vital point of communion between Mourides and their central authority. There are at least three times a year when these radio broadcasts draw large audiences in areas of Mouride influence.

First is the eve of the rainy season when, according to a well-established tradition, the *khalif* signals the beginning of the planting season. This serves as the occasion for other *marabouts* and disciples to initiate their own agricultural activities. While this tradition derives from the mimetic function of the *marabout*-disciple relationship, it is also the result of the unpredictable nature of Senegal’s climate over many generations. Disciples, who regard the *marabout* as a man of enlightenment, believe that beginning their activities at the same time as their *marabout* will insure them against the effects of drought. Thus, disciples listen for optimistic predictions about the rainy season. The message is also the starting point for the return of Mouride seasonal migrants who move to the cities during the dry season and return to cultivate their fields during the rainy season.

Second is the great Touba pilgrimage (*magal*) which is the sect's main collective event. All Mourides regard this eagerly-anticipated moment as a special occasion that, today, brings together some hundreds of thousands of people. The *Khalif* calls for the mass participation of Mourides dispersed throughout the world, reminding them of their duties as disciples, and of the principles at the heart of this major religious occasion.

Third is the *Khalifal* declaration during the 'official ceremony' marking the end of the pilgrimage. This is the moment that serves as a barometer of the relations between *Khalifal* and governmental authorities, as well as an indication of the 'terms of trade' for services between the two parties (Coulon, 1981). It is in this statement that the *Khalif* thanks the State on behalf of the brotherhood (if the State's actions are deemed to warrant it) and articulates Mouride demands for the future. Anyone familiar with the importance to Senegal's political stability of the Mouride-State relationship will appreciate that the significance of this statement cannot be over-emphasised, particularly on the eve of local and national elections, when its significance is heightened several-fold. Television coverage of the great *magal* is a highly important political matter with every detail being controlled by the brotherhood as part of a communications strategy which is, itself, part of the proselytising mission that the sect continues to direct at the world at large. Video cassettes of the gathering are sold in all areas where disciples have settled, evoking and disseminating the emotion of the event.

While these three occasions are eagerly anticipated each year, radio broadcasts are also used at other times to bring messages of *Khalifal* authority to the sect's urban disciples. One such example is the announcement of major works being carried out by the brotherhood – announcements that have occurred periodically during the construction phase of most of Touba's infrastructure. Funds for these works have been raised in a matter of days as a result of the emotional impact and effectiveness of these radio broadcasts: approximately 100 million CFA francs for the Well of Mercy (*Ainou Rahmati*), some 300 million CFA francs for the Touba Library, and billions for successive extensions of the Grand Mosque. Moreover, since radio reaches the entire nation, it has been the primary means for spreading the call for land clearance/settlement, both for rural inhabitants and for Mourides living in the cities. Radio is also used to announce future (and celebrate past) devotional events and other religious activities.

Clearly, radio and television are important to the sect. For instance, a 1983 lawsuit concerning the broadcast of a message by the sect aroused the anger of *Khalif* Serigne Abdoul Ahad, who, at that point, threatened to launch a Mouride radio station. In the event, several FM stations aimed primarily at Mourides (and the informal sector more generally) have been established in Dakar. Some carry out a proselytising function, with an increasing number of broadcasts dealing with the teachings of Sheik Ahmadou Bamba, the sect's founder; advertising spots are often preceded by jingles made up of psalms (*khassâides*) by the Sheik. Furthermore, as part of a strategy to establish its autonomy, the sect has been gradually developing its vision for its own audiovisual outlet. Today, movements, such as the old *dahira* directed by Mouride students, are attempting to make this vision a reality, with plans to create a Mouride television station in Touba. In the event, the station, already in existence, is fully equipped and has, for some years, broadcast programmes of the great pilgrimage. However, because of the government's refusal to grant it official authorisation, it has been unable to launch full operations.

Given the nature of the urban environment, which can lead to social alienation, particularly for a sect with a strong rural identity, radio and television have been major tools in the *marabout*-disciple relationship. These media have helped to promote a sense of collective identity for those living in cities, and the current proliferation of private radio stations on the FM band has strengthened the sect's traditions by providing full-length broadcasts and regular presenters. But State media also play a major role in promoting the status or lineage of the brotherhood's holy men or *marabouts*, with such media 'participat[ing] in constructing and reproducing an identity that gives lesser *marabouts* the status of "dignitaries"' (Diop and Diouf, 1990:330), through television and/or radio coverage of the *magals* and kinship gatherings. These commemorations extol the individual or collective charisma of *marabouts*, serve to reinforce the latter's commitment to their disciples, and help to consolidate state political support for the brotherhood. These are moments of political *ndigël* that support a clientelist relationship. The *marabouts* are not mere 'poachers' infringing 'on the territory of political entrepreneurs', as Diop and Diouf (1990) have written. Rather, they are themselves political entrepreneurs whose legitimacy is based on what Jean François Médard (1992) refers to as 'overlapping positions'. They use their religious resources to strengthen their political and economic positions and, conversely, use political resources to enhance their charisma and saintliness.

Photography should also be regarded as an information and communications technology, since it is a means for producing images for dissemination on television and on the internet. Photographing the saints and the sect's major religious symbols plays an important role in territorial expansion, providing a reminder to the faithful and aiding in the effort to disseminate the sect's beliefs to the outside world. Part of being a member of the sect includes carrying a photograph of the particular saint with whom one is identified; this image, by helping to overcome the distance between the parties, supports the *marabout*-disciple relationship. French colonial forces often used photography to surveil persons believed to be potential opponents of their plans, with these images being included in the files that the French maintained on these individuals. These photographs were later reappropriated by the sect, which felt a need and duty to use the most forceful symbols possible to maintain cohesiveness among its increasingly dispersed members. The best known and most widely disseminated photograph is certainly that of Sheik Ahmadou Bamba. Not surprisingly, it is the subject of a study by Roberts and Roberts (1998), who reconstruct the history and significance of this photograph, which gives meaning and identity to the Sheikh even while becoming, in the process, the sect's most important emblem.

The migration of disciples to the cities, beginning in the 1940s, is unquestionably part of (and one stage in) the secularization of Mouridism (or *mouridiyya*), representing the dissemination and establishment of a new territorial base and provoking a renewed and ever stronger identity. More than merely a sect or a movement, this represents a group creating and recreating its cohesiveness, socialising within and beyond its traditional social, spatial and symbolic areas. NICTs have been an element in this socialisation. The city represents merely a stage in the translocalisation – or even transnationalisation – of the Mouridiyya:

*[t]ransnationalisation, as we construe it, means the expansion of a religion beyond its original borders ... rooted in a land-based frame of reference, particularly through an attachment to holy places, and marked by certain original features of its ethnic and national identity ... Such a process may be illustrated by the history of Senegal's Mourides, the history of Zaire's Kimbanguism, or the history of divine Christianity (André, 2000:72).*

International migration and the appropriation of NICTs are a continuation of this process. In this context, the holy city of Touba continues to be the place that embodies the sacred thought and power of the Sheik. The delocalised religious system works due to a circularity between centre and periphery, a productive exchange of symbolic and material goods.

### **Emergence of a New Urban Pole in Senegal**

Senegalese Islam is strongly sect-based, and the autonomous quality of its sects (*vis-à-vis* the state and other sects) is reflected in religious centres, whose strengths derive either from their link with the colonial-based urban network or from their own volunteer activity, often supported by the State. The city is thus religious; '[o]ne often finds the sacred there, and it is the sacred that seems to have given rise to the collective life' (Racine, 1993:355). At the same time, NICTs are a factor in attracting people to cities like Touba, which act as magnets that both attract and disperse people. Toubiens are exceptionally mobile, with 94.3 per cent having migrated at least once during their lifetime. It is Touba's role in facilitating the spread of Mouridism that gives the city its meaning, its *raison d'être*. This process might be referred to as the 'seeding' and 'harvest' of the territory, as conservation by the city and within the city. The marking of territory through the diaspora of the saints, on the one hand, and the burial of the 'saint of saints' in Touba, on the other, are two apparently contradictory dynamics at play. Without Touba, it would have been impossible to focus the religious spirit and attain its full strength – both in terms of the sacred and the memory it evokes. At the same time, it is the territory beyond Touba that has allowed the sect to discover the possibilities for extending its global reach.

The land is part of a Mouride identity, which is constructed through defensive anchoring, as well as through borrowings and appropriations. In this sense, globalisation, rather than being contradictory to identity, as Castells (1999) seems to suggest, is used to promote it. This issue deserves further examination as it relates to the sect's Wolof heritage, the difficulty of distinguishing between religious and ethnic identities, and the reconstruction of these identities under the influence of forces such as migration and the appropriation of NICTs. Will today's transnationalised territory be shaped by the use of NICTs? Will NICTs deprive Mouridism of its personality and its roots, or will they, on the contrary, enhance its global reach? NICTs tend to blur the boundaries between city and country, between local and global, and are important vehicles for transmitting religious values across different types of society. In a Touba characterised by rapid change, NICTs constitute a veritable revolution; they embody changes on a mass scale, providing major challenges for the city, for Mourides who have adopted life in the city, as well as for those who live away from the city.

The new Mouride, in spite of a highly international orientation, views Touba as an anchor and a source of personal identity. S/he creates an urban society with a strong sense of identity, a mental construct of the Touba homeland, a particular lifestyle and a distinct world view. This can be seen, as Tall (1996) demonstrates in strong long-distance relationships that are both social and economic, and that increasingly make use of NICTs. Audio and video cassettes sent from home allow émigrés to share in the events and spirit of the city. These cassettes do not only contain lengthy messages from the family. They also provide updates on the latest battles in traditional conflicts; baptisms and marriages that drive clothing fashions; the latest music, dances, etc. In this way, the émigré can see children growing up, girls about to be married, and can participate more fully in his or her country of origin. For Mourides,

moreover, these cassettes are carriers of the images and sounds from pilgrimages, religious events, the messages of the *Khalif*, and religious speeches. They are listened to collectively or individually, with listening an occasion for socialization and for building group identity. Systems of dissemination, through lending and through formal and informal exchanges, are increasingly evident and are highly effective. Satellite radio is another technological innovation that is beginning to play a role in shaping the relationship between émigrés and their country of origin; through the broadcasts of digital satellite radio WorldSpace, for example, émigrés are able to listen to Senegalese stations. It is, however, by telephone that émigrés create and maintain the strongest links with their country of origin. A Senegalese émigré spends between 5 per cent and 30 per cent of his or her income on telephone calls, despite the decline in the price of calling and the flat rates offered by telecommunications companies in order to attract customers.

Touba's attractiveness is due, among other things, to the status it has achieved as a true financial centre. Billions of CFA francs are handled locally, including gifts to *marabouts* (the *Khalif*, in particular) and remittances by hundreds of thousands of Mourides spread throughout the world – remittances sent to finance the construction of their houses, family living expenses, the *magal*, communal projects, etc. The Touba post office, the least important local channel for incoming remittances, still handles between two and four million CFA francs daily between September and March, and some five to six million CFA francs between April and September.

The latter period is the lean period for the rural population (the so-called 'hungry season'), when road maintenance and construction begins again, and when preparations for the great Touba *magal* are underway. It is also a period which coincides with a massive increase in the number of telephone calls received locally, usually by the families of émigrés living abroad. The latter also send money orders, either directly to their relatives or, more rarely, through merchants, who in turn disburse such money to families. Most remittance, however, arrives via returning émigrés or importers operating at the Sandaga market (the largest informal market in Dakar) who are entrusted with remittances during business trips abroad. These traders buy merchandise abroad with the money, and pay it back gradually to designated beneficiaries on their return home. Recently, banks have begun to play a role, though there is no local tradition of interaction with, and little confidence in, the formal banking system. Significantly, the latest system for sending money to Touba reflects a trend that increasingly rejects official routes, depending instead on an autonomous organisation, Kara International Exchange, which utilises NICTs.

Tall (1999:7) describes the operations of Kara International Exchange, which was founded by disciples of Serigne Modou Kara, one of the rising stars of the Mouride brotherhood, as follows:

*After cashing the amount needed for the transfer plus commission, Kara's New York office sends a request, by fax, to its Dakar office, to remit the amount deposited by the émigré to the person he or she has designated as recipient. The émigré is responsible for providing the information about the recipient and often, at his or her own expense, calls the corresponding office by phone ... The time required for delivery is short, rarely more than 12 hours.*

Kara has developed a relationship, above all, with Sandaga market, but the strong ideological and financial links between Sandaga and Touba lead one to suppose that some of the money sent via Kara ends up in Touba. In addition to the New York-Dakar axis, there are services elsewhere using the Kara model – primarily serving as

links to Touba from Italy and Spain. These informal services offer freight and transit facilities, handling car spare parts and replacement engines, equipment and appliances of all types, second-hand cars, as well as computers and cellular telephones. The role of international émigrés in the arrival, in Touba, of large sums of money is also highlighted by the emergence of an informal currency exchange market; foreign currency can be exchanged in the *Ocass* market, immediately in front of a branch of the city's bank. Clearly, the world of NICTs represents new territory to conquer and tame – both for the local urban society and for Mourides scattered throughout the world.

### **The Paradox of the Telephone in Touba**

The installation of a telephone network in Touba occurred in the 1960s, following the building of the Grand Mosque and an accompanying influx of people to the city; the first six lines saw the second *Khalif* and some blood relatives becoming 'wired up'. The layout of the network was informed by 'central place' thinking, focused as it was on the Esplanade of the Grand Mosque, Touba's centre in both symbolic and geographic terms. Subsequently, the number of telephone lines increased steadily, although later growth was limited by technical factors and the lack of a mass market in Touba. It was, however, the construction of the automatic switching station in 1986 with its 1,000-line capacity for Touba and another Mouride centre 30 kilometers away, that launched a real telephone explosion although it was immediately evident that even this facility was inadequate for a rapidly-increasing demand.

The SONATEL Planning Division has 'always had a rather serious problem with Touba, never having been able to predict its demographic development', despite its use of 'complex planning tools' to inform decisions about the capacity of the Touba facility (Sarr, 2000). Three extensions between 1988 and 1993 brought total capacity to 5,000 lines without preventing saturation of the central facility. Local requests for lines in 1990 represented some 75 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively, of requests in the wider Diourbel region and nationally. Thanks to the growing number of requests in Touba, the Diourbel region is second only to Dakar in terms of demand for telephone connections. Not surprisingly, the number of lines in Touba tripled to nearly 4000 between 1986 and 1994, with some 2000 requests still pending in the latter year.

Consequently, SONATEL embarked on a massive 14 billion CFA franc investment project which was, above all, a response to the need to exploit the rapidly-expanding market in Touba to the full, and thus maximise profitability. In part, therefore, the investment was in anticipation of a huge increase in demand which was expected to result from the survey/delineation and sale of some 110,000 residential plots for development as part of the *Khalif's* new Housing Development plan. But it was partly, too, to overcome the technical obstacles created by the sprawling nature of the city, through rendering the network secure and providing a significant improvement in communications quality. Thus a complex system of four new switching stations with expandable memory has been created with Touba at its centre, while the old switching station has been moved to another region. Consequently, the number of lines doubled between 1995 and 1996 to reach a total of 9,911, and increased even further to 13,246 in 1999.

With the recent conversion of the switching centre to digital and, subsequently, to fiber optic, the SONATEL network in Touba has traversed all the different stages in the technological development of the telephone within a few years. This shows how,

in the field of NICTs, the process of catching up is easier than in other areas. Indeed, for SONATEL, Touba is an experimental area in which all technological innovations are rapidly implemented, including support for development of the Internet as well as for a cellular phone network. Following investment by its mobile subsidiary since 1997, SONATEL could claim complete autonomy from the national electrical grid, with its deficiencies and unpredictability. SONATEL currently adopts a prospective and anticipatory approach for Touba which takes account of the *Khalif's* development plan (once a portion of the *Khalif's* plan has been implemented, SONATEL installs its network), without neglecting other initiatives (for example, the Works Plan 97/2000, involving an expenditure of approximately eight billion CFA francs, and which aims to increase/expand the capacity of the Touba network to almost 30,000 lines, is also underway).

Clearly, Touba is a paradox in at least two ways. First, it is a place where Mourides have settled and continue to settle and, at the same time, a crossroads and centre of mobility that stimulates activity in the larger Mouride territory. Second, in terms of telecommunications, Senegalese regional capitals play a dominant role and serve as focal points for outlying areas. However, because of the overwhelming importance of Touba, the Diourbel region constitutes an exception: its network is therefore configured differently, in a manner which runs counter to the norm.

### **Local Calls**

The Diourbel region (which includes Touba) boasts the second highest number of telephone lines in the country, but only ranks third after Dakar and Thiès in terms of telecommunications traffic, including local calls. As local calling can be correlated with the level of development in a region, or with the financial resources of its population, the relative volume of local calls in Touba and Diourbel shows the scope of urbanisation as well as being evidence of expanding local economic life – a life that is intensifying and becoming accustomed to the culture and habits of telephone use.

The appropriation of the telephone by Touba's merchants, whose influence extends to all city-related decisions, is one of the principal determinants in the telecommunications boom in the Diourbel region. Although often intransigent when their interests are threatened, merchants take an active role in financing urban development and, to a certain extent, catering to the *marabouts*. Their use of the telephone demonstrates that Touba's urban society – mirroring the country as a whole – is increasingly open to technological innovation.

The brotherhood's second *Khalif* was long opposed to the installation of a post office (which did not occur until 1971), the establishment of French schools and, even, of health services. In 1996, 35 schools, built around Touba, were closed for this reason. In this context, Touba's rapid adoption of NICTs is all the more astonishing. Moreover, it is likely to quicken the pace of change in rules and practices related to the *marabout-disciple* relationship, and could upset Touba's social and religious hierarchy to a significant extent.

### **National Calls**

The Diourbel region ranks sixth in terms of duration of national/domestic calls. The near-complete absence of government and other state officials and formal sector businesses in Touba explain the relative weakness of calls to other regions of the country. An additional factor is the poverty of Touba's inhabitants, most of whom are

economic refugees fleeing drought, who come to the city seeking the *marabouts* who serve as redistributors of the financial manna provided by the Mouride diaspora. Above all, however, low domestic call levels reflect Touba's lack of integration with the rest of the country.

It is therefore worth considering the question of Touba's 'extra-territoriality' as it relates to NICTs. The city's extra-territorial status has an origin and a history, and continues to evolve, giving a certain elasticity to the city's ambitious land development plans. This extraterritoriality continues to play a role in furthering powerful financial and economic activities capable of stimulating the development of NICTs. Touba is more than the capital for the informal sector; it is an informal city with its own way of doing things. In terms of integration with the country at large (measured by call duration and frequency), Touba, along with Louga and Tamba (one of the country's poorest and most isolated regions), record the lowest volume of calls. Geographically, Diourbel's central location might be expected to make it one of the most highly integrated regions. Thus, the relative weakness of domestic calling here is significant.

A clear distinction must be made, however, between the telephone network and the manner in which it is used. For while SONATEL's extensive investment during the 1990s placed Diourbel at the heart of the company's development strategy, the Mourides in the Touba area do not utilise the network to strengthen their links with the rest of the country. Instead, it is mobile telephony that has seen the most dramatic growth, with total duration of calls, total number of calls, and average duration of calls in Diourbel all confirming the explosion of mobile telephony in the Mouride capital.

### **The Cellular Explosion ...**

Nationally, Diourbel ranks third in calls placed from cell phones. But this technology remains a city phenomenon. That Touba has become one of the country's main areas for cell phone use is attributable to the fact that cellular telephony, in addition to being inexpensive, is best suited to the Mouride lifestyle.

The extent to which cell phones have been adopted by Mourides is confirmation of the telephone's growing role in social interaction. The cell phone's success is driven by ease of acquisition and maintenance, the fact that it is fashionable, and its capacity to respond to felt needs. Nevertheless, the average duration of calls for all regions shows that the unit price of calls serves to limit the length of phone conversations. The average Senegalese has opted for the prepayment format, which allows him/her to own a telephone without being troubled by bills; prepaid users represented 75 per cent of all cell phone users by the end of 1999. Many people own cell phones exclusively to receive calls.

Recently, large Mouride markets like Sandaga (Dakar) and Touba's Ocass have increasingly come to rely on the *nourouman*, who seeks clients inside and outside the market, providing these clients with merchandise from larger merchants. These workers make money from the client to whom they sell, as well as from the shop owner. Most *nourouman* use this method of operation to accumulate capital to eventually open their own shops or to finance emigration to Italy, the United States or other countries. For the *nourouman*, as for those who supply them with merchandise, the portable phone has become an essential tool, making it possible for merchandise to be located quickly and easily.

Moreover, access to cell phones is greatly facilitated by international migration. Inexpensive second-hand phones from Europe are readily available in the Sandaga and Ocass markets, for example. The most sophisticated phones, and those that are blocked in Europe, are adjusted, repaired, and 'tropicalised' without any problem. Merchants specialising in Asian electronics, who made their fortune in the early 1980s, are currently experiencing a new rise in activity, while young new traders have made considerable sums of money in short order, thanks to the cellular telephone market. In addition to the merchants who sell these phones (and use them in the process), the poor have also adopted cell phones. People own telephones and access phone networks without needing to spend any money directly at all. For example, the relatives and friends of émigrés are given telephones by the latter. For the wives of emigrants, the portable phone has become a means of reaching their husbands (wherever they may be), particularly on lonely nights. Thus, the telephone relationship takes on a more intimate character, with conversations between lovers less likely to be overheard by others – a level of privacy not always to be found with the family land-line phone.

### **International Calls**

Touba is the destination of a large volume of international calls but only generates a relatively small number of such calls itself. Only Louga – another Mouride region that includes Darou Mousty, home to the second-largest Mouride population – has lower figures for outgoing international call duration, charges and number. Given Mouride transnationalization and the intense long-distance relationship between the city and its émigrés, this represents a striking paradox. Touba's inhabitants do not need to make frequent international calls because they receive a large number of such calls, notably, from the Ivory Coast, Gabon, Italy and the United States. This is the product of the installation and use of telephones by international émigrés. Appropriation of the telephone in the Mouride region thus has unique characteristics.

While telecommunications represent an indicator of (and depend upon) a population's purchasing power, an even more important factor is the degree to which they reflect the extraversion of a society or group. Thus, while Touba ranks second among Senegal's cities in number of telephone subscribers, its unique characteristics make it a major challenge for SONATEL. That incoming calls greatly outnumber outgoing calls is a reflection of Touba's peculiar nature, and of the unique way in which it has adopted NICTs. The explosion of telephone lines in Touba is above all a response by Mouride émigrés to the need to keep in touch with their families, *marabouts*, and the people who oversee their money transfers. SONATEL data confirm the high volume of incoming calls, which represent between 39 per cent and 65 per cent of total calls; between 70 per cent and 80 per cent of incoming calls are international. The Touba switching centre is the second busiest in the country, surpassed only by Dakar, and the only centre linked to international switching stations.

According to SONATEL, international calls, in general, and international calls to Touba, in particular, represent a valuable source of foreign currency. Although this is characteristic not only of Touba, but also of other towns from which there is extensive emigration (such as the villages of Fouta), Touba represents the largest market, one which continues to grow in size and demand. SONATEL assigns special importance to Touba as a telecommunications market, for approximately 60 per cent of its revenue comes from international call traffic, with Touba accounting for more of this traffic than any urban centre except for Dakar (personal communication, Birahim Sarr, 20 July 2000). Thus, the profitable, thriving status of SONATEL – a company held

out everywhere as a model – can be traced to émigrés. Thus, we have what is indeed a strange and paradoxical situation. Here is a city that is not highly profitable for SONATEL, since subscribers do not create significant revenue. However, when the company's total sales are broken down, in terms of domestic revenue and revenue from international call balances, Touba is one of the highest revenue producers. It is this fact that accounts for SONATEL's willingness to invest in Touba and which gives the city special importance. Indeed, Touba, and the Diourbel region generally, have even served as a testing ground for experimental telemedicine projects, with SONATEL contributing 30 million CFA francs.

### **Parabolic Antennas Highlight the Uniqueness of Urban Society**

The growing use of NICTs is directly linked to the internet; however, television – which has expanded due to satellite technology – has now become a new player on the scene. Touba not only serves as capital to a worldwide brotherhood; it is also the place where new outward-looking models of urban existence are being invented. Television is one of the main instruments in the interspace that forms the new territory of the Mourides. Arriving in Senegal in the early 1970s, and adopted by Dakar's bourgeoisie and jet set, television became omnipresent during the 1980s and 1990s. For the last ten years, satellite television with MMDS antennas has been the fashion. However, despite their explosion across the country and their great height – which itself is a form of appropriation and innovation – these antennas do not provide Touba with good quality reception. The response to this local problem has been a proliferation of parabolic antennas. Within the context of the deep-rooted identity of Mouride society in Touba, parabolic antennas represent an expansive openness to the outside world, while also representing boredom and inactivity. Touba women, who remain at home all year while their husbands are away, have only television to fill the hours, since other forms of amusement and escape are prohibited. Moreover, as Senegalese television does not have continuous programming, the only recourse is satellite television. This openness exposes the religious city's urban society to all of the positive and negative images of other societies, societies that are often based on different rationales – a circumstance that should ultimately make most Touba residents much like city dwellers everywhere, in contradiction to the founder's original plan.

It is above all the international migrants – following the lead of certain travelling *marabouts* – who have been instrumental in making parabolic antennas an important part of Touba's landscape. However, the development and proliferation of parabolic antennas are also linked to their price in Touba. While an antenna sells for around 800,000 CFA francs in Dakar, prices in Touba vary between 175,000 CFA francs (on the black market) and 400,000 CFA francs (in stores). Antennas sold in Touba are manufactured in South Korea, but purchased and reconditioned in the United States before being shipped to Senegal by Mouride merchants. Sometimes, however, antennas are purchased in Banjul. Parabolic antennas do not just provide access to some 300 radio stations; they also 'open up' the Arab world to Toubiens via television stations like ARABSAT, LBC, NILE TV and NILE SPORT, which contrast somewhat with the Francophone channels (TV5, CFI, CANAL HORIZON) preferred by Dakarois.

Apart from parabolic antennas, Mouride merchants in Touba also sell satellite radios brought back from Dubai (United Arab Emirates) which, in recent years, has become a new destination for Mourides. Satellite radios have long been used by Arabic-speaking *marabouts*; now, diaspora Mourides listen to stations like Walf FM and Sud

FM to keep in touch with developments at home. The new fashion – one likely to become more widespread in the coming years – is to broadcast on FM from stations located in houses belonging to *marabouts* or in neighborhood centres. Such broadcasts are not entirely new, as they have been used for several years in the run-up to, and during the great Touba pilgrimage, when they provide not only a means for the owners to promote their stations, but also a way for people to participate in the celebrations via broadcast sermons, chants and poems attributed to the brotherhood's founder. While these stations had a limited presence, with a maximum coverage of only one km radius, they are now poised to become, as in Dakar, true communications systems, as well as vehicles for capturing Touba's nascent advertising market.

The development of the electronics market in Touba's urban society is part of a process of opening Mouridism to the modern world – a phenomenon linked to its increasing transnationalisation. Thus, Mourides – whether living in Touba or far from their capital – are increasingly open to NICTs. This openness, which is indicative of a secularization of society, is part of the brotherhood's universalist goals. The explosion of the telephone over the past several years, combined with advances in technology, make Touba an environment conducive to the development and use of the Internet.

### ***Hizbut Tarqiyya*: a Dynamic Internet Undertaking**

*Hizbut Tarqiyya* refers to the former Dahira ('association') of Mouride Students founded in the 1970s at the University of Dakar to provide young Mouride intellectuals with opportunities for socialising. After establishing a presence in Dakar, as well as in regional capitals and other cities, the *Hizbut Tarqiyya* based itself in Touba, where it built a large cultural centre. Like the majority of large Mouride *dahiras*, it has become increasingly international, currently with a presence in several European cities.

In its development and growth, *Hizbut Tarqiyya*, which 'has always held strongly to the credo of method and organization' (Atou Diagne, interview, 6 July 2000), has used modernism and activism to serve the sect's founder and his successors, and has managed to make a place for itself in the brotherhood. A true pioneer in the field of ICTs, it has long used remote sensing techniques to monitor its farming operations, and has used theodolites when planning land-leveling operations. Moreover, Mouride students have, for a long time, used walkie-talkies to communicate during farming, and have readily adopted the cell phone. 'Information technology was adopted because they made it easier to manage people and goods. The determination to succeed, the spirit of a staffed organisation, a specific time – these are the essential elements of *Hizbut Tarqiyya*. Adoption of the computer is neither a quest for prestige nor an attempt at imitation. It is simply an attempt to satisfy the need for greater autonomy. We began with mechanical typewriters, then adopted electric typewriters due to the pressure created by increased work volume. And we have adopted computers for the same reason', explains Atou Diagne, who inspired this development.

At the end of the 1980s, when computing was still new to Senegal, the *dahira* acquired a set of computers, provoking wonder and envy in many Dakar circles; *dahira* members were increasingly mobile and there was a need for exerting greater control over adherents in remote locations. In this respect, computers were a salvation; a membership file was established, providing complete information on each adherent, including their financial standing. In the event, *Hizbut Tarqiyya's* acquisition of computers in 1988 coincided with the launch of an 'X25 data package transmission

network, known as SENPAC. Providing access to foreign data banks, with 19,200 bps capability, SENPAC is designed for businesses and, to a lesser degree, for institutions of higher learning and research' (Sagna, 2000:13). The system provided access to French databanks, primarily with the help of Minitels and computers. The *dahira* connects through this system, which is, in effect, the predecessor of the Internet in Senegal. With its Telematic Guide to Mouridism (TGM), the *dahira* is becoming a pioneer within the brotherhood and at the national level, and has been widely praised for its adoption and exploitation of this 'miracle'.

But computer use was also a way for *Hizbut Tarqiyya* to bring its operations into line with Cheik Ahmadou Bamba's image of power. Members were given computer training to make them part of the ongoing technological revolution. Mobilising and motivating members is carried out through an internal communications policy that emphasizes achievements, and allows members to make use of this dynamic audiovisual undertaking. In this way members feel that they belong to a cutting-edge movement of major scope.

Today, the *dahira*, which has diversified its financial resources, is devoting all of its energy and resources into organising the great Touba *magal*, a pilgrimage bringing together two million Mourides each year, and thereby making its mark as a modernising force. Since 1999, the *dahira* has operated a major website to coincide with the *magal in order* 'to promote cultural values espoused by Mouridism and around which *Hizbut Tarqiyya's* entire educational system is organised, via the Internet' (Atou Diagne, personal communication). The creation of a website ([www.htcom.sn](http://www.htcom.sn)) is a new stage in the evolution of the *dahira* and demonstrates its avant-garde awareness of, and interest in, utilising NICTs to further Mouride universalism. Although still under construction, the site demonstrates a high degree of awareness within the movement of the new challenges posed by NICTs.

An analysis of the site's content indicates *Hizbut Tarqiyya's* commitment to a universal Islam and to a universalist approach to Mouridism. The site gives a detailed presentation of Mouridism and its role in the 'rehabilitation of Islam', in order to elucidate the history and significance of the founding of the brotherhood. Other Muslims are clearly the target. The purpose is to proselytize. Likewise, the 'Didactic Islam' menu provides prospective converts with Internet instruction on the religious practices of Islam, without reference to the brotherhood. It also describes and explains Islam's major events and gatherings. However, the *Hizbut Tarqiyya* site, above all, deals with the personality of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, who is presented in his most-revered role of 'The Servant of the Prophet', which is also the name of the site. The site presents topics that shed light on the brotherhood, through the founder's life story, writings, pilgrimage and beloved city, Touba. Green, the color of Islam, is the background color on the site, which incorporates numerous images of the founder and of other saints of the brotherhood, as well as pictures of its symbolic mosque. Sound is also an important component, with broadcasts, throughout the day, of poems by Cheikh Amadou Bamba, sung by well-known, talented members of the *dahira*. The site also presents, in audio, the latest messages from the *Khalif*. Like other websites, there is a main menu, sub-menus and hypertext links, which make it possible to refine searches and upload/download texts. The site also provides an opportunity for dialogue and exchange and makes it possible to remain current on the brotherhood.

In addition to *Hizbut Tarqiyya*, other lesser known organizations are gaining prominence as a result of their sites.

## **Conclusion**

Today's widespread system of exchange, which is interactive and instantaneous, brings 'northerners – the hypermediatised United States, Europe and Japan, interconnected in complex networks' – face to face with southerners – 'the Africa of villages and mushroom cities where – though they have partially escaped the organised structuring of spaces and of technical networks – social networks play a determining role' (Chéneau-Loquay, 2000). With their mass presence and their increasingly transcendent nature, ICTs herald a new revolution which seems – as did the industrial revolution – to exclude some and favour others. However, this Manichean distinction between two categories does not appear to be today's functional paradigm. NICTs have attracted all generations, and even the most backward can easily catch up. In today's environment, the transfer of technology is also made easier by increased mobility and by the presence of networks that are more diverse and have denser coverage. Africa now shares the same history as the rest of the world. Despite its lack of resources, it is gradually integrating networks and adapting its resources and its identity to this new meeting space.

The Mouride brotherhood is one of the symbolic groups and standard-bearers of this change. Having become a migrant socio-religious movement, it is now national in scope, covering both rural and urban areas. At the same time, it is international, filling in the gaps of what is regarded as a globalising and dominating world economy. Mourides have adopted a participatory approach, riding the wave of globalisation. The brotherhood 'establishes openings in the transnational culture, slips in, and negotiates its part, with underground business rules and practices, imprinting it with new points of inflection, structuring it to adapt to new actors, new operations, and original and flexible forms of accumulation' (Diouf, 2000:20). However, within this approach is a movement to shut away the symbols, out of a contradictory, but valid concern for a recentring of spirituality and of the sacred, in order to disseminate it more effectively. Through this mechanism, the brotherhood has been able to reconcile its transnational reality – which requires a territory as broad and diffuse as the Mourides themselves, beyond their most favored territory – with a unifying approach, which over the course of time has translated itself into the urbanisation of Touba, place of oneness and return. Globalisation, therefore, is not synonymous – contrary to what some believe – with a loss of place and identity. NICTs are, on the one hand, an instrument for integrating Touba with the rest of the country and, on the other, a means for gaining a broader international presence. The importance of NICTs in the Mouride capital, and within the brotherhood, make them a barometer of social change in Senegal. Moreover, these technologies facilitate understanding of a cultural plan that is both endogenous and universalist.

NICTs broaden perspectives, widen horizons, awaken consciousness, provide new opportunities for stronger relationships and make distance unimportant. They have the potential to allow one to liberate oneself from one's body, one's race, one's nationality and one's personality, and to communicate as pure spirits. Mourides have adopted them in a unique manner, incorporating them in their operations and in promoting their religious message. Photography, radio, television, telephone and the Internet transmit symbols by sound and image throughout the world, making it possible to construct and broadcast – among themselves and beyond – the codes of a socio-religious identity that has freed itself of its complexes and demands recognition.

In this regard, two major Mouride sub-groups are gaining greatly from these developments. First is a corps of merchants whose resources are partly responsible

for supporting the *marabout* class and who have adopted NICTs – particularly the telephone but, increasingly, information technology and the internet – to enhance their activities. Such groups, and their activities, continue to grow as a function of their location and size. The world of information and communications plays a role, not only in making them aware of their strength, but also in diversifying their sources of revenue. The *nouveaux riches* of these groups are those who have profited from the boom in cell phones and in imported electronics and computer products. The other beneficiary sub-group consists of *dahiras*, which are now developing a transnational and universalist vision. They have grasped the challenge of disseminating Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba's message, in a world of deeply held beliefs, where each contributes his knowledge. According to one internet proverb, 'on the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog'. In other words, all that matters is what one posts online. After conquests on the rural, urban and international fronts, the Internet has become the new, promising territory – one from which *dahiras* can draw profit, while at the same time disseminating their ideology and practices.

In this respect, scientific output is reinterpreted to provide content for sites aimed at developing links among the faithful. Widespread Mouride adoption of NICTs helps make Touba the 'ideal' Mouride city, the pilgrimage city-of-the-dead, the market city, a telecommunications pole that is increasingly influencing national and international forces. Touba is contributing to a reexamination of notions of boundaries and urban life. The city's relative youth and that of NICTs combine well, making the city and its image a point of reference. The strength of Mourides consists not only in their ability to adapt abroad, but also in their capacity to recentre themselves, symbolically and actually, on the holy site of Touba, navigating the interplay between the two spheres to enhance and legitimize a sort of nomadic life of the faithful. A process of re-territorialization and reconstruction by NICTs is also establishing new group limits and embellishing, symbolically and concretely, the symbol that is Touba.

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# Egypt: Building an Information Society for International Development

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*Deborah L Wheeler*

**This article examines Egypt's attempt to build an information society for international development as defined by four key variables: an IT infrastructure, a knowledge economy, a public culture of discursive openness, and formal legal institutions which support the digital age. The main finding is that given serious infrastructural challenges, as well as a tendency towards political and economic centralisation, the efforts of a series of government-led projects are unlikely to affect all but the top of the Egyptian social pyramid for the immediate future.**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the global community hangs great hopes on the internet and other digital technologies and their ability to transform life as we know it. In the words of US Commerce Secretary, Donald Evans, 'the most powerful aspect of the knowledge-based economy is the internet – and we are just at the beginning of the internet's tremendous influence on world trade, global production and society at large' (Evans, 2001:1). T.H. Chowdary, an Indian IT advisor, calls the internet, 'the eighth wonder of the world' (2002:1.). Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa, describes the circumstances of the digital age as 'a highly potent revolution', one which 'will forever change the way we live, work, play, organise societies and ultimately define ourselves' (Mbeki, 1999:1).

At the same time that there is great anticipation about the powers of digital technology to positively shape economic and human development, there remains a great degree of uncertainty about how to best manage such changes for the benefit of all. These concerns are especially appropriate when applied to developing countries and the 1.5 billion members of the world community who live on less than one dollar a day, those whom Jeffrey Sachs calls 'the bottom billion' (Sachs, 2002:12a). More specifically, as a report on e.readiness observes, 'world economic growth depends increasingly on information and communications technologies and the abilities of countries and enterprises to collect, process and use digital information' (McConnell International, 2001); and yet, as US Commerce Secretary Donald Evans attests, 'it's not progress unless everyone has an opportunity to participate in the knowledge-based economy' (Evans, 2001:1). At present, less than 1 per cent of the world's population is part of the knowledge economy.

In Egypt, there are only 540,000 internet users in a population of some 68 million people. Although this figure is expected to grow to 2.6 million by 2006, this will still leave more than 96 per cent of Egyptian society lacking access. Similarly, only 8.5 out of every 100 citizens have access to a telephone; access to PCs is even lower. As early

as the mid-1980s, the GoE began to absorb information technology into governance and the economy. Since 1999, building an information society for economic and social development has been a central goal of government, demonstrated by the establishment of a new Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. Part of the mission of the new ministry was/is to articulate the government's ICT strategy for Egyptian society. The ministry's projects have ranged from computer clubs for low income youth; training for small and medium-size business managers; linking professional communities like physicians; and enhancing knowledge flows in Egypt to off-shore software development and training schemes. This agenda is said to be dependent upon the presence of four key variables: an IT infrastructure, a knowledge economy, a public culture of discursive openness and formal legal institutions which support the digital age.

The main finding of the social and economic analysis is that given serious infrastructural and demographic challenges, a tendency towards political and economic centralisation and a reticence towards innovation, efforts to build an information society are unlikely to affect any but the top of the Egyptian social pyramid for the immediate future. It is argued that if the government is to achieve its aim of making the information revolution in Egypt more inclusive, it will need to overcome a number of the constraints, including the government's narrow interpretation of desirable information flow, as well as the problems of poverty, illiteracy and un- or underemployment for the majority of Egyptians.

### **Local Narratives & Demographics**

Information society is understood as 'a form of social and economic development where the acquisition, storage, processing, assessment, transmission and diffusion of information leads to the generation of knowledge and the fulfillment of needs of individuals and firms and thereby plays an important role in economic activity, the generation of wealth and the quality of life of citizens' ([www.primeminister.gr/infosoc/en-01-01.htm](http://www.primeminister.gr/infosoc/en-01-01.htm)). Writing about the information society in Egypt is a daunting task, as contrasts between the information-rich and information-poor within the country make simple descriptions and explanations challenging to sustain. The cluster of policy makers and IT professionals linked with the Cabinet Information Decision and Support Center, and dispersed throughout the upper echelon of Egyptian society in the private sector and non-profit organizations, as well as in other government ministries, are all highly skilled knowledge workers. Interviews with these entrepreneurs, many of whom are pursuing active campaigns of social, political, and economic re-engineering, yield mostly encouraging visions of an information rich and economically prosperous Egypt in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, an Egyptian woman in her 40s, who is employed by a foreign diplomatic mission's library and information center observes:

*This is a new century. We have got to know computers. IT is a new language – the language of commerce and business. If you want to keep your job, you have to be computer literate. Computers and the internet will help Egypt to progress into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We must be quick to take advantage of the forces of globalization (interview, 12 May 2000).*

Similarly, a Cairo-based regional information technology and software engineering center employee in her late 20s observes:

*The internet and IT provide a way out for the less fortunate. If I give them bread and clean water then I've helped them for a day and they expect more from me tomorrow. But if I*

*teach them to fish for information and to think beyond their poverty, then they can provide long term solutions to their unfortunate life circumstances. Thus the internet is a way out of the trap of poverty. It can allow the poor to reach beyond their station in life if deployed properly (interview, 10 April 2000).*

Despite such optimism, many Egyptians are skeptical about the role of IT in building economic and social development in their country. For example, a Ministry of Communication and Information Technology employee in his late 30s explained that 'Globalization and the information revolution are something imposed on Egypt. Those who adapt the quickest will win – adapting quickly is not a cultural norm for Egypt' (interview, 20 April 2000, Min. of C and IT). His observation suggests that the speed of innovation required to be competitive in the information age is unlikely to evolve quickly in Egypt. That means the government's attempts to push information society programmes might not pull enough Egyptians along with them to be effective beyond a small circle of e.heroes (Wheeler, 2003). Expressing doubt about government attempts to bridge the digital divide with current projects, a director of a major western information technology company in his late 50s argues that:

*The information revolution will make the barriers between rich kids and poor ones more exaggerated than ever before. It's inevitable. All of these telecentres in Upper Egypt to provide internet access to poor kids are a joke, a complete waste of money. How many of these kids know English? (interview, 15 August 2000, Cairo).*

In many global settings, access to and demand for IT products are fostered in institutions of higher education. In Egypt, however, only the American University of Cairo fits the pattern. In other institutions, evidence of a digital divide is present. For example, a Professor at Cairo University in her late 30s observes:

*Our students don't have easy access to computers, even at the university level. How can I teach them, or expect them to use a computer if I can't provide access? Still I 'require' internet-based assignments and they have to go to [internet] cafes to complete them. In reality though, many students choose not to complete the assignments, since internet use is unlikely to help them to prepare for departmental exams. We have departmental meetings to discuss what technologies are needed for the classroom, and we ask for overhead projectors, but we don't get them. How can we expect to get laptop computers equipped with Powerpoint or something like this if we can't even get access to the most basic technologies? (interview, 12 May 2000).*

Not surprisingly, a strong selling point of several new private universities which have emerged in Egypt is their access to IT technologies. As such, these schools are small and cater to the middle and upper classes – already part of the information rich social class. Their ability to narrow the digital divide remains minimal, however, given the small student body. Problems of connectivity are also due, if only in part, to low demand. For example, a taxi driver in his mid-50s noted: 'Why do I need the internet? I'm not a student. Computers are expensive. I have a telephone, a TV and a VCR. This is enough for me' (interview, 25 August 2000).

Employees at the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, the Regional Information Technology Institute, and the Cabinet Information Decision and Support centre, express the view that, until the small- and medium-sized enterprise base in Egypt adopted the information society vision of the government, Egypt's transition to the information age would remain slow to crystallize. One individual noted that even when the Egyptian government was giving away server

space for company home pages and free internet accounts, businesses were still slow, if not reluctant, to move on-line. There was a feeling that the majority of entrepreneurs would not be interested in such services; that the utility of becoming part of the information society was viewed as low; and that the desire to keep 'business as usual' was high. Basic demographics explain such reticence. In Cairo, approximately 60,000 people are homeless and living in abject poverty on the streets. Nearly 70 per cent of the population of Upper Egypt lives on less than \$1 a day. Nationally, only 50 per cent of the population over the age of 15 can read; nearly 70 per cent of the female population is illiterate. Furthermore, only a fraction of those who are literate can read and write English, the dominant language of the 'Information Age'. Indeed, the majority of Egyptian children, including those who receive their education in state institutions, will enter the world of work without ever having touched a computer. In these circumstances, participation in the information society remains a luxury for the few.

The differences in ways of life between the knowledge worker and the masses make generalisations about the emergence of an information society in Egypt difficult to sustain. Does one cast a description against the background of the positive image of the handful of information rich, computer savvy, creative, innovators who are wired, and ready to take Egypt quickly into the digital age? Or does one instead, paint a more general picture, one of densely packed crumbling neighbourhoods, many of which have no telephone, not to mention satellite TV or internet access? Most neighbourhoods in Egypt are characterised by limited access to technology, whether cars or microwaves, food processors or vacuums, cell phones or computers, faxes or pagers. In a country which still levies heavy value added taxes on most imported technologies, access to the most basic technological tools remains out of reach of most people. Understandably, computer and internet access remain among the lowest in per capita terms in the Arab world.

Nonetheless, these obstacles notwithstanding, the Egyptian government, a community of knowledge workers in the private and public sectors, and several international organisations, most importantly the UNDP, the EU, the World Bank and USAID, are all working with limited capital in pursuit of a shared vision of a more wired and prosperous Egypt. Their aim is to initiate local IT-led economic and human development, and I provide here a glimpse of the over-arching mission statement which guides both the vision and process of construction which is already underway.

## **The Vision**

Although forms of an information society have existed in Egypt since the time of the pharaohs, the latest attempt to build a computer- and telecommunications-based information society began in the early 1980s with the establishment of a Cabinet Information Decision and Support Center (IDSC). By 1987, the project had expanded to include the creation of Governorate Information and Decision Support Centers. The goal of these information centres was to 'improve top level decision making at the Cabinet [and governorate] level with respect to socio-economic development planning' (Kamel, 1995:6). The hope was that with more accurate, complete and current information available for decision makers, Egypt would be better prepared to tackle its goal of enhanced economic and social development in the face of mounting challenges, including 'heavy foreign debt, balance of payment deficit, high illiteracy rate[s], poor technological infrastructure, lack of financial resources, and rising unemployment' (Kamel, 1995:6). One of the greatest accomplishments of the IDSC

was the creation of an information system with which to better manage Egypt's foreign debt. The Chairman of IDSC observes that the database established at the Central Bank of Egypt, 'supports the negotiations of the Economic Committee with other creditors and international organisations and has led to reducing Egypt's debt by more than \$10 billion' (Radwan, 2000:7).

Major breakthroughs in Egypt's drive to use advanced information technology in the service of economic and human development began in 1999, when in September of that year, President Husni Mubarak announced the National Project for Technology Renaissance. Part of the project included the establishment of a new ministry to oversee the IT branch of the transition, namely, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. In February 2000, Ahmed Nazif, the Minister, observed in an interview: 'This is the age of information technology. We cannot afford not to be well advanced in this area' (quoted in Osman, 2000:25). Motivation of this kind continues to drive the process of IT-led development. The Ministry of C and IT works closely with new and pre-existing IT institutions, including the Cabinet Information Decision and Support Center, the Regional Information Technology Institute, the Information Technology Institute, the Regional Information Technology and Software Engineering Center, the internet Society of Egypt and a handful of venture capital firms including Raya and IT Ventures. USAID has also been an active player in the transition to the information age, as has the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt. American interest in Egypt's IT development stems from USAID's 'Aid to Trade' policy, which is a defining principle of USAID's Egypt 2000-2009 Strategic Plan ([www.usaid-eg.org/detail.asp?46](http://www.usaid-eg.org/detail.asp?46)).

The National Project for Technology Renaissance consists of four main branches: the development of an IT infrastructure and internet content; the creation of a flexible information society; the expansion of IT systems as tools for economic and social development, and increasing the number and quality of IT professionals in Egypt (Muir, 2000:1). These four goals translate into a series of projects supported primarily by funds from the Government of Egypt, the UNDP, and USAID. Key projects include modernising and expanding the national telecommunications network and bolstering the power of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority; developing the country's information infrastructure base through the introduction of e-commerce and e-government; re-engineering the postal service to include computerised tracking and more efficient delivery of mail; training 20,000 government employees in IT annually; supporting IT business development, including software engineering; and establishing a Development Plan for Technical Education so as to enhance the human resources of Egypt's work force. A recent analysis sponsored by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) notes that Egypt intends to be the next India in terms of software development and export (Minges, 2000:1).

The experience of integrating information technology into regional government decision-making in late 20<sup>th</sup> century Egypt parallels the transitions to e.governance, e-commerce and a more wired Egypt in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, in the creation of regional Information Decision and Support Centers, 'the use of information technology and computers was almost non-existent in local administration in Egypt. The bulk of information technology is concentrated in the governorates of Cairo, Giza and Alexandria.' Thus, 'the awareness of the benefits and outcomes of the use of information and computer technology on the socio-economic development programmes in the governorates level was also minimal or even non-existent.' Such unfamiliarity with IT led to 'resistance to change and fear of losing jobs to automated machines' (Kamel, 1995:10). Likewise, Egypt has experienced reluctance to move

towards a digital universe from other sectors of society. Some find a lack of utility in the new technologies; others fear the accuracy or reliability of computerised bookkeeping, databasing, and other financial services; while yet others just prefer to do things the way they have always been done, especially as a way of protecting one's job, power and authority. Most Egyptians are unfamiliar with computers and find the need to interact with new information technology undesirable. More efficient forms of doing business and administration are not necessarily welcome. As one Egyptian IT professional observes, 'Egyptians are used to waiting in line' (interview, 15 April 2000, Cairo). Another IT professional observes: 'In Egypt the philosophy is, if it's not broken, don't fix it ... Even if the need for change is accepted, Egyptians don't change course quickly' (interview, 20 August 2000).

In spite of the slow pace of change, important progress has begun. It is now possible to reserve train tickets on-line, while the new e.government initiative has made available on-line forms, instructions and other information to make public administration processes run smoother and quicker. Mail service is becoming more reliable. Internet use is growing at more than 100 per cent a year. And there are many e-commerce initiatives like Otloob.com, and careeregypt.com and it is now possible to look for an apartment or house on-line. On-line information with regards to health care issues, NGOs, travel and tourism has been developed by the IDSC at the same time that internet cafes have become readily available, providing connectivity and training for reasonable fees especially Cairo and Alexandria and also the Red Sea resorts. There are also plans to incorporate the poorest of the poor into the information age through regional government-sponsored tele-boutiques; 21<sup>st</sup> century computer clubs are taking shape in poor towns like Sharqiyya and Siwa, while legal and institutional frameworks to guide and secure the transition to an information economy are emerging. More training centers and multi-national partnerships designed to enhance the IT resources of the workforce have emerged. Plans to make low-cost and low-interest laptop computers available to all university students are underway, with agreements involving Microsoft already making low-cost software available for educational use. Public awareness of the importance of IT to economic and social development is rising, especially as much energy is being dedicated to highlighting IT-related issues on state-run television, in the print media, and in the President's speeches. In spite of progress along the road to achieving the vision sketched out above, the following four components of this goal require close attention.

## **IT Infrastructure**

The basic infrastructure of an information society includes adequate telephone access and PC penetration; ISPs with low cost monthly service; internet backbone and bandwidth; and locally-relevant on-line content in local languages. Related variables are reliability of connectivity, knowledge and training in how to maximize the power of connectivity, and reliable electricity – important, as servers, computers, and other tools of a digital age consume large amounts of energy. In Egypt, as elsewhere, connectivity varies according to geographical location with more developed, speedier, and reliable connectivity being concentrated in capital cities and other major urban centres. Thus bytes and bandwidth are most concentrated in Cairo, with slower connections available in Alexandria and Port Said. However, internet cafes and service providers are also bringing IT to the village economies of Luxor and the Sinai. The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, in cooperation with provider RITSEC are building 21<sup>st</sup> century clubs in poor

neighbourhoods throughout Egypt in an attempt to narrow the digital divide. Over the next few years, the IDSC plans to wire 300 villages with permanent internet connectivity and training centers – part of a project called the ‘Kafelet el-internet’.

In terms of the society in general, however, less than three per cent of Egyptian businesses have a web site/pages, under 10 per cent of businesses and only 0.03 per cent of the Egyptian population have an e-mail connection (Blakey, 2000:1). In spite of this, organisations such as USAID, the internet service provider Nile On Line, and the Egyptian Government’s IDSC, are all predicting massive growth over the next 10 years due to an increase in wholesale bandwidth which will speed up connections and lower costs. ‘Enhanced internet use will help to produce efficiency, transparency and productivity in both daily life and the economy’, according to one analyst (Mintz, 1998). But before this can happen, the institutional arrangements needed to make an information society safe and viable for all participants, from inventors, to investors, to everyday users of information, need to solidify.

### Formal Legal Institutions

Legal and regulatory frameworks, including at least rudimentary systems for taxation, dispute resolution, intellectual property protection, finance and payment systems, and credit regimes, are crucial. A survey of e-readiness conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit highlights the importance of institutional development. The survey observes that the legal and regulatory environment ‘governing e-business is a vital factor that can enhance or inhibit the development of electronic trading (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001:2). As Vint Cerf, father of the internet has suggested, the market will build connectivity. It was not until the internet was opened to commercial uses in the United States through an act of Congress, that its user base and infrastructure was built into a global web of finance, politics, culture, and entertainment that we know today as the world wide web. Legal and regulatory safeguards encourage investment in research and development, e.commerce, and other aspects of business and information distribution which will in the end make or break the building of an information society.

When commenting on his efforts to get legislation passed to support IT entrepreneurs in Egypt, Minister of C and IT Nazif observed: ‘passing legislation is a protracted affair, and more time is needed before Egypt has its IT house in order. I thought it would be easier, but I found out the hard way that it would take a long time’ (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 5-11 April 2001:2). Adding to these frank words of frustration, a CEO of a local IT venture observes:

*while the Ministry of ICT has many good plans and innovative ideas, since the average age of most ministers is over 50, and most of these individuals are virtually computer illiterate, in addition to being culturally conditioned to be risk adverse, the ICT ministry has a tough job ahead of it, trying to convince the other ministers to take its proposals seriously and to pass legislation which will bring the vision to fruition (interview, 18 August 2000).*

Most Egyptians involved in the information age argued that the institutional variable is one of the most important roadblocks to IT-based economic growth in Egypt. USAID and other foreign parties have also recognised this fact and are setting up programmes designed to provide the institutional arrangements to support e.commerce and the knowledge economy. Key variables addressed by USAID and the Government of Egypt include:

1) *The need to develop institutions to support the 'cashless society'*. Currently, there are only 200,000 credit card accounts in Egypt, with the LE5000 deposit, which is commonly required ensuring that credit card ownership remains out of reach of most Egyptians. On the other hand, banks have to protect themselves from rampant credit card fraud, thus the need for a security deposit. Because there is low demand for credit card use, many businesses don't accept credit cards. This low demand has also slowed business to consumer e-commerce and delayed electronic signature, secure on-line payment options, and other banking services over the internet.

2) *Commercial cyber laws*. The Information Decision and Support Center is working with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology to draft a set of e-commerce laws which will provide legislation to support growth of the industry locally. Key concerns are on-line privacy, consumer and business to business protection, and fraud protection (Radwan, 2000:18). A general overhaul of the business and commercial legal systems in Egypt is recommended by a consultant for USAID who observes: 'There has to be a significant overhaul in the critical sectors of business registration procedures, the ability to hire expatriates, labor laws, banking procedures and all financial transactions', in order to 'create or improve the enabling environment for the successful introduction of ICT in Egypt' (von Schirach, 2000:12). The American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt also notes that until the judicial process is made more efficient, both by computerising the court administrative system and making this data transparent and easily available to the business community for use in the informed assessment of risk and creditworthiness, it will remain difficult to increase investment in Egypt (American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, June 1996, p. 1).

3) *Intellectual property protections*. There is a need for rules and regulations to support registration of patents and trademarks, and to insure intellectual property protection and observance of agreements. Currently, 'the absence of proper legal protection for inventions poses a formidable obstacle to innovation', observes Fariba Khorasanizadeh, in a discussion of the difficulties faced by entrepreneurs (Khorasanizadeh, 2000:39). In terms of intellectual property, Egypt is a signatory to the WTO's Intellectual Property rights agreement (1995), and is also a signatory to the GATT agreement on intellectual property protection. Although piracy is still common, recent public government enforcement of violators is reducing piracy by as much as 50-75 per cent, according to Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Dr. Ahmad Nazif (American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, 2001:2).

## **Knowledge Economy**

At the Middle East and North Africa Economic Summit in 1994, the Egyptian government presented its version of a socio-economic development and growth strategy. It identified five elements, of which the most important was the desire to make the transition from an industrial-based into a knowledge-based economy ('Egypt's Perspective: Regional Economic Development and Cooperation,' Document presented at the MENA Economic Summit, Casablanca, 30 October to 1 November, 1994:30). The rise of a knowledge economy nurtured and protected by basic laws, rules and regulations will create a context in which capital, both financial and human, required to build an information society, can emerge. Local venture capitalists note that 'they are particularly interested in seeing more innovation and less blind imitation of ideas that have been implemented abroad' (Mostafa, 2001:3). In its effort to make the IT market more export oriented, the government is struggling to find ways to stimulate innovation within a society which has been said

to be risk adverse, afraid of change, and built upon a shared culture of conformity (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 5-11 April 2001:1).

In addition to an enterprising spirit, a knowledge economy needs financial and human capital to take root and thrive. Financial capital can be provided by various sources including any combination of the state, the private sector, international aid agencies or foreign direct investment. Human capital is defined as an ability to know, to solve, to imagine – brainpower, broadly defined. It is the only sustainable resource over time in the international economic system because ‘knowledge can yield a continuing, growing payoff’ in a way that raw materials and cheap labour (two basic commodities of most developing economies) cannot (Landes, 1992:66 see also Glanz, 2001:3). Under these conditions, ‘the migration of skilled workers has come under intense scrutiny’ by countries around the world who are losing knowledge workers, mostly to the United States, a country that has absorbed more than 1,000,000 of the world’s ‘best brains’ (Glanz, 2001:3). Keeping skilled workers at home has become a necessary ingredient in building a knowledge economy. At the same time, in the cyber-era, doing so is increasingly difficult. Some countries, like Egypt, have adopted an alternative approach. They have maintained open borders (often subjecting the nation to short term knowledge capital flight) but realising great benefits in the long run, as high tech and other highly skilled workers ‘return home with extensive professional networks and far greater experience than they would have had otherwise’ (Glanz, 2001:3). The challenge for the developing countries, then, is to give future workers the basic knowledge and skills required to be internationally competitive (helping them out the door), and to provide the resources, opportunities and living environment that will attract knowledge workers back to their home countries (or prevent them from leaving). Institutionally, government and enterprise must provide environments in which the freedom to innovate is possible. This means different things in different settings, but in general, key factors include support for R and D, an educational environment that provides for innovative thinking, and a political/social environment that supports open experimentation with new forms of communicating/behaving. If existing institutions find avante guard behaviour threatening, then this can limit a society’s transition to the new economy, a necessary stimulus to building an information society.

Three sources provide the most of the capital for building an information society: the Government; private local/global capital investment and organisations including the World Bank, the IMF and, most prominently, USAID.

At present the IT market generates around \$40 million a year, which is relatively small compared to India’s \$8 billion industry, or the US’s \$1 trillion industry (33 per cent of the total US economy) (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 5-11 April 2001:2). The Egyptian government and its partners are actively working to build a \$1 billion a year IT market over the next 10 years. And one of the key variables in making this vision a reality is providing financial support for new business ventures and training projects (human capital generation) (Tradeport, 2000:1). The government is pumping money into local IT development via the creation of the new Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. The budget for the ministry has increased significantly, from \$6 million in 1999 to \$14 million in 2000 and \$15 million by 2001. Minister of Information Technology and Communications, Dr. Ahmad el-Nazif, claims that another strategy for building economic growth via the IT market is by ‘promoting off-shore development of Egyptian IT products which may sell to America’ (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 5-11 April 2001:1). Directly related to the argument here, Nazif wants to establish a \$50 million bi-national fund with which to support

Egyptian-American IT ventures. Note that in 1993, India established a fund like this, with the support of the International Finance Corporation (although the initial fund had three-quarters of a million dollars to begin with, and quickly grew to \$3 million with private sector contributions). The fund 'provided equity capital to first-time entrepreneurs and existing enterprises that wanted to expand in information technology related businesses' (IFC Press Release, 1993). An American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt report titled 'Information Technology in Egypt' specifically cited the Indian success with IT-led development as a comparative case from which Egypt could learn. The reason one can observe patterns in the strategies which the two countries are using or have used in the past to build IT-led economic growth, is that there is a conscious effort in Egypt to model the IT revolution after Indian successes, while avoiding the limitations of the Indian case. Limitations include the lack of a sufficient electricity and telecommunications infrastructure, a lack of privatisation of the data communications infrastructure, and a lack of sufficient trickle down effects in efforts to bridge the digital divide (American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, 1998:26-31).

In addition to Government projects, local venture capital firms are actively funding start-ups, but as one observer comments, 'the money that's being poured into the internet locally cannot be compared with what is being invested abroad' (Mostafa, 2001:1). Abdalatif al-Hamad, Chairman of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, notes that 'in Europe, investment in IT is 1,000 times more than it is in the Arab world' (Fahmy, 2000). Venture Capital firms operating in Egypt include Raya, Sigma Capital, Horus Private Equity Fund, an EFG-Hermes affiliate, and the locally grown IT Ventures run by Dr. Hisham el-Sherif, former head of the Regional Information Technology and Software Engineering Center, and one of Egypt's e.Heroes. Another local conglomerate, Orascom Holdings owned by the Sawiris family, is investing in cellular phones; while the Baghat Group, another family owned company, has begun building 'smart cities' completely wired for internet connectivity on the outskirts of Cairo, in addition to its involvement in funding/running projects in the local ISP market (Mitchell, 1999:31).

In spite of these initiatives, there is at present in the words of one local participant, 'an incredible lack of collaboration and communication between investors and entrepreneurs' and this 'is hindering the growth of this sector' (Mostafa, 2001:3). Understanding this problem, Ahmed el-Mofty, an investment analyst with the local internet incubator EnCube, co-founded The Informal Society of Technology Entrepreneurs ([www.istenetwork.com](http://www.istenetwork.com)). El-Mofty observes: 'we don't expect deals to be cut overnight, but if we succeed in making the entrepreneurs understand what the investors want and vice versa, I think we will have accomplished a great deal' (Mostafa, 2001:3). One venture capitalist summarises the problems associated with investing in the Egyptian IT market as follows: 'our market is small, so no matter how big you get as a web site, you will still be small' (Mustafa, 2001:3). This statement assumes, incorrectly, that only a domestic clientele would participate in e-commerce exchanges. In an information society, geography has less importance, since cyberspace is global, and potential clients could be located anywhere in the world. Thus, in spite of a low demand for e-commerce and IT locally, Egypt is still considered a growth market with great potential. The fact that the IT/entrepreneurial experiment in Egypt is still in its infancy has a significant impact on how Egypt is perceived by foreign IT professionals and venture capitalists.

However, working together with foreign partners, the Government is pursuing a number of strategies to make Egypt a more attractive place for FDI. For example, a

GOE/EU partnership is financing bottom-up reform in manufacturing by improving the skill set of workers, updating equipment and retraining management. In terms of building a communications infrastructure which will support international business ventures, one of the Minister of IT and C's first projects for the year 2001 was to install up to 5 million new telephone lines in Egypt, using wireless technology, and to begin plans to introduce a third mobile phone operator by December 2001) (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 5-11 April 2001:1). On the financial front, the World Bank, IFC, and USAID are all donating large sums of capital to computerise banking services, and to develop high value added services in this sector (interview with Mervat Tawfiq, USAID, 6 August 2000). Other USAID projects include legal and regulatory reform, increased e.government and e.business initiatives, expanded use of ICT, and administration grants to NGOs to enable the implementation of IT strategies for development work at the grassroots.

In spite of existing challenges and perceptions of underdevelopment in the high tech market, new investments in the IT sector more than doubled from LE290 million for 1999 to LE620 million for 2000. Overall, growth in the IT sector was recorded at a rate of 35 per cent for the year 2000, which means that it exceeded growth in any other sector of the economy, including tourism (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 5-11 April 2001:2). Enhancing human capital is also a key element in building an Egyptian knowledge economy with which to finance and develop an information society. Even though, Egyptian universities were turning out around 300-500 software engineers annually by 1999, it was estimated that Egypt only had an estimated 5000 or so IT professionals nationally in the spring of 2000, compared with 500,000 in India and 6 million in the US. In an interview with the Managing Director of IBM Egypt, Mr. Amr Tawfiq, he observed that one of the main constraints on IBM Egypt successfully bidding for IT off-shore contracts is the limited number of qualified local engineers. With this in mind, IBM Egypt is actively scouting new talent and sending the top performers to IBM training centers now located in Egypt, where they are certified at international standards. In a few years, Egypt will be better able to compete with countries like India and South Africa. Until then, IBM Egypt is winning smaller contracts and developing a proven track record for delivering efficient, high quality engineering services at relatively low cost (interview with Mr. Tawfiq, 29 August 2000).

The Government has developed a series of multi-national training partnerships with IBM, Oracle, Lucent, Alcatel and Microsoft, supported in part by USAID. In addition, the Regional Information Technology Institute, and the Information Technology Institute are two examples of local institutions established with government and private sector funds, to provide training and certification for young IT professionals. Both centers offer joint degrees with institutions of higher education in the US and Europe. The Ministry of Education has also established the Technology Development Center and plans to use this initiative to induce massive educational reform, such as getting rid of rote memorisation and creating more spaces for self-expression in the classroom. In addition, training in the use of new technology is an important part of the new curriculum. But as one inside observer notes, 'in Egypt, as in the US, technology can play a role in remaking education only if and when broader social, political, economic, and cultural factors are aligned to make school reform likely (Warschauer, 2001:26).

The Government of Egypt has sponsored several other initiatives to get children throughout the country to use computers at increasingly earlier ages, and in more effective and entrepreneurial ways. One example are the 21st Century Club projects which seek to build 1,000 computer learning centres over the next five years

throughout Egypt, especially in impoverished rural and urban areas. So far, about 120 clubs have been established. These clubs have trained over 42,000 students in 1,000 organised training sessions with over 23,000 hours of training so far. This project is based upon a multi-sector partnership using government to build infrastructure, NGOs to administer centres, volunteers to do the training and to help maintain equipment, and the private sector to donate computers and partial financing (data obtained in an interview with Heba Ramsey, Director, Kids and Youth programs at the Regional Information Technology and Software Engineering Center, Cairo, 10 April 2000).

During an interview with the Director of the Cabinet Information Decision and Support Center, it was mentioned that the government of Egypt was not interested in using the internet to support children's play, but mainly as a strategy to target reform among middle level management. Children's play, however, might offer the best way for Egypt to build a knowledge economy and information society in the future. For while middle level management is generally computer illiterate, as well as being highly suspicious of technology which might threaten their control over work environments broadly defined, Egypt is a country where 50 per cent of the population is under the age of 25 (Tradeport, 2000:2). These young people have either grown up using computers, or are aware of them and are eager to learn how to use them. Moreover, with unemployment hovering at around 20 per cent, and underemployment almost universal (the tea boy at IBM headquarters in Cairo has a law degree and couldn't find a better job), younger people show the greatest promise for trying to find innovative ways to use their talent, imagination and capabilities, if given the chance. Unfortunately, in the short run, such opportunities will be reserved mostly for the children of Egypt's wealthy families.

Egypt is a country that already has a great divide between rich and poor. Joel Beinin argues that in Egypt, transitions to the new economy have accompanied 'upward redistribution of the national income' (Beinin, 1999:18). Expanding upon this view, Timothy Mitchell observes that, 'the state has turned resources away from agriculture, industry and the underlying problems of training and employment. It now subsidizes financiers instead of factories, speculators instead of schools.' These strategies have acted 'to concentrate public funds into different, but fewer hands' (Mitchell, 1999:31). Mitchell estimates that only 3 per cent of the Egyptian population qualifies as a 'wealthy household', defined as having consumer spending of around \$4,000 a year, while around 50 per cent of the population lives in abject poverty. If not deployed properly, building human capital in the creation of an IT revolution may serve to exacerbate the gap between rich and poor. On the other side of the fence, exists a shared form of skepticism. Leila Askander is Managing Director of CID, a consulting firm that works to build poverty alleviation strategies through the introduction of appropriate technologies. She observed, 'early signs show that IT is an inappropriate technology for Egypt as a tool for enhancing education or poverty alleviation ... this concept of giving Egyptian students IT so that they can talk with students in North America is nonsense. What use is this for Egypt?' (interview, 27 July 2000).

There is a shared sense that IT is an important tool for the elite of Egyptian society, and not for the poor. And yet, with only 5,000 skilled IT professionals, much work is left to be done, even in the upper echelons of society, to produce enough human capital to compete on a global scale. As this knowledge worker community grows, so too will the gap between rich and poor. Whether or not IT can be used to add any value to the lives of the less fortunate remains to be seen, but initial results are not very encouraging, especially with 50-70 per cent of the poor in Egypt being illiterate, even in Arabic. Some NGOs, like Care International, have been exploring ideas of

streaming video and providing pictorial or oral data bases of farming techniques, commodities prices and global direct trade opportunities. Together, these offer a possibility to enhance productivity, secure better crop prices, and maybe even eliminate intermediaries to the benefit of farmers (interview with Care International staff, 5 April 2000; 27 July 2000; 5 September 2000). The long term effects remain to be seen. Until then, it is safe to say that only the top 5-10 per cent of society in Egypt lives as a part of the knowledge economy and the evolving information society. This segment is typically fluent in English, is computer literate, is educated, and possesses an entrepreneurial spirit as well as general access to financial capital.

## **Culture of Discursive Openness**

In the final analysis, an information society is a set of institutions and technologies configured to allow the rapid and complete flow of information throughout a society, and between a society and the rest of the world. Governing the flow of texts, images, bits and bytes is a cultural norm that can either promote or hinder this process. Censorship, a lack of transparency in business, punishment of individuals or groups who exercise their right to free speech – these all represent evidence of a lack of discursive openness, itself a cultural norm which will hinder the emergence of an information society. The UNDP's Arab Human Development Report (2002) argued that 'the extent of freedom in Arab countries compared to the rest of the world, shows that out of the seven regions of the world Arab countries had the lowest freedom score' (UNDP, 2002:5). In addition, the 'Arab region has the lowest value of all regions of the world for voice and accountability' (UNDP, 2002:5).

In Egypt, this lack of freedom has wide expression. A recent survey by the Freedom House of Press Freedom ranks the country in the lower third of 178 countries, giving it a rating of 124<sup>th</sup> (1 being a high degree of freedom). The same survey gives Egypt a 'democracy' ranking of 112 out of 178, placing Egypt in the bottom half of all countries rated (for survey criteria see [www.worldaudit.org/press.htm](http://www.worldaudit.org/press.htm)). The case of US/Egyptian academic Saad Ibrahim, who was imprisoned for amongst other things allegations regarding a film he was trying to make about democracy in Egypt, illustrates the state's desire to police, monitor and control civil society initiatives, as well as official intolerance of discursive openness. In terms of IT, the Ministry of the Interior has a new cyber-police branch that is charged with monitoring internet use in Egypt. Several recent cases of arrest illustrate a culture of 'freedom under surveillance', and suggest that this new branch of domestic security is effective at it's job (UNDP Arab Human Development Report, 2002:5). In one case, gay men were lured into chat rooms and dates were arranged. When these men went to meet their on-line friends, they were arrested. Homosexuality is not de facto illegal in Egypt, but there are laws against 'debauchery' on the books, established ironically by the British. The key point is that the internet is being used in this case to limit freedom of movement and association for a persecuted minority in Egypt (Wheeler, 2002a). In another case, an Islamist was arrested, in part because of things he said on-line which were recorded by the Ministry of the Interior.

Lack of a free press, regular crack downs on peaceful student demonstrations, the sense that public and private discourse is under surveillance, the lack of free movement and access given to researchers, the inability to gather survey data without state authorisation – all of these factors indicate a lack of openness, thereby contradicting the ideals of an information society. An information society is one 'based upon transparency and democracy'; where 'new technologies constitute an important tool for the creation of a modern democratic state'; where IT acts to

improve the 'relations between the state and citizens and the reinforcement of democratic institutions'; where IT enables 'more and better services to the citizens and greater transparency and democratic participation of citizens in matters of public interest' ('Defining the Information Society', [www.primeminister.gr/infosoc/en-01-01.htm](http://www.primeminister.gr/infosoc/en-01-01.htm)). In Egypt, IT seems at present to enhance the reach of the state, often at the expense of the voice of citizens. While there is a presumption in Western contexts that the internet, as a part of its design principles, automatically promotes democracy and openness, because of the power it devolves to individuals to distribute information as they please, the surveillance capabilities of the same technologies make the internet a double edged sword. This is especially in countries with a history of authoritarian government. Perhaps as more people move on-line in Egypt, and monitoring their communications becomes increasingly difficult, the democracy and transparency effect of the internet will become more apparent. Until then, we are faced with what R. Augustus Norton calls, 'the slow retreat of authoritarianism in the Muslim World' (Norton, 1999:27).

## **Conclusion**

Egypt has embarked on a highly ambitious plan to build a knowledge economy as a strategy to produce sustained economic growth for the 21st century. This plan distinguishes Egypt among countries in the MENA region. Drawing especially upon the experiences of India, Egypt has sought to fashion its own information technology revolution which would boost GDP, create new job opportunities, accumulate human capital, increase private sector growth, and reduce dependency on agriculture and manufacturing, two sectors with shrinking returns on the global market. This paper has attempted to provide an overview of the challenges and opportunities Egypt faces in its efforts to build a local IT revolution. It provides both hope and scepticism.

Projects which attempt to make the information society more inclusive are underway. In terms of internet services, internet cafes, scattered throughout Egypt make IT available without the expense of PC ownership, and a dial-up account. Many cafes have broken down costs into smaller units through billing by the minute. Government also supports initiatives for making IT available to the poor via telecentres established in areas with a high degree of urban and rural poverty and which offer free internet connectivity and training. Additionally, in January 2000, Telecom Egypt introduced a new programme which allowed anyone with a home phone the facility for dialing a special phone number to access 'InTouch Communications' servers in order to connect to the internet, thereby bypassing the need for a monthly ISP account. Connectivity costs 20 piasters (about five cents) a minute at peak times, with the charge for accessing the internet appearing on the person's monthly telephone bill.

Preliminary findings suggest, however, that innovations in the form of a knowledge economy and information society will also widen the gap between rich and poor. Thus, the early and encouraging signs of an emergent internet culture and knowledge economy must also be viewed in the sobering light of demographics, infrastructural challenges, and cultural barriers to change. As one of the oldest and most industrious civilisations in the world, as a society where 50 per cent of the population is under the age of 25, and as a society deeply committed to national survival, the early signs of an emerging information society are probably best seen as success against stiff odds. If its strategy is to develop its vision of an information society beyond a small elite, however, it will need to introduce much greater reforms

– to the education sector as a whole and to fiscal policy – than it has considered to date, as well as freeing public information flows. Such reforms might carry their own risks.

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### **Liberia: An Analysis of Post-Taylor Politics**

*Thomas Jaye*

The departure of Charles Taylor from Liberia on 11 August 2003 to Calabar, Nigeria has definitely altered the political landscape of Liberia in some significant way. Taylor was certainly not the only problem but he was a major problem for Liberia and indeed West Africa. Since his departure, Liberian stakeholders have signed a 'comprehensive' peace agreement; a transitional leadership has been elected and inducted into office on 14 October; and by the date of his departure, the ECOMIL troops had begun to arrive in Liberia. Further, days after his departure, the US committed 200 marines to the peace process but as expected, they have already left Liberia; and ECOMIL has now been replaced with UNOMIL troops.

All of these are good signs but given the above, can we say now that peace has finally dawned upon Liberia and West Africa? Certainly, for Liberia, there is a glimmer of hope that peace can be built but it requires the tenacity, will, commitment and organisation of the Liberian people themselves. Indeed, international support at every step along the way towards peace and security in Liberia will be needed. In the case of West Africa, peace in Liberia can contribute significantly to peace in the region as this tiny West African state previously contained a cesspool of fighters and did serve as the epicentre of the region's conflict system. Having said that, I am also aware that the region will need to monitor itself very closely and take the necessary measures

to abort the sort of wars experienced in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Nearly every country in that region cannot escape armed violent conflicts because the very factors that produced wars in the above countries are prevalent in every country.

Significantly, the peace deal worked out in Accra, Ghana did not come about overnight. It has taken Liberians and the international community 14 years of diplomacy and military intervention to reach this far. In fact, 'Civil War Part One' was fought between 1989 and 1997 and election was held, which was won by Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Party (NPP). ECOWAS took the lead in the management of this conflict. The elections came after 13 peace deals were signed and reneged upon by armed factions. Critical observers strongly feel that the one fundamental error made in the management of the conflict was to allow Charles Taylor and his party and other 'warlords' to contest the elections.

The elections were significant for Liberia's post-conflict politics but from day one, it was clear this was not the panacea to the country's problems in specific relations to peace building, the major challenge facing Liberians today. Yes, the elections were institutional pillars for democracy and the building of peace but they could not necessarily be equated with democracy or security. A lot depended upon the will and commitment of the regime that assumed power after the elections. Unfortunately, Taylor squandered the opportunities offered by the elections by pursuing an undemocratic course. Moreover, his election signified that he had effectively won the war. Worse still, he took his victory as a

zero-sum game and therefore while he tokenistically appointed some opposition people in his government, it was not long before Taylor showed his true colours.

Like the regimes before him, Taylor took to pathological level the anomalies, vices and vices, which caused the war. His rule was characterised by political repression, severe economic mismanagement and corruption, social alienation of the mass of the people, and a high degree of personal rule unprecedented in the history of the country.

By virtue of this record, it was evident that Taylor would not last long in office. It was barely two years (1999) after he came to power that the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) emerged to challenge his legitimacy. Greeted with mixed feelings for the fact that Liberians had already gone through hell during the 'Civil War Part One', LURD remained steadfast in its military campaign and by the time of the Accra peace talks, a division occurred within the ranks of LURD and thus giving birth to Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). As in the past, ECOWAS led the peace mediation with the strong support of the International Contact Group on Liberia comprising UK, US, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana. For two and half months, the delegates stayed in Ghana after which the latest peace deal was brokered after several deadlocks. The peace talks brought together three armed factions, 18 political parties and civil society groups.

At the end of the talks in Accra, the mediators put forward a formula for selecting an interim leadership, mainly the Chair and Vice Chair of the transitional government. In keeping with this formula, the 18 political parties and civil society groups were tasked to nominate three names each for the posts of Chair and Vice Chair. The three names that received the highest votes were submit-

ted to the armed factions to select the Chair and Vice Chair. After the first round, Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Rudolph Sherman went through while Gyude Bryant, Prof. Togba-Nah Tipoteh and Dr. Harry Moniba tied. In the second round of vote, the political parties and civil society groups selected Gyude Bryant. Therefore, Bryant, Sirleaf and Sherman were submitted to the armed factions to select from for the position of Chair. Initially, the armed factions rejected all three names but after a long period of negotiations, they were forced to settle for Gyude Bryant. Contrary to the notion that he is a 'neutral' person, Bryant was then serving as Chair of the Liberia Action Party (LAP). Wesley Johnson of the United People's Party (UPP) was selected as Vice Chair.

### **Ideology & Alignment of Forces**

Without delving into the peace deal in detail, one important outcome of the Accra talks was the peace agreement and the election of a transitional government. The results of the selection process speak volume about the nature of contemporary Liberian politics. First and foremost, ideologically, all but four of the 18 political parties, which gathered in Accra, originated from the True Whig Party (TWP) tradition. To a large extent, the leaders of these parties are recycled TWP elements, which for one reason or the other have organised into splinter groups. According to one source, the key motive driving these groups is 'political ego'. In addition, they have done so to make political choice difficult and ensure that the old status quo is maintained by making believe that they represent different political traditions. The leaders of the other four come from a radical tradition in Liberian politics. However, in contemporary Liberian politics, some members of these groups from the radical tradition have switched ideological carpets to become apostles of the TWP ideological positions in Liberian politics. Like the TWP before them, they fervently belief in

the unfettered role of the market in national development and are totally opposed to the role of a developmentalist state.

In light of the above, it is evident that the TWP tradition dominates Liberian politics today. Importantly, it is even shaping the agenda in civil society and because of the relative weaknesses of the left there is virtually no counter-hegemonic force and agenda for development in post-war Liberia. This does not suggest that an alternative view cannot emerge but it will take some time for the radical left to re-group and put forward an agenda that will pave the way for an alternative people-centred course of development. Even achieving this is a tall order in a society in which idealism does not appeal to too many people anymore. It is wealth (ill-gotten wealth) that decides most things.

In terms of the coming elections of 2005, it is evident that the present group represented by Chair Gyude Bryant, Harris Greaves and Co. will do everything to shape the results in their favour because the class they represent is bent on perpetuating itself in power. The sad situation in that country is that money talks in Liberia and money did talk in Accra. If money continues to set the basis for votes in the coming elections as opposed to policy issues, then the Liberian left, in its present state, will be left out once again. Worse still, external patrons from Europe, Asia and America are heavily aiding and abetting the local agents of neo-liberalism.

With the current alignment of forces, the future of Liberia looks very bleak in the sense that those who continue to marginalise the vast majority of Liberians have once assumed the helm of state power. These elements have never shown interest in the security of the Liberian people; rather, they have always been interested in getting rich quick, building mansions, lavishing money on concu-

bines, travelling abroad, sending their children and families abroad on vacations while the other 'half dies' slowly in abject poverty. In the long run, this is a recipe for renewed fighting and this means that the issues of governance, distributive justice and security need to be taken seriously within the context of building a secure post-conflict society. As the saying goes, unless your neighbour is secure, you can never feel secure in your own home. This is the lesson that future generation of Liberians need to learn or face the wrath of those who are good at exploiting the grievances of the ordinary people by using violence as an instrument of politics.

Regarding the LURD and MODEL, it has been difficult knowing where they stand ideologically and many of their documents are vague along these lines. Yes, they talk about democracy and the need to replace Taylor as a pre-condition for achieving the former goal but both lack the institutional capacity to restore peace and democracy in the country. There are mixed motives within the leadership of these movements and like other armed factions across Africa, they can not be equated with national liberation movements, which had clear political agendas and command and control structures. They may have come together to achieve one fundamental goal – getting rid of Taylor but there are elements within these movements whose interests strongly coincides with those of the previous regime: loot the economy and bastardise the system. Yet, there are those who think that you need peace and security in Liberia in order for people to go about their business under a less intimidating and threatening environment. While fighting the war, these armed groups did receive support from Liberians as well as non-Liberian patrons. The interests of some of these patrons vary as well: others now want big posts in the interim government; and some want to get lucrative business deals.

Unfortunately, this is the state of affairs out of which contemporary Liberians politics have been shaped. Thus, this means business as usual.

### Regional Dimension

*Civil War Part One, 1989 to 1997:* From its inception, the war in Liberia has always had a regional dimension to it. For security and personal reasons, various regimes in West Africa have supported one armed faction or the other. In specific relation to the first war, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso strongly supported the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) invasion out of personal than any serious security reasons. Felix Houphouët-Boigny had harboured deep-seated hatred for the Samuel Doe regime because it was responsible for the death of his son-in-law, Adolphus Benedict Tolbert and this was the basis for the support provided by Boigny. By the time he realised that Taylor was up to no good, it was difficult to withdraw the support because certain individuals within the Ivorian security sector were benefiting immensely from Taylor's war. Thus, they were capable of turning blind eyes to whatever Taylor was doing from their territory. In the case of the Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaore is married to a ward of Houphouët-Boigny and this partly explains why he was sympathetic to the Taylor cause.

Like elements in Côte d'Ivoire, over time, Compaore and his officials began to benefit from the spoils of the Liberian war. However, in the past four years, the relationship between the two leaders seems to have become lukewarm to the extent that Compaore hosted a meeting of the Liberian civil society groups, that were obviously opposed to Taylor's excesses. For Compaore, this was a clever move to extricate himself from Taylor and keep a critical distance because he was aware of what would become of his friend one day.

In the bid to pressurise Taylor militarily, Nigeria, Guinea and Sierra Leone supported the Liberia Peace Council (LPC), United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO), which later split into ULIMO (J) and ULIMO (K) at one point during the course of the war. ULIMO (J) is named after its leader General D. Roosevelt Johnson whilst ULIMO (K) is named after Alhaji G.V. Kromah. In fact, ULIMO was born in Sierra Leone before splitting into two camps. In terms of ethnic composition, Krahn and Mandingos, who were systematically targeted by the NPFL, dominated these groups. With the end of the war in 1997, these groups were disarmed but not fully demobilised. As a matter of fact, they were not thoroughly disarmed.

*Civil War Part Two, 1999 to 2003:* During 'Civil War Part Two', it was an open secret that LURD received support from Guinea. The point is that after coming to power, like he did in Sierra Leone by supporting the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to continue the war in that country, Taylor was also providing support to Guinean dissidents who were bent on overthrowing the regime of the ailing Lanssana Conte. As was the case with Guinea, the Gbagbo government in Côte d'Ivoire also supported the MODEL forces in their invasion of Liberia because of role played by Liberia in nurturing the birth of Mouvement Patriotique Ivoirien du Grand Ouest (MPIGO) in western Côte d'Ivoire. Sam Bockarie, a leading member of the RUF who was resident in Liberia actively participated in the Ivorian war and so were senior state officials from the Taylor Government.

### Socio-economic & Political Realities

While the departure of Taylor has been greeted with gusto, Liberia's problems are far from being over. Since independence in 1847, Liberia has had a troubled history and the war caused problems,

which have scarred an already terminally ill society.

But what are these problems? Like other post-conflict societies, the issue of building peace in this country remains high on the agenda. Associated with peace building is the disarming, demobilisation and reintegration of the fighters; revamping of the national economy, which have laid in ruins for more than a decade; national reconciliation; building of a viable and democratic national polity; and above all, addressing the underlying causes of the conflict.

Currently, there is no established figure on the number of fighters to be disarmed, demobilised and reintegrated. The success of this process depends a lot on a number of factors including an incentive for the ex-fighters and the willingness and commitment of the armed groups.

It looks like the views of the civil society groups prevailed during the peace talks in specific relation to the issue of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) whose establishment has been enshrined in the peace agreement. In other countries like South Africa, Sierra Leone and others, this process started fairly quickly whilst in Angola, there is no talk yet about any TRC or a War Crimes tribunal. In Liberia, there is much talk about these two institutions.

In fact, the Accra Agreement insists on the establishment of a TRC as way towards national healing. According to the agreement, TRC 'shall be established to provide a forum that will address issues of impunity, as well as an opportunity for both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to share their experiences, in order to get a clear picture of the past to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation'. Clause 2 also reads that 'in the spirit of national reconciliation, the Commission shall deal with the root causes of the crises in Liberia, including human rights violations'. Finally, clause

3 points out that the 'Commission shall, among other things, recommend measures to be taken for the rehabilitation of victims of human rights violations'.

In summary, the TRC will address impunity, provide an enabling environment for victims and perpetrators to share experiences, facilitate healing and national reconciliation, and deal with the root causes of the conflict. The TRC will also rehabilitate victims. All of these are noble objectives to achieve and if Liberia should move forward in peace building efforts, they must be addressed. However, to achieve these within the course of the next two years is not only cumbersome, it is also a tall order. In theory, nothing is wrong with setting up the TRC but the timing is questionable. Just dealing with the root causes of the conflict could open the Pandora's box and possibly divert people's attention from certain crucial things that need to be put in place before the elections of 2005.

In fact, some people are strongly arguing that this rather legalistic approach to peace building and national healing has its own merits and demerits. On the bright side of things, bringing the culprits to justice or exposing them can help to avert impunity but TRCs do not have legal powers to punish anyone. On the other hand, as indicated above, if poorly timed, TRCs can delay the peace process and even cause renewed fighting because it instils fear in the minds of fighters. This may certainly be the case with Liberia where civil society elements are claiming to be the 'angels' and the fighters as 'bad guys'. Currently, there are constant threats from civil society groups that the perpetrators of crimes will be brought before a war crimes tribunal. The sad reality in Liberia is that some elements of these civil society groups are inept, corrupt and civil society has also bred its own kleptocrats and dictators. The implementation of the Agreement has also encountered some difficulties. For example, the mediators

have rejected the seating of the 15 representatives from the 15 political sub-divisions of Liberia. The mediators are arguing that those representing the 15 sub-divisions should be elected in the counties and not in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia. In theory, this sounds fine but the sad reality is that currently, most of these sub-divisions are inaccessible and thus making it impossible to carry out such elections there. Others are even arguing that if the mediators want to stick to this principle, then more than half of the people in the transitional legislative assembly should be rejected. For example, all the civil society representatives were elected from groups based in Monrovia. Liberia's civil society is larger than Monrovia and the same argument could hold for the political parties. In the first place, how many of these parties really have national mandates. Moreover, the groups in Accra that elected the present interim leadership were far from being reflective of the aspirations of the people of Liberia on the national scale. In this light, what the mediators are proposing is a recipe for disaster and could cause further fierce tensions.

Another possible area of tension is nominations to the positions within the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL). So far, no woman has been nominated to any senior ministerial position. I am sure the only exception will be the Ministry of Gender. What is worrying is that the nominations from factions seem to be skewed in favour of certain ethnic groups. In fact, within the factions themselves, there is growing disagreement over these appointments. Bryant has assumed the role of Chair of the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (NCDDRR) but it is not clear whether this will go down well with the stakeholders to the peace agreement. One would have thought that such position would go to someone with adequate knowledge or experience in this area.

In order to avoid the derailment of this process, the mediators and local stakeholders will need to be very careful with the way in which decisions are made. At every stage of the process, there is a need to galvanise consensus among the various factions and this means that Gyude Bryant will also need to exercise effective leadership based on consensus and consultation. Finally, in order to guarantee the secure implementation of the Agreement, there is a need for an independent body to periodically (six monthly) assess the extent to which the mediators and stakeholders are adhering to the terms and conditions of the Agreement.

**Thomas Jaye** writes on regional security issues and recently, Edwin Mellen Press published his book titled: *Issues of Sovereignty, Strategy and Security in the Economic Community of West African States (ECO-WAS) Intervention in the Liberian Civil War*.

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## Writing a Global Constitution: Report from Cancun

*Kevin Danaher*

It was a lineup of luminaries of the left: Walden Bello, Vandana Shiva, Medea Benjamin, Randy Hayes, Maude Barlow, Anuradha Mittal, Tony Clarke and about 15 other internationalists. But they weren't presenting a new book or making academic speeches, they were fighting off police and scrambling to hang a large banner from a 30-foot high pedestrian walkway outside the World Trade Organization's Fifth Ministerial conference in Cancún, Mexico. The direct action was part of a large and diverse assault on the WTO's latest attempt to cobble together a constitution for the world that will supersede national and local legislation, and

empower transnational corporations to hold down wages, monopolize markets, wipe out small farmers, and wreak havoc on the environment.

As it turned out, the WTO failed completely in this latest effort, and it was largely due to a growing spirit of collaboration between nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and third world governments. Several hundred NGOs had gained credentials and thus could penetrate the tight security of the convention center. There were also thousands of activists on the outside of the cordoned-off hotel zone waging a constant struggle to be heard by the world media despite being kept miles from the convention center by thousands of Mexican police and massive metal barricades.

When it became clear that the talks had collapsed jubilant singing and dancing broke out inside and outside the convention center. As veteran activist Tom Hayden put it:

*Derailment of the Cancun WTO Ministerial caused gloom in the suites and dancing in the streets.*

This latest battle in the struggle between corporate globalization and people's globalization established some new political benchmarks: a much greater willingness of third world governments to stand up to the bullying tactics of the North American and European governments, a promising new level of collaboration between NGOs and third world governments, and a remarkable level of unity among the street-level forces fighting corporate globalization.

During the final day's protest at the barricades separating Cancún city from the hotel district, the entire rainbow of protesters worked together to produce an amazing display of tactical unity. Black bloc youth provided an outer ring of security for diverse women to approach the metal police fence and cut

holes in it with bolt cutters. Then Korean farmers tied heavy-duty rope to the fence and hundreds of people worked together to pull the fence down. But when it was toppled, to great cheers, the protesters did not storm the police, they turned their backs on them, sat down, and conducted a moving ceremony to honor the sacrifice of Korean farmer Lee Kyung Hae who stabbed himself to death while protesting at the top of the police barricades.

A diverse range of NGOs worked together in the recently formed network called 'Our World Is Not For Sale' (OWINFS) that held daily meetings of 50-100 organizations to analyze the situation, plan actions inside the convention center, and build relations with the protesters in town and the third world governments who were open to collaboration. Despite the wide range of languages and cultures it represents, the OWINFS network operated with amazing efficiency: plotting strategy and tactics, carrying out daring nonviolent direct actions, and lobbying government officials. As the OWINFS network itself described how the popular forces triumphed over the WTO:

*it was an amazing coming together of the OWINFS membership, both social movements and NGO's. From marches of the farmers, indigenous and student movements; alternative forums, daily creative actions in the convention center and in the city of Cancun; lobbying; cutting edge policy analysis; creative media work ... people really pulled together.*

More than any other single factor, it was the united resistance of so many third world governments to the insulting behavior of the U.S. and Europe that ultimately crashed the talks. The so-called Group of 21 nations focusing on agricultural issues includes such heavy hitters as China, India, Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Venezuela, and many others. They were

adamant in demanding that the rich countries reduce the massive agricultural export subsidies that are depressing farm prices and literally destroying farmers throughout the global south. Vandana Shiva's research organization reported that some 20,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide in recent years due to their inability to compete with the low-priced grains from Europe and the U.S. that are flooding the Indian market.

The draft text (representing positions favored by the rich countries) was presented on Saturday, September 13. It was so unresponsive to the demands of developing countries that many third world governments took it as an insult, and they walked out of the talks. So while a superficial analysis may portray the third world governments as the negative voice in this debate, the reality was more complex. The arrogance of the U.S. and European governments was met by an increasingly sophisticated and adamant third world bloc – fortified by the NGOs – and the unbridgeable gap between the two sides caused the failure of the talks.

Now the question is, can we build on this defeat for the corporate globalizers, and take the struggle to the FTAA negotiations in Miami in mid-November and repeat the success we enjoyed in Cancún?

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## When Northern Elephants Fight Over GMOs ...

*Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher*

As the world's attention was focused firmly on the Cancun World Trade Organisation summit in September, an important international agreement quietly made its entry on the world stage, holding out immense implications for developing countries. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which aims to regulate trade in genetically modified organisms (GMOs), came into force on 11 September after five-year-long negotiations over trade advantages and disadvantages – intractable North-South issues that are set to continue to bedevil the Protocol's implementation. This is highlighted most forcefully by the US move to take the European Union to the WTO dispute settlement mechanism over the EU's insistence that US exporters clearly label all GM food sold to Europe.

One of its main complaints is that Europe's stand makes Africa reject GM. The elephants that are Europe and US thus fight, and the grass that is Africa gets trampled. The WTO Ministerial Meeting in Cancun, Mexico, which would have had direct or indirect implications on the case, collapsed on 14 September 2003, largely because the South, and especially Africa, refused to accommodate the elephants.

Is this a foretaste of the future of the implementation of the Biosafety Protocol as well? Why do I foresee future difficulties? The reasons are many, flowing chiefly from the substantive differences between the developing countries and the US over GMO regulation. The US, which is unlikely to be a party to the Protocol, and the 60 parties to the Protocol start from opposing premises.

The US starts from the premise of 'Substantial Equivalence', which says GM

crops are as safe as non-GM ones unless proved otherwise. The EU and the developing world support the 'Precautionary Principle' embodied in the Protocol which states that a GM crop is to be considered possibly risky unless proved to be safe. From these perceived differences flow implications for implementation.

The Cartagena Protocol requires a country to allow the importation of a GMO only after it has obtained all the necessary information about it and carried out a risk assessment to evaluate the likelihood of harm to human health, to agricultural systems, to its environment and to its socio-economic conditions.

The country of import is first informed by the exporter or by the country of export of the intention to export the GMO.

The country of import, after a risk assessment, then informs the exporter or the country of export in writing whether or not it will allow the import.

In the case of GM commodities intended for food, feed or for processing, the intention to export is notified to all countries in one go through a computerised database system called the clearing-house. In this procedure, failure to communicate a decision to the country of export or to the clearing-house cannot be taken as an agreement to import. The failure might happen through lack of capacity and the Precautionary Principle would then imply that no exportation takes place. There are some exceptions to the procedure.

- A GMO that is merely transiting through a country is not subjected to the procedure. However, if a country considers any GMO as too dangerous to be allowed even transit, it has the right to register this fact at the clearing-house and prohibit its transiting.

- A GMO that is destined for contained use – under conditions from which it cannot escape into the open environment and cannot come into contact with humans or other forms of life – need not go through the procedure before importation.
- A GMO for use as a pharmaceutical for humans is subjected to the procedure unless there is another international law or a specified international organisation to govern its import and export authorisation. At the moment, there is no international law other than the Cartagena Protocol to govern the environmental impacts of GMOs. The World Health Organisation is responsible only for the safety to human health of pharmaceuticals – GMOs or otherwise – and not for their environmental impact.

When it comes to implementing and regulating the Protocol, however, developing nations are faced with all kinds of handicaps – for a variety of reasons. For instance, the Protocol depends on full information for its effective implementation – it requires a labelling and traceability regime to be negotiated once it comes into force. But the US, the biggest producer of GMOs in the world, refuses to label them, so countries will not necessarily know when an unlabelled US GMO is imported into their territories. In the meantime, safety will be compromised.

The poverty of developing countries, especially the least developed among them, mostly in Africa, remains a crucial handicap: they are simply too poor to allocate adequate resources for biosafety. Even more worrying is the fact that, should a risk occur, these countries will find it hard to muster the financial and technical capacity needed to combat it.

One would have thought that, given this situation, socio-economic considerations

would constitute a very important component in decisions over whether to import a GMO. But the relevant provision of the Protocol is very weak. However, neither this weakness nor any other international law prevents a poor country from adhering to the Precautionary Principle and making a rigorous socio-economic assessment before importing a GMO.

Risk assessment in the South also becomes complicated because of the complex tropical and subtropical environments. A micro-organism under contained use functions optimally at high temperatures. If it escapes into the open environment in the North, it is unlikely to survive the winter cold. But in the hot tropical and subtropical environments of the South, it may survive and flourish indefinitely.

The South should, therefore, put in place biosafety systems that restrict contained use only to laboratory conditions from which escape of GMOs is impossible. A major problem is related to the rich biodiversity of the South.

It is a well recognised fact that biodiversity increases Equatorwards and decreases Polewards. The environmental risk GMOs pose is one of passing their genes to wild species. The larger the biodiversity, the more complex and uncertain becomes the evaluation of risks posed by GMOs. And yet, owing to low technical capacity, specific knowledge on the South's biodiversity is very poor. Additionally, most centres of origin of crops are in the South, which makes any mistaken release of a GM crop more devastating in the South. The Protocol's information and risk assessment requirements recognise this fact and include the centres of origin or genetic diversity.

It should thus be, but is not necessarily seen as, in the interests of the North not to push GM crops into the South, and for the South to resort to caution. After all,

virtually all crops of importance in the North have their centres of origin or genetic diversity in the South, which means that the North depends on the South for its future breeding programmes and its future food security. A more intractable issue, of course, is trade and environment.

Trade rules favour the North. And the international agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights – or TRIPs – makes GMOs especially problematic for the South. TRIPs makes the patenting of micro-organisms and microbiological processes compulsory. The North is allowing the patenting of GMOs and their sub-cellular components based on this provision. The cellular parts essential for genetic engineering are already patented. This means that any domestic development and use of GMOs will become internationally bureaucratic (negotiating for the tens of subcellular parts) and expensive (paying royalties on each patent).

It also means that GMOs, even when developed in the South, will be controlled by the foreign patent owners of sub-cellular parts. TRIPs puts the burden of proof of innocence on the person accused of the infringement of a process patent. This could spell trouble when a GMO cross-pollinates with the unmodified crop of a small holder farmer and his crop becomes contaminated by patented genes.

Absurdly, the farmer is assumed to be a process patent infringer. The culprits – the wind and the insects – cannot be summoned to court as witnesses. A South that wants food sovereignty and its farmers to remain innocent of crime can refuse the planting of genetically modified crops in its territories.

Happily, however, at the insistence of the South, there is now a commitment to negotiate a liability and redress regime under the Protocol in case of damages caused by GMOs.

Given these handicaps, is the South going to benefit from genetic engineering? I wonder.

Generally, genetic engineering appeals to the South, which wants to develop fast – the technology promises to put beneficial traits found in living organisms to human use. Conversely, not using this capacity threatens being left even more behind in development.

It has no choice but to stay safe. The South has to put in place biosafety systems firmly based on the Precautionary Principle and develop the capacity – no matter how expensive – to protect itself.

**Dr Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher**, Director General of Ethiopia's Environmental Protection Authority, was chief African negotiator at the Cartagena Protocol.

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## Mozambique: 'Round Up All the Usual Suspects'

*Joe Hanlon*

In the famous 1942 Humphrey Bogart film 'Casablanca', Bogart shoots a Nazi official while the police chief is standing next to him; then the chief telephones his own headquarters and says 'The major has been shot; round up all the usual suspects'. And we all laugh, because the Nazis are the bad guys. In Mozambique, it was the courageous anti-corruption fighter Siba-Siba who was shot. But the donors have again made clear that, as in Casablanca, they are happy to simply 'round up all the usual suspects' and let the murderer go free.

The World Bank and donor statement after the 1-2 October 2003 Consultative

Group meeting in Paris makes clear that the priority is still support for the private sector and privatisation of the government's remaining interests in the banking sector, as well as the normal macroeconomic issues. In terms of corruption, as it has been for the past decade, the stress is on long-term reforms including efficiency, transparency and improving supervision (even though a World Bank study in 2000 showed this will not work). That part of the elite that killed and stole is allowed to go free in exchange for implementing reforms that may, some day, slightly reduce their ability to kill and steal. The lesson for the corrupt elite fraction is that in exchange for backing donor economic policy, they can literally get away with murder. And the lesson for the honest people is that donors want 'reforms' on the books, but they will allow the murder of anyone who actually tries to use those reforms to crack down on corrupt people in high places. Instead of protecting the watchdogs, donors actually protect the killers.

Siba-Siba was very senior in the central bank, and was probably the single most important person actually taking action to curb corruption - exactly what donors always claim they want. If the head of banking supervision in any donor country was assassinated because he was investigating corruption, there would be an outcry – look at what happened when judges were killed by the mafia in Italy. Yet these same donors say there is no point is chasing Siba-Siba's killers, and instead we must look to future reforms.

Mozambique's elite is divided. The honest fraction has repeatedly appealed to the donors not to let the corrupt fraction get away with murder, saying it sends the wrong message that corruption is protected. By giving Mozambique extra money with no conditions on Siba-Siba or investigations of hundreds of millions of dollars of bank fraud, the donors have made clear again that they side with the corrupt rather than to the honest.

And the Arrumacao farce shows that donors are happy to be fobbed off by a 'Casablanca'-style 'Round up all the usual suspects'.

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## Considering the Role of the BBC in African Conflict

*Jonathan Temin*

On 25 September 2002, six days after unidentified rebels staged surprise attacks on Abidjan, Bouake and Korhogo in the Ivory Coast, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service for Africa aired an interview on its 'Network Africa' programme with one of the rebels, identified as 'Corporal Kwasi'. 'We started the rebellion because the current regime is a dictatorship hiding under the guise of democracy,' Corporal Kwasi declared. 'But the people living in Ivory Coast know that it is not a democracy.'<sup>1</sup> Soon thereafter the rebels' name, the Mouvement Patrotique de la Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI), was announced over the BBC. The interview with Corporal Kwasi was brief and vague, but it nonetheless provided some of the first clues as to the identity of the rebels and their motives. It cleared up, if only slightly, the murky and chaotic situation in the country. However, it also provided the rebels with valuable political capital, and granted them a degree of credibility not previously enjoyed. No longer were the rebels an unidentified group with uncertain aims; after Corporal Kwasi's interview on the highly respected and influential BBC, they became legitimate.

As it turned out, the MPCI was a well organised and supplied group, comprised primarily of disenchanting former soldiers, which posed a serious threat to the Ivorian government and status quo. Regardless of whether the BBC aired an

interview with an MPCI member or publicized the group's progress, the movement would have achieved at least some of its military goals and brought the country to the brink of civil war. In this sense, the BBC's coverage – and its editorial policies and decisions – did not radically affect developments on the ground. But were BBC editors aware of the size and capacity of the movement at the time? Did they consciously consider whether they should grant the rebels a medium – an extremely powerful one at that – for airing their grievances and espousing their beliefs? Or, following the longstanding journalistic credo of detachment and impartiality, did they automatically broadcast the interview without a second thought?

These are questions that must be considered, as warlords in Africa are becoming increasingly media savvy. According to Elizabeth Ohene, former voice of 'Focus on Africa', the BBC's most popular African current affairs programme, 'if you mean to start a war in Africa today, you get a satellite phone [in order to communicate with the media] before you get AK47s.'<sup>2</sup> This briefing shows that warlords have used and manipulated the BBC to their strategic advantage. It then argues that BBC editors must re-evaluate their coverage of conflict in Africa in order to heighten the BBC's defenses against such manipulation and to debunk notions that Britain is (however subtly) meddling in the affairs of sovereign African states.

### The BBC in Africa

The BBC's influence in Africa today is unparalleled among African and international media outlets. Especially in Anglophone Africa, but increasingly in non-Anglophone countries as well, the BBC is the 'voice of record'. According to Mytton, 'the largest BBC audience anywhere in the world outside the UK, as a percentage of the adult population, is found in Africa.'<sup>3</sup>

The British government started broadcasting to Africa in 1932 under the name of the Empire Service, which changed to the General Overseas Service in 1947 and then to the World Service in 1965.<sup>4</sup> Today the BBC World Service for Africa is available in 57 African countries,<sup>5</sup> 24 hours a day in many of them, and broadcasts in nine languages, including Arabic, Somali, Swahili, French, Hausa, Portuguese, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi and English. In addition to direct broadcasting to the continent, much of the BBC's content, such as news updates lasting several minutes, is rebroadcast throughout the day on local radio outlets, further magnifying its impact. BBC programming undoubtedly influences African journalists working in all mediums to produce local content as well.

Though some African media outlets have improved substantially in recent years, foreign broadcasts, such as those of the BBC, remain powerful. These broadcasts are particularly influential in countries in which government maintains a near monopoly over media and independent outlets are weak or nonexistent, such as Liberia, and in extremely under-developed countries in which there are few listening alternatives, such as Sierra Leone. During Sierra Leone's civil war, 'the national broadcasting service ... hardly reached beyond the Freetown area. BBC Africa Service broadcasts were the main means through which provincial citizens followed events in their own country.'<sup>6</sup>

The BBC has become so ingrained across the continent that, according to Darbshire, there now exists 'a developed culture of listening to BBC and RFI [Radio France International] broadcasts.'<sup>7</sup> There are several explanations for the BBC's influence. First, in Africa radio is by far the most powerful formal medium of information (informal mediums, such as word of mouth and religious services, remain highly influential as well). Newspapers are expensive and illiteracy levels are high, while televisions are a rare luxury

and, without a satellite dish, programming in quite limited. The internet remains accessible only to a privileged few. Radio stations, however, can broadcast in multiple languages (including vernacular), and radios themselves are inexpensive and often function as public goods, as a small number of sets can serve an entire community. Second, according to Thompson 'the BBC has developed a brand credibility, so that in some areas people believe the BBC more than their local news-provider.'<sup>8</sup> This is accentuated by the fact that the local provider is often a government controlled media outlet. A third explanation concerns past government media policies; Hyden and Leslie argue that 'the popularity of BBC and VOA [Voice of America] transmissions can be directly traced to the dogmatic media policies of most African governments in the 1970s and 1980s.'<sup>9</sup>

Because of these policies, Africans began tuning out local stations (which through most of the 1970s and 1980s meant government controlled stations in which people placed little trust) and tuning into the BBC.

As it does elsewhere in the world, the BBC plays a particularly influential role in Africa when conflict erupts, largely because of its capacity to report quickly and relatively accurately on breaking news. As a result:

*Wars and negotiations are played out over the BBC airwaves in Africa much as politicians elsewhere use CNN television. 'You are more powerful than an African president,' Elizabeth Ohene, its deputy editor, was once told – by an African president. Most of his colleagues listen to it every day. So do their opponents.<sup>10</sup>*

Those opponents not only listen to the BBC, but in some instances have been able to use its broadcasts to advance their cause.

## The BBC in Liberia & Sierra Leone

The salient examples of the BBC playing a powerful, and ethically intriguing, role in African conflict come from Liberia and Sierra Leone, both of which endured devastating civil wars in the 1990s.

On Christmas Eve 1989 Charles Taylor, recently escaped from prison in Massachusetts, led his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) across the border from Ivory Coast into Liberia. The NPFL initially comprised around 100 rebels, but in their march towards the capital, Monrovia, they encountered limited resistance and gained many followers. Since 1980 Liberians had been living under the inept rule of Samuel Doe, who managed to stay in office for a decade largely due to US support motivated by Cold War geopolitical interests, support that went as far as the US endorsing blatantly rigged elections in Doe's favour in 1985. 'So hated was the Doe government' according to Ellis 'that the NPFL attack was welcomed by many Liberians and the violence rapidly spread out of control.'<sup>11</sup> Taylor and his NPFL reached the outskirts of Monrovia quickly, and by June 1990 he controlled all of Liberia except the capital. There he encountered stiff resistance provided by the Nigerian-led ECOMOG peacekeeping force and it was several months before Taylor finally claimed Monrovia. Nonetheless, in August 1995 Taylor announced over the BBC the end of Liberia's civil war and told his fighters to lay down their arms.<sup>12</sup> In 1997 he was elected President of Liberia, a position he held until being forced into exile in August 2003.

'Taylor proved himself a master of broadcasting misinformation over the BBC'<sup>13</sup> according to Richards. During his march to Monrovia, Taylor frequently phoned the BBC in London and was interviewed on the air. Many Liberians, eager to hear about recent developments in their country and skeptical of what little information was provided by the Doe

government, tuned in to hear Taylor preach (sometimes literally) his doctrine. In addition, Taylor was able to manipulate information provided to the BBC. According to Tom Kamara, a Liberian journalist, 'stringers under [Taylor's] command fed the BBC's popular African programme 'Focus on Africa' with slanted news depicting the 'virtues' of the warlord and his conquests.'<sup>14</sup> Kamara cites the following incident:

On 2 July 1990, as Taylor's rebels attached and roamed through neighbourhoods of Monrovia terrorising frightened residents and looting their belongings, the BBC was reporting a heroic welcome they (the rebels) were receiving from jubilant residents. It would emerge later that residents were in fact sardined indoors, afraid to get out.<sup>15</sup> Kamara concludes that:

*In the pursuit of the unusual, many foreign news organizations, without regular reporters on the scene, transmitted misinformation filed by partisan stringers as news. This method of misinformation has been copied extensively by other rebel groups such as Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front. Calling the BBC or VOA via a satellite phone to make bogus claims and issue scary threats became a powerful media and political tool that enhanced the stature of combatants in the power contest.<sup>16</sup>*

Taylor used the BBC primarily for three purposes: to put a positive 'spin' on his rebel movement, to communicate with his fighters and to recruit new followers. He was successful in all three pursuits – his use of the BBC helped the NPFL gain popularity and attract thousands of followers during the march to Monrovia, and his fighters were able to stay abreast of recent developments through the BBC broadcasts. During the war, 'it was said that it was safe to walk the streets only when 'Focus' [on Africa] was on', according to *The Economist*. 'The fighters were all busy listening.'<sup>17</sup>

Civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone began on 23 March 1991, with an incursion into the country by elements of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The RUF was led by a former Sierra Leone army corporal, Foday Sankoh, a protégé of Taylor and beneficiary of Taylor's excess troops and equipment. According to Richards, Sankoh learned from his mentor's use of the BBC:

*Imitating the [RUF's] backer, the Liberian warlord Charles Taylor, and probably using Taylor's French-supplied satellite phone link in Gbarnga, Sankoh soon [after invading Sierra Leone] phoned the BBC Africa Service in London to explain RUF aims. Interviewed by Robin White he proclaimed an ambition to reach Freetown to deliver a free and multiparty election. He denied presidential ambitions.<sup>18</sup>*

Sankoh understood the power of the BBC in Sierra Leone. As it was for Taylor in Liberia, the BBC was critical to Sankoh's efforts to keep his rebels informed and recruit new followers, as 'the [BBC] Africa Service [was] the main source of information for soldiers of the Nigerian-led ECOMOG – and almost certainly for the rebels, too. Along with his FN30 rifle, virtually every soldier [had] a small FM radio.'<sup>19</sup> The BBC was also used by the RUF to communicate to the general population; in 1999 *The Economist* reported:

*For a brief moment last week, there was a ceasefire in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown. People there knew about it only because the government had announced it on the BBC's 'Focus on Africa,' a radio programme broadcast three times a day from London. They came out into the streets to celebrate. But the rebel commander had also heard the report. Not true, he told the BBC by satellite telephone. Minutes after the third broadcast, the streets were empty.<sup>20</sup>*

The RUF-BBC relationship worked in the other direction as well, as the RUF monitored any scrap of information it could glean about Sierra Leone from the radio, and when it could, tried to get its own point of view across via spokespersons phoning the BBC Africa Service in London from Abidjan or Accra.<sup>21</sup>

RUF spokespeople often succeeded in getting their point across at critical times, as it has been alleged that the BBC 'had more frequent interviews and longer airtime with the RUF spokesman Fayia Musa and Abu Bakar Sankoh whenever the RUF was launching an offensive.' For these reasons, 'many believed the BBC had lent itself to manipulation by the RUF.'<sup>22</sup> As the wars in both Liberia and Sierra Leone dragged on people began to recognise the warlords' use of the BBC, though, as 'radio interviews with Charles Taylor and Foday Sankoh were regarded with heightened skepticism, and civilians became more alert to the potential uses of rumor as a weapon of war.'<sup>23</sup>

Sankoh was ultimately less successful in his pursuits than Taylor, as he languished for years in prison before his death in July 2003. Meanwhile, Sierra Leoneans are confronting their past and the country is inching towards democratic governance. But Liberia and Sierra Leone are not the only African countries in which questions have been raised concerning the role of the BBC. Elsewhere, various groups have expressed displeasure with the attention the BBC grants to opposition views:

The Somalis' real complaint is that the Beeb [BBC] has broadcast interviews with members of the rebel Somali National Movement, whose as in northern Somalia has grown bloodier of late. This habit of giving dissidents and rebels a say has angered other Africans. In October the *Ghanaian Times* complained that the BBC, which has more Ghanaian listeners than any local station, had been paying undue attention to London-based

Ghanaian dissidents. When Mr. John Tusa, head of the BBC's external services, visited Kenya and Uganda last month, both governments urged him not to play up opposition views.<sup>24</sup>

It is worth noting, however, that while Somalia has disintegrated into a warlord-controlled pseudo-state, Ghana, Kenya and Uganda have all realised significant democratic growth since the 1980s, and the BBC may have played a small part in that process.

### **To Broadcast or not to Broadcast**

The question of what role the BBC *should* play in societies in conflict is complex. Ideally, warlords and tyrants would not be allowed to use the BBC as a 'weapon of war'. Such media abuse is one of the negative consequences of the BBC's reach and influence. But for every negative consequence there are positive effects of the BBC's work, and the dilemma is that the good and bad are inseparable. Do the positive effects outweigh the negative? Generally, the answer is yes. Because infrastructure is often destroyed during conflict and African government almost always tighten their grip on media in times of crisis, the capacity of domestic media outlets to produce content (which may be minimal to begin with) is frequently compromised, leaving international broadcasts as one of the only sources of information left. Furthermore, during conflict media content produced domestically tends to become increasingly polarised, as outlets frequently end up 'taking sides.' Thus information coming from a basically neutral, external source, such as the BBC, can be of great benefit. Even if that information is unbalanced or even biased – which BBC broadcasts generally are not – in most situations it is better than blatantly polarised information or no information at all.

The flip side to the use of the BBC by warlords to promote conflict is that it can just as easily serve as a positive tool for

spreading information. According to Ohene:

*There is consolation in that access for war mongers is also access for the public. This was evident when a young woman in The Gambia called us from a public phone box in her village with the first news that the Farafenni barracks were under attack during the failed counter coup of November 1996, which followed the successful coup of July 1994.<sup>25</sup>*

Maintaining the ability to spread and receive information via outlets such as the BBC is critical because warlords thrive on misinformation and lack of information. For them, the less people know about their plans, motives and tactics, the better. Conversely, spreading information about warlords and tyrants can be a powerful tool in efforts to deter them. The ability to spread information through the BBC should be left intact.

But the BBC cannot continue with business as usual and ignore the issues surrounding how it has been used by the likes of Taylor and Sankoh. To do so would be to play into the hands of their future incarnations. It would also fuel speculation that former colonial powers are supporting rebel movements and using international broadcasts to pursue narrow self-interests, practices that are supposed to be extinct. BBC editors and policymakers must recognise that the respect and influence their outlet enjoys comes with responsibility, and that their editorial decisions have wide-ranging and critical consequences on the ground. Nobody in the BBC takes their job lightly, but editors and policymakers must pay particular attention to how they report on conflict in Africa.

This discussion raises larger issues concerning how international media outlets report on conflict, which reflects an ongoing debate within the journalism field. Norms of journalism once taken for granted are now being questioned; fore-

most among them the notion that journalists should remain strictly detached from conflict and jealously guard their neutrality. Reflecting conventional wisdom, Peter Shaw, newsroom editor of the BBC World Service from 1990 to 1993, and some of his former colleagues recently expressed their belief that 'imperatively, all journalists must remain above and beyond the action at all times and in all ways.'<sup>26</sup> They did so in a letter to *The Times* (London) in reaction to a BBC journalist's decision to testify in the trial of Slobodan Milosevic. Their opinion reflects that of many journalists, particularly veteran reporters.

However, a new line of thinking quickly gaining momentum suggests that journalists do have a role to play in conflict beyond just reporting the facts, that they can help mediate conflict, and on occasion even play a part in resolving or preventing conflict. This argument is based on the belief, as Manoff phrases it, that 'the professional norms of journalism do not trump fundamental human moral obligations.'<sup>27</sup> Jacky Rowland, the BBC journalist who testified in the Milosevic trial, said in her defense 'I don't believe that journalists are exempt from moral obligations or international justice.'<sup>28</sup> There are a variety of ways that journalists can contribute to conflict mitigation, from reframing the conflict to providing opportunities for face-saving and consensus-building.<sup>29</sup> This new line of thinking suggests that it is no longer sufficient for BBC editors simply to believe that by airing an interview with Taylor, Sankoh or Corporal Kwasi, they are just broadcasting the facts and shrewdly remaining 'above and beyond' the conflict. Nor can they argue that the consequences of their actions are not their concern or responsibility. The time that this argument held up to scrutiny has passed.

Should the BBC have broadcast the interview with Corporal Kwasi? The general answer is yes, but with a critical caveat:

before airing such an interview, careful consideration must be given to how the interview may affect the conflict and to the motives of the individual being interviewed. If it is decided that airing the interview is likely to escalate the conflict, and if it appears that the interviewee is using the BBC to disseminate an inflammatory or misleading message to a wider audience, then it should not be broadcast. Consideration should also be given to the context and the details of the particular media environment: if the BBC is a major influence in that environment, as it is in Ivory Coast, then editors and must be especially circumspect when deciding whether to air the interview.

The response to this argument will be that such a policy creates a 'slippery slope'. Critics will assert that journalists cannot be expected to double as fortune tellers, constantly predicting the effects of their reporting. This is true, but it is equally true that not considering the questions posed here has consequences as well, witnessed amidst the destruction wreaked by civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. BBC policies in such situations need to be amended, so that the consequences of editorial decisions are closely scrutinized prior to being made. The wars and savagery in Liberia and Sierra Leone were not the fault of the BBC. But Taylor and Sankoh were able to use the BBC to their advantage. Shaw and his colleagues warn that 'to be seen colluding with authority – any authority – risks credibility, damages hard-won reputations, and may even put correspondents' lives in danger.'<sup>30</sup> The BBC unwittingly colluded with Taylor, Sankoh and Corporal Kwasi. Its editors should be wary of allowing this to happen again.

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**Editor's Note:** we would like to continue this discussion of radio programming in Africa, looking at local radio stations as well as VOA and RFI. Contributions please to Jan Burgess, [editor@roape.org](mailto:editor@roape.org).

## South Africa: Dying to Fight

*Peter Dwyer*

'Avoid Aids, come inside' says the sign outside the sex shop near the Durban beachfront. Just 100 meters away 500 Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) activists, from 110 branches across South Africa, were meeting at the second TAC National Congress to plan how to carry on their fight for the roll out of a comprehensive treatment plan for the 5 million people living with HIV-AIDS. With the highest national HIV prevalence in the world, AIDS is estimated to have caused 40% of all adult deaths in 2001, as many as 1,000 people a day according to UNAIDS (a figure not challenged by the ANC government). Addressing the Congress on the final day, the historic nature of this campaign was underscored by the UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS, Stephen Lewis, who compared TAC with some of the greatest social movements of the twentieth century and the 'anti-globalisation' movement of the twenty-first.

Straight and gay people (although the majority were black women in their mid-twenties) gathered with representatives from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and other affiliated groups such as the South African Council of Churches to elect the TAC leadership, ratify their constitution and perhaps most importantly to debate whether to re-start a civil disobedience campaign to force the ANC government to sign and implement the framework agreement on a National Prevention and Treatment Plan, negotiated by mandated representatives of government, business, labor and community during October and November 2002.

Over three days, 'positive Muslims', 'health care workers united against AIDS', trade unionists and the unemployed, socialists and priests who make up TAC's

united front campaign, hugged, danced, sang, laughed and cried (and broke down sobbing uncontrollably in frustration with the ANC government, as one young woman did) in a Congress that unanimously vowed to continue their struggle for treatment and embark, once again, on civil disobedience.

Such was the heady atmosphere that one cannot but help draw comparisons with the liberation movement against apartheid. Although people drew heavily on past struggles by singing popular anti-apartheid tunes they are developing their own songs, dances and symbols built on their experiences and campaigns under an ANC government. Yet from the young poet who skilfully and polemically rapped 'I wonder how it is to walk along the road to peace and democracy without treatment' to the woman who jumped up and screeched out a customary 'praise song' one could be forgiven for thinking it is not the ANC that these young people identify with but TAC. Despite every delegate, mantra like, starting a speech with roars of 'Viva TAC Viva!' a seemingly unquenchable response was guaranteed. Amidst songs of 'TAC is the champion since 1998' (its founding year) nobody dared or ever called out 'Viva ANC' (including a rather feeble and apologetic ANC parliamentarian who addressed the Congress).

Dare I shatter another sacred cow when I say that TAC national chairperson (re-elected unopposed) Zackie Achmat, (a self-proclaimed socialist arrested and detained 5 times, and operated underground for ten years, during apartheid) has won 'Mandela-esque' adulation and respect amongst TAC campaigners. Indeed Mandela has praised Achmat as 'a role model whose activism is based on principles that are admired way beyond South Africa's borders'. The special bond between Achmat and TAC activists was further evidenced through a moving song in which hundreds of delegates danced, conga-style, to the front of the

hall pointing at Achmat singing how they will follow him into civil disobedience even if it means getting arrested.

Although it was not personal pleading from Nelson Mandela that finally persuaded Achmat to give up his principled refusal to take antiretroviral drugs until everyone has affordable access to them, but the unanimous vote and pleas by delegates. Without fanfare, it was subtly made apparent on the final day of the Congress that Zackie Achmat would start taking drugs. Ever the propagandist and with a boyish grin that masks his constant fight against illness he rhetorically asked why should he allow Thabo Mbeki to kill another person.

In the last 3 years in Europe I have been fortunate to have participated in many anti-capitalist marches and the 1 million strong anti-war march at the European Social Forum in Florence in November 2002, but this festival of resistance was a rollercoaster ride of emotions and had a vice like psychological and spiritual grip on me (and others), the likes of which I have never experienced before. From the first songs and dances that punctuated proceedings the mood of the Congress was celebratory and frustrated, militant and defiant yet shrouded in anguish for those that have died and continue to die unnecessarily because the ANC government have so far refused to pay for treatment. No wonder that Mark Heywood, TAC National Secretary, noted that one of the main challenges facing TAC activists 'is to stay alive'.

And alive they were as amidst an uplifting cacophony of cheers and with a sense of new found confidence speaker after speaker refuted the government's claim that AIDS drugs are ineffective and toxic. As if to provide 'living' proof of this, on Sunday morning, whilst the votes for the national secretariat were being counted, with almost evangelical zeal in an ecstatic, congratulatory atmosphere people living with HIV/AIDS spoke out about

how antiretroviral drugs have worked for them. To the cries of 'Phansi (down with) Thabo Phansi' they condemned the ANC President, of whom they sang 'Thabo Mbeki is going to have to answer in the next life'.

TAC is an organisation rooted in a popular tradition of resistance. This was a gathering defined by dances, songs and words of struggle and whose bitter experiences have shaped them. Indeed, as Molefe Tsele made clear 'There is nothing new in what we are doing' for 'we are a people of campaigns, it is who we are'. Building on the victories of the liberation struggle TAC have utilised the right to protest, the courts, research, the Human Rights Commission, the Competition Commission and new corporate bodies to try to change ANC policy.

Constantly having to dismiss government charges that they are undermining democracy they have shown that they 'are not slaves of democracy but citizens in a country that will hold its government accountable' as Achmat proudly proclaimed as activists repeatedly called out 'no treatment no vote!' Indeed, it is intriguing to see that those leaders who fought for democracy now find that it is being brandished and used to make them accountable. In the week prior to the TAC Congress I attended four grassroots organised rallies in Durban townships over water cut offs and rent increases during which people sang 'no water no vote'.

Yet there is much more to TAC. In past four years they have handed over numerous petitions and memorandums to the government, many of which have gone unanswered. Despite this they have continued to campaign and whilst calling on other popular forces to work with them and create a 'people's health movement' they have wasted no time in training and educating a new layer of activists and the general public about HIV/AIDS, their constitutional rights and broader issues such as the power of drug companies in a

globalised world. Evidence of this abounded as people relived stories of how they are trying, with few resources in mainly impoverished townships, to inform people about HIV/AIDS and to counter government denials that HIV leads to AIDS so compounding intolerance.

This is a small but growing army of volunteers and activists learning, disbursing information, giving moral support, sometimes at great costs to themselves (only recently in the Chester-ville township in Durban a TAC activist openly living with HIV/AIDS was brutally attacked in her house). Often under pressure, not sure if they are always doing the right thing people told how they are organising workshops, offering practical and tender support and counselling at hospitals, clinics and in peoples homes. These are people rightly proud of what they have achieved.

'As I've joined TAC' said a breathless animated older woman from Cape Town, 'I have realised I have got the power to help my community'. Another younger woman, openly living with HIV/AIDS, from one of the poorest areas, Limpopo province, told how a mobile clinic visits her area only once a month. Yet even here TAC have helped create a small group of people who at least know to ask the mobile clinics for their emergency drug list to demand that they have relevant drugs on it for those living with HIV/AIDS. It is in this way that many activists could confidently stand up and say that through the TAC literacy campaign TAC have begun to generate a sense of dignity and defiance.

Yet, in some ways TAC is a victim of its own success. One woman who was raped, and having come across TAC is now confident enough to live openly with HIV, says she cannot cope with the number of people (often in secret) that are coming to her for help and advise on what to do having been diagnosed HIV

positive. A farm worker told how through information from TAC comrades he persuaded a (white) doctor from a private practice in a small rural Western Cape Town to come and give talks to people about HIV/AIDS and how through this the doctor is now an active member of TAC. But he left the Congress telling me he needed more support from TAC.

Although the Congress ended with the national anthem, that night TAC supporters protested during a speech by the much despised Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang at the opening of an international conference on HIV/AIDS in Durban. The next day hundreds of protestors marched to the conference carrying wooden crosses and posters with the names of those who have died from the disease. At the protest rally, as scientists, academics and government bureaucrats pressed up against the conference window to see what all the noise was about, Zackie Achmat said they were tired of the 'foot-dragging' by government to implement an anti-retroviral treatment plan. 'We have given them enough time to act by suspending our civil disobedience campaign' he said (during which time over 100 TAC activists have died).

The week that followed the TAC Congress was marked by a plethora of vague government statements about a commitment to rolling out treatment - soon. TAC activists have long since tired of promises and the Congress showed that they are still dying to fight for treatment.

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## HIV/AIDS: Behind the Rhetoric, Whose Interests Are Being Served?

*Gill Seidel*

*Tell me of one major international programme that has assisted people here on the ground, those who most need help (personal communication, Indian AIDS activist, 2002).*

Since the early stages of the epidemic, many Southern NGO and CBO voices have angrily asserted that HIV interventions are donor-driven. Indeed, some international agencies appear to act on the basis of shallow knowledge. Many projects are distinguished by their lack of understanding of the lived experiences of the people behind the statistics, and the social dynamics of the communities they are committed to helping. Analyses of international humanitarian NGOs and their crisis interventions have criticised their 'unpolitical' and standardised responses (see, for example, Pottier, 1996 on Rwanda). Others draw attention to the narrowness of 'good practice' codes while ignoring the underlying inequalities of bilateral economic relations between North and South (Bracking, 2000). A few outspoken analysts have gone so far as to suggest international NGOs represent a form of neo-colonialism, while other critics are motivated to broaden citizen and southern NGO involvement in policy change (IEED, 2003; Smith & Bornstein 2001). While insights into the working processes of international AIDS NGOs may create a buzz in conference corridors, this kind of knowledge is rarely brought into the public domain and opened to greater scrutiny.

What I set out here is my brief but illuminating experience in working as a consultant with a large international AIDS NGO, funded from the US. I discuss my observations and concerns, and assess

the strategies, values, linkages, and meanings in contention. These observations emerged from a preliminary meeting and email exchanges with members of the technical team charged with developing a new resource for People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in the South, with particular reference to Southern Africa. It was planned as a new Southern 'empowerment' tool. The team and my own markedly different approaches and philosophies are illustrated here with reference to two proposed topics: Nutrition, and Positive Pregnancy. And in more general terms by the refusal of the technical team to consider providing any links between issues.

Coincidentally, around this time (late May 2003), the af-aids network posted a series of messages about what it means to empower PLWHAs. Extracts from these messages are reproduced below. Each of these makes important links, underscoring their importance – the first between poverty, gender and food and, in the second, firmly placed in the frame of political economy, between runaway prices, structural unemployment, violence, and incapacity of the health services to deliver.

To: 'AF-AIDS' <af-aids@lists.healthdev.net>  
Sent: Tuesday, May 20, 2003 8:07 PM  
Subject: [af-aids] Empowering PLWHAs

In addition to Richard Matikanya's definition of 'empowering PLWHAs', I would like to propose that Stigma, poverty and gender discrimination are the three MOST disempowering factors for PLWHAs. In my experience working with PLWHA in my country Uganda, and other countries in East and Southern Africa: Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique, Botswana and now in Lesotho, I observe that any PLWHA affected by any or all of those three will not have access to care, good nutrition, and socialization, badly affecting their physical and psychological wellbeing.

Thank you

Wilson Kisubi

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To: 'AF-AIDS' <af-aids@lists.healthdev.net>  
 Sent: Tuesday, May 20, 2003 8:07 PM  
 Subject: [af-aids] Empowering PLWHAs (3)

(...) The concept of empowerment should not be divorced from the social political context of the day. Where bulls fight, the grass suffers. The political impasse in Zimbabwe specifically and Africa in general had negatively impacted of the empowerment process of PLWHA as their welfare has been greatly compromised. Shortage of fuel. Insufficient foreign currency reserves. Hyperinflationary environment. Structural unemployment. Violence. Economic decline. Crumbling health delivery systems. (...)

Maxwell Madzikanga  
 Programme Director  
 Youth Alive Zimbabwe  
 posting from AF-AIDS (af-aids@healthdev.net)

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The issue of links refused to lie down. The other point of contention was the technical team's insistence that this new resource was to be exclusively web-sourced – despite an unequal terrain in which many practical Southern materials are simply not referenced, or available on-line. The technical team was adamant about what should be included under 'Nutrition'. They sought to prioritise self-help guides to healthy eating, with an important focus on local herbal preparations used as supplements, or immune boosters. Although food is inextricably linked with a host of other factors, not least, with food security, and with poverty, and gender, such links were talked down as irrelevant in this connection. (For an overview of food security and HIV, see Barnett, 2002). In a stroke, they had dismissed the entire concept of sustainable livelihoods that seeks to make micro-macro linkages, and hence to mainstream HIV and people living with HIV/AIDS. (For a study of vulnerable livelihoods in Malawi, see Devereux 2001). No less a voice than Peter Piot has joined in this debate:

*We will see more and more what we have seen recently in southern Africa: a vicious circle of poverty, hunger and*

*AIDS, working in a synergistic way and exacerbating each other (...) It is absolutely important that ministries of agriculture must tackle AIDS as one of their core priorities. (Copyright (c) AFP or Agence France-Presse, July 2003 <http://ww2.aegis.org/news/afp/2003/AF0306B6.html> Source: AEGiS)*

This refusal of this international NGO to accept links, even in this context, was not only startling. More to the point, its position is out of kilter with key recommendations of UN bodies. I would refer in particular to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, UN General Assembly, Special Session on HIV/AIDS, New York (27 June 2001), and the follow-up technical meeting co-hosted by FAO, IPAD, WFP, and UNAIDS in Rome (5-7 December 2001).

One of the objectives of the Rome technical meeting was 'to identify interventions to reduce vulnerability and rural livelihoods, with special attention to the emerging needs of such groups as the ultra-poor, and AIDS orphans rendered especially vulnerable by the epidemic' (Seeley & Pringle, 2001). The FAO was one of the first international agencies that sought to combine gender concerns with livelihoods, and is exercised by the gender impact of resources allocated to agriculture. It is actively seeking ways of influencing land policies, particularly those which disenfranchise widows and orphans, the most stigmatised (see [www.fao.org.sud](http://www.fao.org.sud) and FAO 2003. For an important conceptual paper on gendered dimensions of conflict, see Byrne 1996; for mainstreaming gender in poverty reduction strategies, see Kabeer, 2003; Whitehead, 2003).

Ideologically, if not rhetorically, the team preferences to focus largely on herbal medicines are altogether congruent with the increasing trend towards the privatisation of health. This position favours and panders to elites and free enterprise. In South Africa, acclaimed but as yet non-

evaluated preparations, like 'Sutherlandia', may be bought over the counter (BBC World: Africa, 2001: C. Dempster). While this array of products, particularly those impartially tested and rated in scientific tests, are clearly welcome developments in their own right, in political terms they remain part of exclusively private initiatives. To afford them assumes a measure of disposable income. We are not talking here about wealthy Californians. It's Zambians, Malawians, Zimbabweans, and Ethiopians who are in the frame.

This bolstering of a purely individual and privatised approach, deriving from the neo-Conservative ethic, is problematic in other respects. It ignores calls for health restructuring (Simms, Rawson & Peattie, 2001). It also lets governments, the IMF, EU, and G8 countries, entirely off the hook (Baylies, 2000). This superficial treatment of nutrition glosses over the fact that political and socio-cultural factors, together with global pricing arrangements, and debt-servicing (<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/hivaids/downloads/debtrelief.pdf>), hamper the improvement of local food production in Africa, and elsewhere (see [www.eldis.org/hivaids/foodsevhiv.htm](http://www.eldis.org/hivaids/foodsevhiv.htm); for donor support for structural adjustment policies in Zambia, see Bartlett 2001; Cheru, 2000). This is how a recent FAO manual of HIV nutrition and care puts it in its recent manual on nutritional care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS:

Few crises have affected human health and threatened national, social and economic progress in quite the way that HIV/AIDS has. The pandemic has had a devastating impact on household food security and nutrition through its effects on the availability, stability and access to food and its use for good nutrition.

Meeting immediate food, nutrition and other basic needs is essential if HIV/AIDS-affected households are to live with dignity and security. Providing nutritional care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS is an important part of caring at all stages of the disease (FAO, 2003).

The conceptual and political links are made. By contrast, for the vast majority of African populations, how far can a simple checklist go, and recommendations like 'Eat more mineral and vitamins', to fill aching bellies, and help balance out local diets? Zimbabwe is a case in point.

In a broader and more grounded perspective, a few governments, like Uganda, have fortified certain staple foods. Although food aid needs to be seen as only a short-term solution, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) has recently announced it will provide enriched food rations to HIV/AIDS infected or affected people in some regions to help them resist opportunistic diseases (WFP Food Aid for HIV/AIDS-Affected People -IRIN PlusNews, SA 12 June 2003 <http://www.irinnews.org/AIDSreport.asp?ReportID=2145>).

Isn't this relevant information? Wouldn't it be helpful to provide links to these initiatives? Plus a further link to 'AIDS activism', or 'what it means to be an AIDS activist'? The absence of activism would be unthinkable in a Southern community resource.

Alternatives to the Neo-Conservative stance would mobilise values far closer to those articulated in this NGO's vision statement. This specifically mentions 'communities'. Why not reference and showcase significant community initiatives here? I'm thinking of community-based efforts, loans, and innovative projects aimed at sustaining affected families and livelihoods, and particularly women-headed families. We need to consider what these omissions mean in terms of values and policy (Seeley & Pringle, 2001). A number of other key topics suggested for this resource are similarly multi-levelled and ideological. Like information on being 'Positively pregnant'. The technical team had decided what this should encompass. It would prioritise medical and nutritional information for positive mothers, all to

be downloaded directly from available websites. 'It's a web resource – we don't need anything else.'

That's alright – as far as it goes. But which direction is it taking? And does it go far enough? Let's take a critical look at the assumptions in play. How are positive pregnant women being positioned here? Are we to assume that all these women are happy about their pregnancy? (Tallis, 1997; 1998). As there's no space given to other voices, the simple answer must be 'yes'. This would seem to be an uncontroversial 'given' in this situation – and it clearly belongs to a particular ideological stable. Indeed, speakers at a recent AIDS conference in South-East Asia have attacked the 'F factor' (fundamentalism), as in this report extract<sup>1</sup> from Archina Sachdev (below).

What does this silence say about reproductive rights? And accessing women-friendly services? And links between gendered and other rights? 'Why do we want links?' they asked again, with increasing irritation. In this Bush-styled universe, are we to assume that even an organisation like Catholics for Choice is a candidate for the global Axis of Evil? This is emphatically not the approach favoured by the International Community for Women (ICW), for example, which actively supports sexual and reproductive rights for all women ([www.icw.org](http://www.icw.org)).

In an alternative resource, a product of a more communitarian and gendered ethical values, and informed by local dynamics, basic medical information about being positively pregnant would, of course, also be included. But in a format often adapted, not always simply downloaded, from formal web sources; and which would seek to prioritise useful materials produced in the South.

It would also provide connections to support groups, and to programmes and advocacy that seek to mainstream gender

(SAT, 2001; UNIFEM [www.unifem.undp.org/human\\_rights/hiv\\_aids/html](http://www.unifem.undp.org/human_rights/hiv_aids/html)); and the JOHAP programme (Joint Oxfam and HIV/AIDS Programme), including the dynamic Gender AIDS Forum, in Durban ([www.eldis.org/gender/dossiers/responsesinstitutionalise.htm](http://www.eldis.org/gender/dossiers/responsesinstitutionalise.htm)); and to violence (Vetten & Bhana, 2001; Smith, 2001). It would stress that a woman in this situation need not be alone. Additional links would connect with a range of positive women's own stories about reproductive rights (and wrongs) (Mthembu, 1998), and mothering experiences, concerns, and sources of support.

Narratives on offer could include what 'Zanile' wanted, and tried to do, when she realised she was pregnant (but with limited, or late, access to information and services), as opposed to 'Lucky's story and her more 'traditional' values. Both these positions – 'Zanile's desire to seek a termination, which she knows from the radio is her right (an example from KwaZulu-Natal) (Seidel, unpublished field diary, 1998-9) and, in contrast, 'Lucky's belief that a child is a gift from God – need to be represented within a resource of this kind. A single, authoritative voice is not acceptable in a democracy. (see Global Reproductive Health Forum (GRHF): [www.hsph.harvard.edu/organizations/healthnet/index.html](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/organizations/healthnet/index.html)). This project provides interactive electronic forums, located in Southern countries, which hope to encourage the participation of under-served groups, and distributes reproductive health and rights materials from a variety of perspectives).

With this more participatory approach, more than one ideological position is articulated. Others are recognised, and may be seen as competing for attention and funding. And Southern experiences and useful materials from the South (by no means all referenced on the web) would occupy centre stage – within a conflict, not a consensual, model of society, and within a broader, and clearly

referenced, international human rights' environment.

What communicative styles should shape the proposed booklet and CD? This is not simply a technical consideration. In this instance, the decision was influenced by unexamined Northern representations of what was deemed appropriate for the South. In a more general sense, a decision of this kind is shaped by conditions in which particular forms of knowledge are produced and legitimated.

Outstanding communicative examples in health, including sex education, have been produced in Southern Africa for over a decade (radio, TV soap, and comics). (Seidel, 1994; 1995). In South Africa, 'Roxy' from the Cape, and the acclaimed, multilingual 'Soul City' are probably among the best known. All of these dialogue formats recognise that a range of voices, representing popular participation and socio-cultural dynamics, not simply thick chunks of linear text, constitute an important source of knowledge in predominantly oral cultures. And especially in contexts where more official sources of authority, and very formal language, may be seen as alienating, and politically suspect.

These examples may be built upon and extended to produce a dynamic self-help and community resource for positive people in the South. It must of course include web resources. We do agree on that. But it needs to include a great deal more besides. In these circumstances, the unidimensional *Yellow Pages* telephone directory seems an extraordinary model to propose for a Southern booklet. And a dynamic CD format offers more possibilities to the eye and the ear, not less. And why not include music? This is functional, at times therapeutic, not merely 'decorative'. Songs, a vehicle of hope, run through the abolitionist and the civil right's movement. I have never taken part in any community-based workshop in the South in which songs, and

prayers, like Nkosi Sikelel' i-Afrika, often led by women, did not constitute a spontaneous part of the meeting and deliberations (see Eade, 2003). But this recommendation to include songs was met with embarrassment, even disbelief. 'She can't be serious.' Finally, is capacity-building now out of favour among some large, international AIDS NGOs? Or what form does it take? It certainly remains one of the buzz words. But it would seem that little credence is given to prior learning and experience (V. Tallis, personal communication, July 2003).

'Capacity-building? We don't do that. We can make recommendations to NGOs for them to print out sections if they are asked. But that's all.' Other routes are available. They could link up with existing computer training organisations working in Southern Africa, like Community Heart ([www.community-heart.org.uk/projects/computers/computers.htm](http://www.community-heart.org.uk/projects/computers/computers.htm)). But that wasn't seen as a worthwhile option either. In this instance, capacity-building was present not as a core activity, but merely as a form of politically correct wording embedded in their mission and value statement.

Producing a new CD resource for the South to be used by PLWHAs is undoubtedly a welcome move. But, apart from the question of representing local and activist dynamics, can this be done effectively without also including an IT and probably a mentoring component? Without IT training, how else can larger numbers of positive people, not part of the elite, and who may not be regularly assisted by NGOs, be 'empowered' to access this and other CD resources directly? and produce a people-centred critique, and take the issues further?

This is not to say that an element of PLWHA consultation was not envisaged at the start. That would be to misrepresent the project design. However, this participation was designed to take place further down the line. It was to be limited

to selecting the 50 or so best articles, including toolkits, from those presented to them, culled from web sources. As I understand it, although there was token individual input from two or three in-house positive people from the South, no constituted Southern PLWHA group had any say in the original design.

An important article by ICASO sets out some of the history, and the public policy dimensions, of involving PLWHAs (The Denver Principle, 1983; the Declaration of the Paris AIDS Summit, 1994; the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, 2001 and the GIPA Principle – Greater involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS). Under ‘Challenges’, the authors made the following points:

From: <af-aids@healthdev.net>  
To: ‘AF-AIDS’ <af-aids@lists.healthdev.net>  
Subject: [af-aids] Article on the Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS  
Date: 04 April 2003 11:27:pm

Article on the Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS -ICASO

(...) One of the major obstacles to involving persons living with HIV/AIDS in the response to the epidemic is the lack of information, education and training. Many HIV/AIDS program managers and decision-makers need to better understand the advantages of involving persons living with HIV/AIDS. Some of them also need guidance on how to go about selecting persons living with HIV/AIDS to serve on staff, committees, boards, etc. Because they often come from poor or uneducated backgrounds, many HIV-positive persons need skills training to enable them to participate fully in program and advocacy activities.

For persons living with HIV/AIDS, getting involved in organisations that are responding to the epidemic often means identifying themselves publicly as being HIV-positive. As a result, they often require training, counselling and ongoing support on what it means to go public and how to deal with the fear of rejection. At the organisational level, other obstacles to the participation of persons living with HIV/AIDS can include the lack of clear policies on their involvement, the lack of

medical insurance, and the lack of an enabling and supportive environment.

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Finally, this is how one Southern AIDS activist sets out what is needed, and what empowerment means to him:

Empowerment in the broadest sense is to do with active participation in shaping decisions that affect one’s well being. In essence, PLWHA should be actively involved in formulating all interventions targeted at them that is from conceptualization to evaluating programme impact. PLWHA should not be viewed as consumers or service users but as active crafts persons of their destinies. The empowerment process enables them to gain confidence and thus contribute to the formulation and generation of context specific and appropriate knowledge as well as solutions.

Empowerment also entails strengthening the capacity of this indispensable group in HIV/AIDS programming so that in the long run they can initiate and sustain actions on their own as well as creating structures and designing policies that serve their interests. In essence the concept of empowerment entails more than mobilizing a societal group to decide on what it wants or implement what has been decided but is a means of increasing that group’s overall capacity. It is only when a community has been adequately empowered that it can come up with realistic plans and objectives. The need for possession of sufficient and sustainable resources can never be overemphasized in the empowerment process and paradigm

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Maxwell Madzikanga’s stance is compelling. Is this international AIDS NGOs, dependent on the dollar, promoting individualism and hence demobilising PLWHAs? Is it also championing the rolling back of government, while ignoring key conceptual and political links? Indeed, is the Emperor, high on dollars and Northern Comfort, leaping from one

US Airline to another (a condition of USAID-funded projects), on a global mission, with no clothes?

## Note

1. From: bounce-gender-aids-120407@lists.healthdev.net [mailto:bounce-gender-aids-120407@lists.healthdev.net] On Behalf Of gender-aids@healthdev.net Sent: 07 October 2003 10:46 To: Gender-AIDS Subject: [gender-aids] 2nd APCRS: This 'F' word 2nd APCRS: 6 - 10 October 2003, Bangkok, Thailand

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## The 'F' Factor

*Archana Sachdev*

This 'F' word kept popping up everywhere on the opening day Monday of the 2nd Asia-Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health. Be it US delegate Nancy Northup accusing the Bush administration of adopting anti-abortion policies to 'please its fundamentalist constituency', or Indian researcher Zamrooda Khanday detailing how the diktats of fundamentalist Islamic militants have curtailed women's access to contraception and sterilisation in the conflict-torn Kashmir valley, the shadow of fundamentalism appeared to loom large on the horizon.

Speaking at the plenary session, Prof. Denis Altman of Australia was downright blunt in denouncing the ostrich-like attitude of various governments in the Asia-Pacific region and their hypocrisy in not acknowledging and accepting human sexual behaviour. 'We are scared to confront religion,' said Altman, president of the AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific. He pointed to how the reluctance of the Iranian government to acknowledge the sexual transmission of HIV or the Catholic Church's opposition to artificial contraceptive methods was impacting on the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Describing the US curtailment of public funding for pro-abortion groups at home and abroad as an 'ideological fight on behalf of the conservative base,' Northrup, president of the US-based Centre for Reproductive Rights, called it 'an affront to women's reproductive rights'.

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## Congo: Waiting for Godot

*Stefaan Smis & Theodore Trefon*

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been in the news the past few months, once again, for the wrong reasons. Although no one would deny that the Congolese people have been going through hell, particularly in the northern and eastern provinces controlled by rebel factions supported by Congo's foreign enemies, media reports have more frequently than not, over-simplified an extremely complex local situation with far-reaching international stakes. Media focus on 'ethnic hatred' between Hema and Lendu in Ituri where an estimated 50,000 have been killed since 1999 is off track. It doesn't take into account the instrumentalisation of ethnicity for other reasons, such as territoriality and control of natural resources. Is the French led UN peacekeeping force currently deployed in Bunia really only an effort to protect civilian lives? Or, can it also be interpreted as a means for France to regain credibility in the region after the *Opération Tourquoise* fiasco a decade ago? Perhaps it is a way of showing the international community that French-style diplomacy is indeed an alternative to American disdain for the UN in the aftermath of the second Iraq war.

This briefing offers an overview of the main events that have taken place in DRC during the last twelve months, a period marked by conflicting developments.<sup>36</sup> On 17 December 2002, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD), after a long and painful gestation, initiated with the Lusaka agreement of July 1999, gave birth to an agreement on the institutions for the transitional period. It remains unclear, however, whether it was still-born or not because a number of major problems are already apparent. While parties involved in the conflict are 'talking transition' and dividing up governmental posts, they all have vested interests

in maintaining at least a minimum degree of violence and warfare.

The situation in the East of the country, Ituri in particular, proves that the peace logic associated with the start of the transition period has not replaced strategies of conquering power by force. On the contrary, fighting has intensified. It seems that it is mainly through the barrel of the gun (but also machetes and spears) that the governmental positions in the transition period are attributed. Participation in the transitional government is crucial because so doing has become the only way to protect one's personal interests, explaining why the stalemate has lasted so long. The issue of how the future state should be organised has, however, remained a secondary question. The ordinary people of the Congo have consequently lost faith in the political process. They have understood that political elites are unwilling to work towards peace because war is still more rewarding. After so many years of state-society cleavage, the ordinary people from throughout the country have reinvented new forms of social organisation to survive.

Distrust is also growing towards the international community whose division and conflicting agendas are instrumentalised by the various parties involved in the conflict. This pertains notably to Rwanda and Uganda, the government, the rebel movements and the multiple armed factions. Even MONUC, the UN force in the Congo, has lost credibility since it has proven unable to fulfil its mandate to protect the civilian population, to disarm the 'negative forces' and to effectively monitor the military situation. It will be interesting to monitor events once former US Ambassador William Swing (formerly stationed in Kinshasa as Ambassador) assumes his new position as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, replacing Amos Namanga Ngongi.

### **The Pretoria Agreement & the End of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue**

The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 10 July 1999 provided for the cessation of hostilities, the disarmament of militias and armed groups and a deployment of a UN peacekeeping force to stabilise the war torn country. At the same time, an Inter-Congolese Dialogue was envisaged so the Congolese could agree on the political future of the country. Although the war continued, through tremendous international pressure and intensive negotiations that lasted three and a half years,<sup>37</sup> the representatives of the ICD signed a 'Global and All-Inclusive Agreement on the Transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo'. The process often resembled a vaudeville group on tour with stints in Gaborone, Addis Ababa, Abuja, Brussels, Sun City, Pretoria and Sun City.<sup>38</sup> The agreement was confirmed on 2 April 2003 when participants in the ICD signed the 'Final Act of the inter-Congolese political negotiations' in Sun City.

The Global and All-Inclusive Agreement signed in Pretoria on 17 December 2002 agreed on a '1 + 4 formula' to accommodate the major parties in the conflict. There are three main Congolese parties to the conflict: the Government, the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Goma* (RCD-Goma) and the *Mouvement de libération du Congo* (MLC). The Government is supported mainly by Zimbabwe, and by Angola and Namibia to a lesser extent. The Government is supporting movements opposed to the Congolese rebel groups. These movements include: (1) the Mayi-Mayi. They are loosely structured and often poorly armed local fighters operating in the two Kivu and Maniema provinces of Eastern Congo. (2) The RCD-ML a movement controlling territory in eastern Congo between the zones controlled by Ugandan and Rwandan allies. And (3) the Rwandan ALIR (*Armée de libération du Rwanda*) movement composed of *interahamwe*, ex-

FAR and forces increasingly disillusioned by the present Rwandan regime. ALIR seems to be preparing a military strategy to return back to Rwanda.<sup>39</sup>

The RCD-Goma is a group of opponents to Kinshasa, opportunists and hard liners supported by Rwanda. RCD-Goma has recently formed an alliance in the Ituri region with the *Union des patriotes congolais* (UPC) formerly belonging to the Ugandan camp. The MLC is the other major rebel movement mainly composed of opponents and former-Mobutists. Uganda supports the MLC, despite a troubled entente. At the beginning of the war Rwanda and Uganda were close allies. The relationship subsequently turned sour as witnessed by numerous direct confrontations (notably in Kisangani). Now that relations between Kampala and Kinshasa have improved and that Rwanda is increasingly making incursions in what is considered as the Ugandan zone of influence in North East Congo (see below) further tension between Kampala and Kigali is likely. Both Rwanda and Uganda receive financial and military support from the US and the UK. The latter has intervened several times in the past to reduce tensions between the two erstwhile allies.

Armed control in the field, in the context of the '1 + 4' formula, has translated into a political situation whereby all parties are able to defend their own and foreign interests without having to make concessions. The situation can last at least until the elections that should be held at the end of the 24-month transition period. According to '1 + 4', the transition will be led by a president who is head of state and supreme commander of the armed forces and four vice-presidents. The vice-presidents head governmental commissions comprised of ministers and deputy-ministers (political commission, economic and finance commission, reconstruction and development commission and a social and cultural commission).

The agreement confirmed Joseph Kabila as president and provides that the vice-presidents are nominated by the four components of the ICD (RCD-Goma, the MLC, the government and the non-armed political opposition). Thirty-five ministers and 25 deputy-ministers will constitute the government. A National Assembly and a Senate are the two chambers of Parliament. All vacant posts are divided among the government, rebel movements and various armed factions and the political families of the non-armed opposition. There are also a number of institutions established to support democracy including an independent electoral commission and a human rights monitoring body led by civil society representatives.

Anticipating the new positions to be opened, political actors in Kinshasa, the capitals of the rebel movements and the strongholds of the numerous armed factions have been busy fine-tuning their strategies since early 2003 to have their movements and personal interests best represented. Movements were reorganised and military officers were given new grades, (including a number of major-generals - the military rank of Joseph Kabila) to insure appointments in the future integrated armed forces structure.

Meanwhile three crucial issues still needed to be settled: the transformation of the various armies into one national and integrated army, the personal security of political leaders in Kinshasa and finalising the draft transition constitution. The South African architects of the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement (President Thabo Mbeki and Minister of Local and Provincial Administration Sydney Mufamadi) apparently thought that pushing for an agreement on these remaining issues could delay the signature of the agreement and left it to the Congolese to finalise the job.

Preliminary work had nevertheless been accomplished and guarantees were in-

cluded to make sure that these issues would not block the formation of a government of national unity. An international team of experts from Switzerland, Canada, Senegal and South Africa elaborated a draft constitution. Discussions on the structure and distribution of posts within the High Command of the integrated national army were held in Pretoria and were to continue under the leadership of General Maurice Barril, former Chief of Staff of the Canadian army. In addition, there was the 'International Committee in Support of the Transition in Kinshasa'. This was comprised of an influential group of ambassadors from the permanent members of the UN Security Council and the Troika of the African Union (Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia), Angola, Belgium, Canada, Gabon, the African Union and the European Union.

The nomination of Arthur Z'Ahidi Ngoma as one of the vice-presidents by the non-armed opposition delayed the signing of the Final Act.<sup>40</sup> The RCD-Goma and Rwanda wished to see UDPS leader Etienne Tshisekedi nominated. A second cause for delay was the appointment of the commander of land forces, but this was finally resolved at the end of June 2003. According to the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement, President Kabila is, as Head of State, also the supreme commander of the armed forces. The RCD-Goma, according to the agreement, can appoint the minister of defence while the government can identify the vice-minister of defence. However, the person that really controls the army is the commander of the land forces (the navy and air force are insignificant). In a country where there is no tradition of a 'republican' army in the sense that there is no subordination of the army to the civil authority, the person that controls the army is a key political player.

The Global and All-Inclusive Agreement was formally reconfirmed when on 2 April 2003 the participants in the ICD

again gathered in Sun City and signed the Final Act of the inter-Congolese political negotiations. This Final Act is a package of agreements aimed at restoring peace and national sovereignty during a transition period of two years. It comprises the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement, the Transitional Constitution, the memorandum on military and security issues of 6 March 2003, and the 36 resolutions adopted by the ICD in Sun City in March and April 2002. The Transitional Constitution was promulgated on 4 April 2002 and Joseph Kabila was sworn in as President for the transition period on 7 April. The President has since abolished the widely criticised Military Court (*Cour d'ordre militaire*) and promulgated a decree granting amnesty for acts of war and political offences (*infractions politiques et d'opinion*). This means that for all crimes and atrocities committed during the war there will be no prosecution, unless the recently established International Criminal Court takes up the case.<sup>41</sup> Military and political authorities can interpret this as a guarantee of impunity and even gives them leverage to access government positions.

### **Is Pretoria the Way Ahead for a Peaceful Transition?**

Even though Pretoria and Sun City have stabilised the political situation, war is far from over. The transition agreements are flawed and parties (in the new government) are not willing to give up the territory they control. Military conquest remains the dominant political strategy. How can actors function as part of a government of 'national union' knowing that their colleagues are probably trying to annihilate their power bases through force? It is doubtful that the transition will be successful if the country remains partitioned.

As Kinshasa has not given up its ambition to regain control over the territories of the East, it has restarted to arm some of the Mayi-Mayi who are fighting RCD-

Goma and has sent military advisers to RDC-ML to train its forces. In spite of the official declarations that Rwanda has withdrawn its troops from the DRC since October 2002, observers have confirmed the presence of an important number of Rwandan troops. Some of them are incorporated in the battalions of RDC-Goma, others are security forces controlling the mining sites.<sup>42</sup> Mayi-Mayi fighters and the Banyamulenge insurrection of Parick Masunzu in the Highlands of South Kivu are generally the targets of its activities. Nonetheless, the last months have seen an increase in military activity in North Kivu where RDC-ML had to give up a number of towns it controlled to the Rwanda-RDC-Goma coalition, apparently to wipe out this Kinshasa supported movement. Kinshasa and Kampala are very concerned about these developments.

For Kinshasa, the region controlled by the RDC-ML is its only position in the East from where it could launch a potentially successful counter-offensive. It is also the gateway to the Ituri region where it wants to play a role, especially now that it has signed a deal with a Canadian company for the exploitation of oil in the Rift Valley around Lake Albert on the Ugandan-Congolese border.<sup>43</sup> In June 2002, President Kabila granted Heritage Oil rights to develop oil production. Kampala fears that Rwanda is willing to extend its zone of influence to the detriment of Uganda and has therefore sent important reinforcements to its border with Congo. In the Ituri region further north, Rwanda has made an alliance with the UPC of Thomas Lubanga. This is driving Kampala and Kigali further apart while moving Kampala closer to Kinshasa, especially since the signature of the Luanda Agreement on 6 September 2002. In this agreement both parties agreed that the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) would withdraw within three months in exchange for the establishment of a joint security mechanism at their common border and a

pacification commission for Ituri in which Uganda would participate (the Ituri Pacification Commission).

What will come first? Peace or economic growth?

With the bizarrely named Artemis<sup>44</sup> operation led by France (600 French troops in addition to a British reconnaissance unit<sup>45</sup>), Ituri has re-emerged in news reports. Perceptions of Anglo-American and French rivalries characterise Artemis. When France proposed to send troops to the region, Rwanda opposed. When the British subsequently agreed to participate, Rwanda reversed its opposition. Fighting and atrocities committed in Ituri are systematically reduced to ethnic Hema-Lendu conflict by the media. The situation is, however, more complex. Tensions between various ethnic groups (not only Hema and Lendu) clearly existed long before the war. Since the beginning of the war, however, Uganda has instrumentalised these tensions to exploit the region's richness. Its policy is to 'divide and rule'.

Even though the word 'genocide' has only recently been voiced, triggering the international community to act, mass killings have been perpetuated ever since the war started. The situation became even more complex last summer as the regional war between Kinshasa, Uganda and Rwanda is now being waged there through proxies. But no one admits to having forces in the field. Despite its media appeal, Artemis has a very limited mandate. The force is approved for three months and its mandate is limited to securing the town of Bunia. This is clearly inadequate because if the whole Ituri and Kivu regions are not quickly pacified the regional war will continue and will have further negative consequences for the transition.<sup>46</sup>

Another weakness in the media's reporting on Congo pertains to its emphasis on the activities of the international commu-

nity and conversely, its neglect of local social dynamics. The weakness is also fuelled by outright racism, epitomised by reports of Pygmy cannibalism in Ituri. Europeans and Americans have widely accepted the idea that positive change in the form of humanitarian relief, economic development, security and eventually democracy can only come from the outside. This perception is spread by the fact that MONUC and NGOs such as Doctors Without Borders (MSF), Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, International Crisis Group, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems or Save the Children are close to media and consequently have voice. Much of the information that circulates concerning the public health situation in Ituri for the moment emanates from MSF. Yet, MSF has only five staff members currently working in the entire Ituri region!<sup>47</sup> Local associations involved in community action do not have the same kind of access to journalists so their work is often ignored. Their work, however, is crucial to local populations because it provides a wide range of services that in most societies is fulfilled by the state.

On the economic front, there are also conflicting realities. At the governmental macro level, reports indicate forward momentum. The IMF and World Bank claim to be satisfied with their involvement in DRC over the past two years. In June 2002 the IMF approved a \$750 million arrangement under its Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility. The IMF has also contributed to rescheduling and reducing the country's very substantial inherited debts – approximately \$13 billion in 2001. All arrears to the IMF, the World Bank and the African Development Bank have been paid off and the Congo is about to benefit from the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. This situation has been made possible because Joseph Kabila has proven to be far more amenable to the international financial community's pressure than his father was.

The Kinshasa authorities seem to have accepted the principle of 'normal budgetary practices'. Extra-budgetary expenditures (mainly for the military) have been reduced to less than a third of all spending in 2002 and forecasts for 2003 indicate that all expenditures will be from within the budget. There is, in other words, no more spending by presidential decree. It also seems that government revenues from taxes and customs are on the rise. A major accomplishment has been the fight to reduce inflation. The rate is less than 20% today compared with over 600% in 2000. The elimination of multiple exchange rates in 2001 has contributed to reducing inflation. On the structural side, positive measures were taken to establish codes concerning investments, mining, trade and the forestry sector. The government seems to be committed to implementing these codes because it will rationalise the use of the country's vast forestry, electricity, agricultural, transport and mining potential.

A fundamental issue for the future of the Congo concerns the ambiguous relationship between peace-making and economic development. Although this is not strictly a 'chicken-and-egg' question, it can be argued that for peace to come to Congo, it will first be needed to sort out how the country's wealth is to be distributed and subsequently re-introduce the population back into a cash economy. This is crucial for economic growth and poverty reduction. Conversely, a case can be made that peace is a prerequisite for economic development. The debate for the Congolese people, nonetheless, remains rhetorical. Despite the country's vast potential wealth, the people are amongst the world's poorest.

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## Endnotes

1. Analysis here relates to the situation up to 30 June 2003. For the period before, see *Review of African Political Economy*, 'Congo between State Failure and Renewal', 93-94, S. Van Hoyweghen, T. Trefon & S. Smis (eds.) 2002.
2. According to some estimates, the death toll of the war and war related events is approximating the four millions. See International Rescue Committee, 'Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Results from a Nationwide Survey' (April 2003).
3. See S. Smis & W. Oyatambwe, 'Complex Political Emergencies, the International Community & the Congo Conflict', 93-94 *Review of African Political Economy* 403-430 (2002).
4. For information on ALIR, see the International Crisis Group's report '*Les Rebelles Hutu Rwandais au Congo: Pour une Nouvelle Approche du Désarmement et de la Réintégration*' (23 May 2003), <http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/>.
5. The other vice-presidents are Abdoulaye Yerodia, Jean-Pierre Bemba and Azarias Ruberwa.
6. Stefaan Smis, 'The International Criminal Court as a means to Address the Question of Impunity in the DRC', forthcoming in 25 *Revue de Droit Africain* (2003), 30 p.
7. See, for example, 'Réseau Européen Congo (REC), Enquête sur le retrait des forces étrangères en RDC et le rôle de la MONUC. Les ONG d'Europe appellent les Etats occidentaux à ne pas rester au balcon!' (November 2002);
8. POLE Institute, 'Shifting Sands: Oil Exploration in the Rift Valley and the Congo Conflict' (March 2003).
9. Artemis was the Greek virgin goddess of the hunt. There is, however, nothing virgin or godlike in this operation.
10. Belgium, some other European countries, Canada and South Africa are participating, or will participate, in Artemis.
11. See UN IRIN web report 16 June 2003.
12. MSF press report 21 May 2003.

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## Transitional Government: Democratic Republic of the Congo 30 June 2003

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President: Joseph KABILA  
 Vice-Presidents:  
 Jean-Pierre BEMBA (MLC)  
 Abdoulaye YERODIA NDOMBASI (former Govt)  
 Arthur Z'AHIDI NGOMA (Political Opposition)  
 Azarias RUBERWA (RCD-Goma)

### Ministers:

1. Interior, Decentralisation & Security: Theophile MBEMBA FUNDU (former Govt)
2. Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation: Antoine GHONDA MANGALIBI (MLC)
3. Regional Cooperation: MBUSA NYAMWISI (RCD-ML)
4. Defence, Demobilisation and War Veterans: Jean-Pierre ONDEKANE (RCD-Goma)
5. Family & Women's Affairs: Faïda MWANGILA (RCD-Goma)
6. Justice: KISIMBA NGOY (Political opposition (Political Opposition))
7. Human Rights: Marie-Madeleine KALALA (Civil society)
8. Press & Information: Vital KAMERHE (former Govt)
9. Planning: Alexis THAMBWE MWAMBA (MLC)
10. Budget: Francois MUAMBA TSHISHIMBI (RCD-Goma)
11. Finance: Mutombo KIAMAKOSA (former Govt)
12. Economy: Celestin MVUNABALI (RCD-Goma)
13. Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises: Pierre Andre FUTA (former Govt)
14. Mines: Eugene Diomi DONGALA (Political Opposition)
15. Energy: Kalema LUSONA (former Govt)
16. Foreign Trade: Roger LUMBALA (RCD-N)
17. Parastatals: Joseph MUDUMBI (RCD-Goma)
18. Civil Service: Bernard Gustave TABEZI (Civil Society)
19. Agriculture: Justin KANGUNDU (MLC)
20. Rural Development: Pardonne KALIBA MUNANGA (*Mayi-Mayi*)
21. Posts & Telecommunications: Gertrude KITEMBO (RCD-Goma)
22. Scientific Research: Gerard KAMANDA Wa KAMANDA (Political Opposition)
23. Public Works & Infrastructure: Jose ENDUNDO BONONGE (MLC)

24. Transportation: Joseph OLENGHANKOY (Political Opposition)
25. Environment: Anselme ENERUNGA (Mayi-Mayi)
26. Tourism: Roger NIMY (RCD-N)
27. Land Affairs: Venant TSHIPASA (Political Opposition)
28. Health: YAGI SITOLO (former Govt)
29. University & Higher Education: Emile NGOY KASONGO (RCD-Goma)
30. Primary, Secondary & Professional Education: Elysee MUNEMBWE
31. Labour & Social Security: Theo BARUTI (RCD-Goma)
32. Social Affairs: Ingele IFOTO (Political Opposition)
33. Youth & Sport: Omer EGBAKE (MLC)
34. Humanitarian Affairs & Solidarity: NZUZI Wa MBOMBO (Political Opposition)
35. Culture: (unnamed - former Govt)

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### Vice-Ministres

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Foreign Affairs: Henri MOVA SAKANYI (Govt)  
Interior: Valentin SENGA (MLC)  
Integrated Army: Philemon MUKENGI (Govt)  
International Cooperation: Trésor KAPUKO(RCD)  
Defense: Général MOHAMED BULE (MLC)  
Veterans & demobilisation: Sylvain DELMA MBO (Civil Society) –  
Security & Public Order: Tharcisse HABARUGIRA (RCD) -  
Justice: KOLOSO SUMAILI (RCD-ML) -  
Press & Information: José ENGWANDA (RCD-N) -  
Planning: Raymond TSHIBANDA (Political Opposition) -  
Finance: Samuel SIMENE (MLC)  
Budget: Freddy SUUSUKU (RCD)  
Economy: Denis KASHOBA (MLC)  
Mines: Jean Louis NKULU KITUKA (Govt)  
Energy: Nicolas BADINGATA (Political opposition)  
Foreign Trade: Yves MOBANDO (Civil Society)  
Agriculture: Samuel BAKATUPIDIA TSHIYOYO (Civil Society)  
Public Works & Infrastructure: Baudouin BANZA MUKALAYI (RCD)  
Transportation: Elias MULUNGULA (*Mayi-Mayi*)  
Health: Aziz KUMBI (Political Opposition)  
Higher Education: Jérôme KAMATHE LUKUNDU (RCD)  
Social Affairs: Alphonse MAKABA (Govt)  
Labour & Social Security: Jeanne UMBA DITENGWA (Govt)  
Civil Service (Govt): un-named – Secondary Education (Govt): un-named.

The posts were shared among: Former Government, Political Opposition, Civil Society, The *Rassemblement Congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD-Goma), The *Rassemblement Congolais pour la démocratie-Nationale* (RCD-N), The *Rassemblement Congolais pour la démocratie-Mouvement de libération*(RCD-ML), The *Mouvement de libération du Congo* (MLC),The *Mayi-Mayi*

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## Sand Castles in the Sahara: US Military Basing in Algeria

*Mustafa Barth*

Two years on from 9/11 and the nature of American military involvement in the vast Saharan expanse of North-West Africa, especially in Algeria, is finally taking shape. The construction by Halliburton subsidiary, Kellogg, Brown & Root, of what is billed as a NASA base (believed by locals to be doubling as a US military/CIA listening post) alongside the main airport of Algeria's southern garrison and administrative capital of Tamanrasset, has been in progress for about a year.

However, the clincher in the establishment of a US listening and basing network across the Central-Western Sahara came in the first week of September (2003). According to local people, a top US General, subsequently reported to be General James (Jim) Jones, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (EUCOM), met top Algerian military personnel at the remote, former French foreign legion outpost of Arak, 1,500 kms south of Algiers and 384 kms NNW of Tamanrasset. The purpose of the meeting was thought to be the establishment of a forward helicopter-attack and listening base at this strategically critical Saharan location.

Understanding the significance and implications of this latest move in US global military dominance requires an appreciation of:

- how Africa, and North-West Africa in particular, fits into America's imperial grand design;
- post 9/11 developments in US-Algerian relations; and

- the events surrounding the abduction of 32 European tourists in the Algerian Sahara in 2003.

### Strategic Importance of North & West Africa to the US

The US, driven by economic interests, notably oil, and terrorism, is currently establishing a string of long-term military bases across the African continent. Three interrelated 'zones' of interest can be identified. One is oil-rich West Africa, especially Nigeria, the fifth largest source of US imported oil, where US investments of \$10 billion are expected to rise substantially over the next decade.<sup>1</sup>

The second zone is the oil and gas rich northern Sahara, notably Algeria, where several US companies are major investors.<sup>2</sup> Algeria's hydrocarbons<sup>3</sup> are of critical strategic importance to Europe. New exploration and production techniques are seeing proven oil reserves of 9.2 billion barrels being revised upwards, while oil exports, 90% of which go to Western Europe, are also set to increase substantially.<sup>4</sup> Algeria's gas resources<sup>5</sup> are even more significant. Proven reserves of 160 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) are being revised upwards of 200 Tcf, making Algeria one of the world's top gas producers. Exports are by pipeline under the Mediterranean and by LNG (liquid natural gas).<sup>6</sup> A significant contribution to this enhanced gas production will come from the recently discovered gas fields close to In Salah (a metaphorical stone's throw from Arak), where engineering work is expected to begin in 2004. Two of the main contractors are the US-based Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg, Brown and Root (already engaged at the NASA base at Tamanrasset) and the Bechtel corporation.

The third zone is the belt of political instability and unrest, marginal to and largely beyond any effective state control, which extends from the Horn of Africa to the Atlantic coast of Mauritania

and Senegal. Four features of this extensive region are exercising the minds of US military intelligence. First, it is a conduit for potential 'terrorists' moving between the traditional terrorist havens of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and the Sudan, and the Western Saharan-Sahel regions of Niger, Mali, Southern Algeria, Mauritania and the Senegal valley. Second, it is the base for major trans-Saharan narcotics and other smuggling operations. Third, the zone feeds into and threatens to destabilise the adjoining regions of West and North Africa. Fourth, the central part of this zone, straddling much of Niger, Mali and southern Algeria and lying strategically between the two oil/gas rich regions of Nigeria (and the rest of West Africa) to the south and Algeria (and Libya) to the north, has become the base for what the US believes to be al-Qaeda subsidiaries.<sup>7</sup>

These three regions and their critical juxtaposition are at the centre of US military thinking on Africa, which involves 'the establishment of a string of long-term military bases across the continent'.<sup>8</sup> This 'family of bases', as General Jones called them, would include 'forward-operating bases', perhaps with an airfield nearby, that could house up to 3,000-5,000 troops, and 'forward-operating locations', which would be lightly equipped bases where Special Forces, marines or possibly an infantry rifle platoon or company that could land and build up as the mission required.<sup>9</sup> As far as North and West Africa are concerned, the US Defense Department has spent the last two years discussing the prospect of a US military presence or greater military access rights in countries stretching from Djibouti to Morocco.<sup>10</sup> The US would like enhanced military ties, including port facilities, with countries like Morocco and Tunisia and long-term access to bases in countries like Algeria and Mali, in the belief that North Africa, the southern Mediterranean and the Horn of Africa will be a major source of tension in the next decade.<sup>11</sup> In May (2003), General

Jones, referring to Algeria and the third of the zones outlined above, said:

*We might wish to have more presence in the southern rim of the Mediterranean, where there are a certain number of countries that can be destabilised in the near future, large ungoverned areas across Africa that are clearly the new routes of narco trafficking, terrorist training and hotbeds of instability.*<sup>12</sup>

Two months later, the General was even more specific:

*As we pursue the global war on terrorism, we're going to have to go where the terrorists are. And we're seeing some evidence, at least preliminary, that more and more of these large uncontrolled, ungoverned areas (vast swaths of the Sahara, from Mauritania ... to Sudan) are going to be potential havens for that kind of activity.*<sup>13</sup>

EUCOM's second-in-command, air-force General Charles Wald described these groups as 'similar to al-Qaeda, but not as sophisticated or with the same reach, but the same objectives. They're bad people, and we need to keep an eye on that.'<sup>14</sup>

## **Developments in US-Algerian Relations**

Washington's ability to 'keep an eye' on these 'bad people' depends above all on collaboration with Algeria in the form of basing or access rights of one sort or another, and better intelligence of what precisely is happening in the 'large uncontrolled, ungoverned swaths of the Sahara'.

Following the cancellation of the 1992 elections<sup>15</sup> and the ensuing violent struggle between the Algerian army and Islamic militants, both the US and EU countries have been reluctant to sell arms to Algeria for fear of Islamist reprisals (as experienced in France) and criticism from human rights groups. The result has been

that the Algerian army has become increasingly under-equipped. A major pre-occupation of the Algerian army for some years now has therefore been to acquire modern, high-tec weapon systems, notably night vision devices, sophisticated radar systems, an integrated surveillance system, tactical communications equipment and certain lethal weapon systems. The Clinton administration kept its distance from Algeria.<sup>16</sup> However, in July 2001, Algeria's President Bouteflika was invited to Washington. He told President Bush that Algeria was 'seeking specific equipment which would enable us to maintain peace, security and stability in Algeria.'<sup>17</sup> Bouteflika's visit to Washington was followed less than three weeks later by a visit by Algerian army chief of staff, General Lamari, to US military HQ Stuttgart at which he sought further support for the army's modernisation effort.

The 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre heralded a new era in US-Algerian military relations. Bouteflika, who made a second visit to Washington in November, was one of the first Muslim leaders to offer help and support to the USA in its War on Terror. He hoped that the US would now see Algeria's struggle against Islamic militants as comparable to its war against al-Qaida and thus be more willing to sell lethal weaponry.

Although 2002 saw a marked increase in military collaboration, with the US announcing that it was planning to expand military and security aid to Algeria through the transfer of equipment and accelerated training, it was mostly symbolic in the form of frequent visits to Algiers by senior US officials,<sup>18</sup> regular visits by US naval ships and a doubling of the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET).<sup>19</sup> Although Bouteflika paid another visit to Washington in June, at which the sale of night vision military systems was agreed, little equipment actually seems to have been transferred during the course of the year.

By the end of 2002, Algeria's mounting frustration was being expressed in public complaints that US assistance was both minimal and slow in arriving. Two reasons for America's tardiness were the fear of criticism by human rights groups<sup>20</sup> and the decline of 'terrorism' in Algeria,<sup>21</sup> the latter giving the impression that the army could manage without US equipment.<sup>22</sup>

In 2003, the situation changed dramatically with the kidnapping of 32 European tourists in the Algerian Sahara by Islamist extremists. The action was almost immediately attributed to the GSPC (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat*),<sup>23</sup> now labelled as an al-Qaida subsidiary, and its alleged 'leaders' (*emirs*): Mokhtar ben Mokhtar (Belmokhtar), an outlaw who had been driven over the border into northern Mali in the late 1990s, where he was now established as a local war-lord operating a major bandit-smuggling operation across the Sahara, and Abderazzak Lamari (El Para) whose sphere of operations was in the mountainous north-east of the country.

From Algeria's perspective, this was stark proof that 'terrorism' was not only far from eradicated in Algeria, but that militant Islamists (terrorists) were now established in the hitherto peaceful Sahara. Algeria also made much ado of blaming the long time (3 months) spent in locating and freeing the first group of hostages and the further three months involved in engineering the release of the second group on the fact that its army lacked the sophisticated military equipment that it had been seeking from the Americans.

From the US perspective, this was firm evidence that a network of al-Qaida links not only stretched from the Horn of Africa across the Sahel to Mali and Mauritania, but now straddled the Sahara from Mali (and perhaps elsewhere in West Africa) to northern Algeria, providing a major threat to US oil and gas

interests in Algeria, the southern Mediterranean rim and Europe itself. This was the background to General Jones's dramatic statements in May and July.

The gloves were now off. In May, the State Department appeared to give the green light to Algeria when it confirmed that Algeria had demonstrated its commitment as a US ally against Al-Qaida and that an improvement in its commitment to human rights would prompt sales of lethal combat systems. By July, with one group of hostages in their fifth month of captivity, the US asked Algeria for military basing rights, saying that it wanted to 'employ Algerian military bases for counter-insurgency missions and the protection of oil interests.'<sup>24</sup> By early September, barely two weeks after the freeing of the second group of hostages, General Jones was at Arak discussing the establishment of what is believed would be a US listening post and forward helicopter attack base.<sup>25</sup>

### What Really Happened with the Hostages?

The hostage crisis was certainly convenient for both Algeria and the US. It enabled Algeria to convince America of the seriousness of the 'terrorist threat' in Algeria and that its army was not equipped to deal with it, while for the Americans it provided further legitimization of their 'War on Terror' and the establishment of General Jones's 'family of bases' across the continent. But were these Europeans actually taken hostage by Islamist extremists? A detailed analysis of the hundreds of statements put out by official Algerian sources; the many (mostly German, but some French) websites and internet traffic carrying details of the hostages' experiences and information about their de-briefings, along with a mix of communications supposedly attributable to various European intelligence services, suggests that reality may have been very different.

There is little doubt that small numbers of Islamist extremists from Afghanistan and Pakistan had spread across the Sahel into Mali and Mauritania since the invasion of Afghanistan and had attracted the attention of the CIA and US military. It is also true that Mokhtar ben Mokhtar has established bases to the south of Algeria's borders with Niger and Mali, where he was managing major narcotic and other smuggling operations and that he was linked with Hassan Khattab's GSPC.

However, there appears to be little, if any, direct evidence that he played a major role in either the planning or the execution of the abductions. The whole business was out-of-keeping with his known modus operandi and likely to be extremely damaging to his commercial (smuggling) and associated interests.

The abductors told the hostages that they were members of the GSPC and that the purpose of their abduction was to draw attention to the 1992 elections and the legitimate, democratic rights of the *salafistes*. They told their captives that they were all from northern Algeria (not Mali or Niger), which was apparent from their lack of knowledge and experience of the desert. Although they never mentioned the name of their *emir*, their fingers seemed to be pointing to Abderazzak Lamari (El Para). This is of crucial importance as there are several suggestions that El Para was working in close contact with top personnel in the Algerian military intelligence services. If that were true, it would indicate that elements within the military may have been implicated in the hostage-taking.

Other indications of possible military involvement in the abduction are:

An earlier attempt to kidnap Europeans had been attempted near Arak a few months earlier (October 2002) and failed. The abductors, also believed to be men from the north with little experience of the desert, had been tracked down (un-

wittingly by the Gendarmerie), but freed, allegedly on orders from 'higher up'.

The hostages report that their abductors had received communications as to their whereabouts from a military checkpoint through which they had passed.

The abductors split into two groups, holding their hostages in mountainous locations (Gharis and Tamelrik) roughly 300 kms apart. The two groups maintained radio contact. However, their radios, according to the hostages' reports, were ex-Soviet stock, long since discarded by the Algerian military who were consequently unable to intercept their conversations. Members of the Algerian military intelligence services who de-briefed the hostages told the hostages that they had been able to locate them thanks to the Americans who had made their listening facilities available. Whether these facilities were satellite or aircraft-based is not clear. It is inconceivable that the Americans would not have had interpretation facilities available, which leads us to suppose that the Americans were quite possibly aware of what was going on. If that were the case, then it raises the question of whether the US military may actually have been party to the planning of the abduction.

Soldiers (now 'retired') claiming to have been engaged in searching for the hostages have told journalists that every time they got close to the hostages and could have attacked and liberated them, they were withdrawn, thus prolonging the hostages' capture.

The hide-out at Tamelrik was clearly prepared in advance over what must have been a considerable period of time. It is inconceivable that certain authorities did not know about this preparation, which involved equipping caves and tunnel systems and blasting an access route through the mountains. While the Algerians reported that all the abductors were killed when the army attacked and

liberated the first group of hostages (in Gharis), the hostages reported that at least half of their abductors had disappeared during the week preceding the attack and that they only saw three of their remaining abductors killed.

Around midday on 19 May, a week after the liberation of the 17 hostages held in Gharis, national state radio reported that the Algerian army had attacked and liberated the fifteen hostages being held in the Tamelrik mountains. By evening, this had been denied. What now appears to have happened on 19 May is that the abductors, no longer in radio contact with their colleagues and perhaps becoming nervous at hearing on state radio that their colleagues had all been killed, were replaced or joined by El Para himself. This second group of hostages were then taken by their guards from Tamelrik to Mali, their ultimate 'exit route', a difficult journey of over 1,000 kms as the crow flies. Debriefing of the group indicates that they were not only escorted by the Algerian military, but may have even been sheltered in a former, now disused, military base.<sup>26</sup>

Journalists in Mali were led to believe that members of Algeria's military intelligence services were recognised by interlocutors as having prepared the way or as having accompanied the group on its journey across Algeria.

These disturbing allegations suggest that the abduction may have been planned and orchestrated within the highest levels of the Algerian military establishment. If that were the case, then it raises even more disquieting questions regarding the alleged role of the US military in the affair. If the US was assisting the Algerian military in intercepting radio messages between the two groups of abductors, were they aware from the intercepts (and perhaps other information) that senior elements within the Algerian military were possibly incriminated in the abduction. In which case, to

what extent did the US military condone, or even participate, in the actions of their new ally?

The outcome of this messy affair is that Algeria may now get its lethal weapon systems and the US its basing facilities across the Sahara. But the long-term damage to the region is inestimable. The Central Sahara is now tarnished as an al-Qaida operative zone, in which diminished tourism is severely damaging the livelihoods of local people. The presence of US military facilities in a region hitherto noted for its lack of sympathy for Islamic extremism, is now likely to attract such elements into the region, further destabilising it and posing an even greater threat to both Western and national mining interests in the Sahel as well as Algeria's rapidly expanding oil and gas operations.

It is rumoured that there are elements within the Algerian army and government that are not happy with these developments. Neither are the French likely to be pleased at what has been going on in their former colony.

### Postscript

Shortly before US Secretary of State Colin Powell's visit to Algiers on 3 December 2003, Algeria's Foreign Affairs Minister, Abdelaziz Belkhadem, denied that the US was establishing a military base in Algeria, saying such reports were contrary to Algeria's policy of not accepting a foreign military presence on its territory. Whether this refutes what we believe was agreed at Arak depends on the meaning given to words such as 'base', 'presence', etc. The US need for a network of listening and accessible forward attack positions across the region could be met with no more than a handful of US personnel. Irrespective of the semantics, Belkhadem's confirmation of the professional co-operation between the Algerian and US military carries major risks for both parties.

**Mustafa Barth**, Africa Newline, Munich-Cotonou.

### Endnotes

1. The US is Nigeria's largest customer for crude oil, accounting for 40% of Nigeria's oil exports. In February 2003, a taped message, purportedly from Osama Bin Laden, singled out Nigeria, with its 60% Muslim population, as a potential theatre for al-Qaeda operations.
2. More than 30 major foreign companies are involved in Algeria's hydrocarbons industry. US companies with investment and/or operational involvement in Algeria include Amerada Hess, Anadarko, Bechtel, Burlington Resources (predecessor Louisiana Land & Exploration), ConocoPhillips, Edison, ExxonMobil, Halliburton and Sun Oil (Sunoco), (source. US State Dept.).
3. Hydrocarbons account for around 95% of Algeria's foreign earnings and 30% of GDP.
4. Halliburton has an eight-year contract to provide, enhanced oil recovery (EOR) services and boost production at Hassi Messaoud.
5. Natural gas comprises 60% of Algeria's hydrocarbons production.
6. Algerian gas exports are expected to exceed 3 Tcf by 2010 and to meet some 30% of future European demand. Currently some 39% of Europe's gas comes from Russia and around 20% from Algeria. In 1964 Algeria became the first LNG producer. In 2000 it was the world's second largest LNG exporter (behind Indonesia), with significant exports to America's New England coast.
7. The insecurity of this region effectively makes the proposed Trans-Sahara natural gas pipeline from Nigeria to Algeria's Mediterranean coast a non-starter.
8. *Al Ahram*, July 2003.
9. Eric Schmitt, quoting General Jones, in *New York Times*, 4 July 2003.
10. Egypt's President Mubarak has rejected a US request for basing rights in Egypt.
11. *World Tribune*, 6 May 2003.
12. *Ibid.* New insurgency threats in these areas would require a greater US presence along the North African coast, which could result in a realignment of US naval forces in the Mediterranean, with carriers spending more time along the African coast than close to Europe, and with carrier-based task forces being positioned in the Gulf of Guinea.

13. *New York Times*, 4 July 2003.
14. *Ibid.*
15. The second round of legislative elections, to have been held in January 1992, would clearly have been won by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and would have brought to power the first ever democratically elected Islamist government. An estimated 100,000 - 150,000 people have been killed in the ensuing struggle, which is not yet over.
16. Military relations were not cut altogether. In 1997 the US delivered 6 Gulf Stream carriers to Algeria. In 1998 America's Vice-Admiral Joseph Lopez, second-in-command of NATO's southern European flank, visited Algiers. A visit to Algiers in February 1999 by US Admirals Abbot (deputy commander US forces in Europe) and Daniel Murphy (US Sixth Fleet) preceded joint naval manoeuvres in 2000 between the small Algerian navy and warships and aircraft from the US Sixth Fleet.
17. *World Tribune*, 16 July 2001.
18. Notably EUCOM's Supreme Allied Commander, General Ralston (General Jones predecessor).
19. This was from a modest \$121,000 in 2001 to \$200,000 in 2002 (and to \$550,000 in 2003).
20. An American official was reported in December 2002 as saying that the US would proceed slowly on the military aid package, in part because of the criticism by human rights groups (*New York Times*, 10 Dec. 2002). Washington also stated publicly that no approval of the sale of lethal weapon systems to Algeria had been given.
21. By 2000, average monthly killings had fallen to around 200, a marked drop from the 1990s, when an estimated 100,000 people were slaughtered. By 2002, Algeria appeared to have reduced and largely contained terrorist activities to the more remote and mountainous parts of northern Algeria. This more secure situation was reflected in a doubling of tourists visiting the Algerian Sahara in both 2001 and 2002, following a complete absence of tourism from 1991 to 1999.
22. An analysis of statements made by US officials on arms sales to Algeria around the end of 2002, although seemingly positive on the subject of military collaboration, reflects America's caution on the sale of lethal weapon systems. One US spokesman, when pushed, said: '...down the road we might consider it. We will consider requests if we believe they contribute to the counter terrorism effort' (*NY Times*, 10 Dec. 2002). It was also noticeable that William Burns, assistant secretary of state for

Near East affairs, made no reference to lethal weapon systems when he said that 'We are putting the finishing touches to an agreement to sell Algeria equipment to fight terrorism' (*The Guardian*, 10 Dec 2002).

23. Hassan Khattab, erstwhile leader of the GSPC, split from the GIA (Groupe Islamique Armé) to form the GSPC in September 1998.
24. *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 20 July, 2003; Middle East Newline and *World Tribune* 22 July 2003.
25. In October, the US added the name of Mokhtar Belmokhtar to the list of persons suspected of having financed world terrorist organisations. Whatever assets he may have had in the US are now frozen! (*World Tribune*, 27 Oct. 2003).
26. One of these hostages died before reaching Mali, apparently of heat-stroke.

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## Will Angola Finally Publish its Oil Accounts?

### *Global Witness*

Not before time, the Angolan Government appears to have made a clear and unambiguous commitment to account for all its oil revenues, which constitute about 90% of the state's money. 'In the past, we had off-budget transactions, so the budget lacked credibility,' Angolan Deputy Prime Minister Aguinaldo Jaime said in a speech at an oil industry conference in London. 'For the first time in Angola's history, the budget will encompass all revenue and that will send to the donor community the signal that the Angolan Government is committed to a fully transparent way of managing the budget.' Jaime clarified that these figures will include all the country's oil revenues.

Global Witness' investigations in Angola over the past two years have uncovered that at least US\$1 billion per year – about a quarter of state income – appears to have been misappropriated from the state's coffers for the last five years. This

missing money is over three-times the value of the international humanitarian aid that currently keeps about 10% of Angola's citizens alive. Global Witness campaigner Gavin Hayman said, 'I hope this announcement marks a real change and that the Angolan Government will finally, and not before time, manage its oil money transparently, although as yet there is no commitment to actually publish the budget publicly. Nor is there any clear timeline attached to this promise.' He added, 'The antecedents are not particularly promising: the Angolan Government has directly threatened oil companies that wanted to disclose payments in the past, and, just two days before this announcement, the Angolans rebuffed the UK Prime Minister's offer to participate in the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative, which has already done much of the work on how best to report and account for oil income.' 'Whilst welcoming the announcement as a step in the right direction', Global Witness believes Angola's oil accounting must be given credibility by taking part in the UK-led Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative. This will allow double entry book-keeping, whereby disclosure of company's net payments will be reconciled with what the government reports as received to improve management and transparency. 'There is a real danger that once the Angolan Government obtains a positive decision on access to debt relief and IMF funding, transparency reforms will simply be abandoned.'

'The Angolan Government must now play a leading role in implementing the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative's reporting systems to improve their credibility and really deliver on their promise'" commented Global Witness director Simon Taylor.

Contact Gavin Hayman or Simon Taylor on +44 (0)207 272 6731 or +44 (0)7957 142 12; e-mail: mail@globalwitness.org

**Editor's notes:** 1) Global Witness focuses on the links between the exploitation of natural

resources and the funding of conflict and corruption. It is non-partisan in all its countries of operation. Global Witness has been co-nominated for the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize for its work in uncovering how diamonds have funded civil wars across Africa. Global Witness' recent statement on transparency in the extractive industries is available at [www.globalwitness.org](http://www.globalwitness.org)

2) Information on the UK Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is available at: [www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)

3) Quotes from the Angolan Government's announcement are from reports by Reuters, 19 June 2003, 'Angola to include oil cash in transparent budget' by Barbara Lewis

4) Global Witness is a member of the Publish What You Pay campaign that was launched in June 2002 (see [www.publishwhatyoupay.org](http://www.publishwhatyoupay.org)). The campaign is calling for stock market and international accounting rules to require oil, gas and mining companies to disclose their net payments to governments for resource access on a country-by-country basis. The campaign now has over 120 member NGOs in the North and South. The coalition believes that revenue transparency is an essential condition for alleviating poverty, promoting just and equitable development, improving corporate social responsibility, and reducing corruption in many resource rich developing countries

5) In addition to requiring companies to disclose their revenues, it is important to increase the transparency of government revenue streams from production sharing agreements and state-owned companies. Global Witness believes the EITI reporting principles must be reinforced by the imposition of appropriate conditionality on relevant bilateral and multilateral development assistance, resource-backed loans from banks, and export credit agency funding.

In addition, the World Bank and the IMF should be required to mainstream revenue transparency across their lending and technical assistance portfolios.

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## Book Reviews

*Winning the War Against Humiliation: Report of the Independent Commission on Africa and the Challenges of the Third Millennium* (2002) by Albert Tevoedjre, UNDP: The Panafrican Social Prospects Centre, Benin. Distributed by ABC books. ISBN 99-9194-600-4. Reviewed by Tina Wallace.

This book is the product of a project funded by UNDP, which brought together a range of eminent African thinkers and analysts to explore Africa and the challenges of the third millennium. The list of 28 MPs, academics and politicians who participated are impressive and includes such figures as Samir Amin from Egypt, Ali Mazrui of Kenya, Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, and Mrs Winnie Byanyima, a Ugandan MP. They held a series of discussions, focusing on the status of Africa in the world and for the future, with a view to mobilising resources across Africa – human, material and strategic. Their purpose was ‘to help the continent escape from the pit of humiliation in which it finds itself, and to promote a revival at political, economic, social and cultural levels’ (p. 21)

The book raises many important challenges and questions for Africa, framed within an approach that understands the fundamental problems to be a loss of initiative in Africa, and Africa’s history as a recipient of ‘unadjusted development strategies conceived by the leaders or imposed by the great powers’ (p.22). The group sees themselves as combating externally imposed plans and practices through reminding themselves that ‘African women and men are well versed in their own problems and that penetrating reflection on our own condition will permit us to find solutions to the ongoing

problems of our continent’ (p. 25). The book represents a resurgence of African confidence and expertise and is much needed to inform current debates on Africa.

In the foreword by Amartya Sen the devastation of Africa through the humiliation of European domination, from slavery onwards is graphically summarised. The language is strong, tackling head on issues of subjugation, denigration, humiliation – terms rarely heard in current debates about Africa. The subversion of old institutions and the undermining of political opportunities and confidence to build new, appropriate ones has seriously crippled Africa’s organisational ability and capacity to undertake radical initiatives. The book also tackles the psychological and cultural impact of the violent history of much of the continent, issues all too easily glossed over in the dominant economic approaches to development.

The participants covered a huge range of issues in their discussions, from war to health services, from lack of education and training to ‘the debased condition of our women’ (p.152). Through analysis of a whole range of problems and the history behind those problems they sought to regain the initiative, develop a better understanding of the issues and challenges, and think inventively for the future.

They see that Africa needs to set its own agenda and be clear about priorities and strategies in order to become a real partner, not a beggar, in the New Partnership for Africa (NEPAD). They worked through a whole host of enormous challenges for Africa, including war and

building a sustainable peace, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, corruption, leadership issues and role of women in development. Their commitment to addressing these - including gender inequality - is clear.

The broad conclusions they draw from a series of seven meetings in different parts of Africa are many. They include the need to generate money internally to get away from the chase for international dollars that currently characterises development relationships, and show where and how they think this can be done. They call on the external world to address the issue of the world's debt to Africa as recompense for the deep wrongs visited over generations through slavery, colonialism and apartheid, as well as the need to sort out the current debt crisis fairly. Strategies proposed include building real strategic alliances within Africa, at all levels, and with sympathetic countries such as India or Brazil. They talk of building real coherence within and across Africa and the need for self-knowledge.

They have not shied away from the internal realities of war and violence, the abuse of power and the resulting human tragedies, and attempt to grapple with ideas for addressing these in future. They emphasise the importance of working with people at all levels. They stress the importance of regaining an understanding of their African heritage and renegotiating their position with the rest of the world, to free them to think creatively and uniquely about their problems, rather than applying external medicines administered in the context of deeply unequal relationships.

The power of the book, for me, lies less in the specific prescriptions and solutions offered - though some of these are very interesting and demand new ways of thinking - and more in the nature of the analysis. The book presents the realisation that Africa cannot progress or seek its own future unless and until current

relationships, marked by dominance, lack of respect and negativity are ended (both internally and externally). Aid relations are (rightly) seen as a continuation of past colonial relations, and so the primary task for Africa in relation to development and positive change is to win the war against humiliation.

This is a timely book written at a critical time of debate about new ways forward for Africa. It is the only document of its kind that brings together an impressive range of African thinkers and activists and it is unique in presenting the current relationships to and within Africa squarely within a continuation of past relations of dominance and subjugation. The book challenges Africans and indeed global actors to accept this analysis and confront the core issues underlying these relationships, including racism. It highlights the reality that development is as much about culture, self esteem, confidence and respect as it is about economic strategies. The underlying relationships of aid clearly determine the way development is carried out; present relationships mean that development is not an empowering and innovative process but rather a dependent and imitative one. To really address Africa's marginalisation externally it is essential to confront the realities of its history and the way that it is currently defined and treated within the global context. Breaking current patterns is essential in order to liberate the space and energy for people at all levels in Africa to develop the confidence, skills and expertise to analyse and understand their complex realities. They can then shape new, locally rooted and relevant solutions. The problems that dominate life for the majority on that continent are complex and deep-rooted, but the book carries a strong note of hope. They display a real optimism for a future that is shaped by Africa and people like themselves, who must now grasp the reins and refuse to submit to or collude with marginalisation and exclusion any longer.

*Taking on the Superpowers* (Vol.1) and *Building a New Nation* (vol.2) by Dan Connell; published in 2003, 2004 by Africa World Press. ISBN 1569021899.

**This is not a review but rather the Introduction by Basil Davidson & Lionel Cliffe to both volumes. The issues raised here are creating passionate debate across three continents. But more than that, it also gives us hope for the future; the Eritreans achieved, against all odds, remarkable success – not just for Africa but as an example to the rest of the world.**

Dan Connell's work is undoubtedly the most complete chronicle in English of the long struggle of the Eritrean people for nationhood and statehood. He has followed events in the country for almost thirty years and covered all the key phases in that struggle: the gains of the 1970s, the strategic withdrawal, the switch from defence to attack in the late 1980s, liberation and reconstruction in the 1990s, and then the drift again into war.

The collection of all his press stories and longer articles in these two volumes is a boon to ordinary readers keen to get a feel for the dynamics of the Eritrean revolution and to future historians. In the first volume, he records the public services and the reform measures in land and the way people governed themselves in liberated areas. The second volume covers the decisive last few years of the liberation struggle – including the dreadful famine of the 1980s, induced as much by war as drought – and provides a record of many of the initiatives that followed Independence.

Connell's concern throughout has been not just with the armed struggle but also with the conditions of the people themselves as they struggled to survive as well as to build new lives. His reports enable us to see unfolding events from the viewpoint of ordinary Eritreans – rank-and-file fighters, refugees, women

heads-of-households, the famine-affected – and that is where his commitment lies. His links have all along been with the main and ultimately victorious liberation movement, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), and his identification has been with that movement and with its successor, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), now the ruling party.

That perspective of sympathy with the people and the identification of the EPLF as an exemplary movement have been shared by many foreign commentators and activists, not least the two of us. But Connell has also seen at close hand the disheartening events of the last five years. The descent into war with big brother Ethiopia brought again many casualties, widespread displacement, a general mobilization of the young and other scarce resources, for destructive rather than reconstructive purposes. But it was more than just tragedy; it was avoidable and thus a crime.

The final section of volume two brings out the tragedy of war-revisited but also offers fresh insights as to how that drift was integrally linked with the emergence of a style of leadership that was becoming more and more remote and centralized – and divided. We recall with sadness how a couple of days after the formal Independence ceremony in 1993, Basil – who had long argued that the Eritrean struggle for self-determination was a just cause – was asked to address a distinguished audience of senior EPLF officials, government personnel and intellectuals at Asmara University on the lessons to be learned from comparative African experience.

The main thesis of that address was that if Eritrea wanted to avoid the institutional crises that were at the heart of the failures in much of Africa, it had to narrow the gap between leaders and the people by encouraging participation and ensuring answerability. This it could best do by

building on the legacy of the liberation struggle, but this would also need 'mine detectors' that would give early warning of shortfalls in participatory practices.

In the following years it is now clear there was unease within the movement and the general population about the increasing tendency for decisions to be taken at the top, without discussion, and to be pronounced by decree. There was concern about the long delay in implementing the Constitution that had been ratified in 1997 and in drawing up a legal basis and concrete plans for promised elections. But these worries were not expressed, and they fermented within as well as outside the ruling party, eventually leading to the statement of protest by the G-15 group of senior PFDJ members in 2001. The excuse of pre-occupation with the war with Ethiopia has been challenged in Bereket Habte-Selassie's new book *The Making of the Eritrean Constitution* (Red Sea Press, 2003), wherein he points out that the commission to prepare electoral laws and plans met only twice over several months and with little urgency or clear focus – even before the war.

A related worry was the increased reliance on repressive measures without due process: the constituting of a Special Court outside the judiciary – initially justified by the need to get quick action on corruption – and the use of extra-judicial detention, torture and even killings, as documented in Amnesty International reports. One noble stance, sadly taken alone in 2001, was the statement of the then Chief Justice, Teame Beyene, expressing his view that the Executive and particularly the President's Office was interfering too much in the activities of what was supposed to be an independent judiciary. The regime immediately confirmed fears that the rule of law was being infringed in its desire to control when it sacked him for this – and by decree, not through the procedures laid down in the (inoperative) Constitution.

When we were trying to understand this decline in a recent conversation, Basil posed the question: "What did we, the 'friends' of Eritrea, the observers of the liberation struggle, overlook?"

Well, it is now being recognized, not least in the new prologues to this collection, that what we are seeing is an accentuation of authoritarian tendencies, which were always one characteristic of the old EPLF. Yet perhaps attention needs to be given not just to the issue of power and its centralisation but to the policies and strategies being pursued by that power. Misjudgements have been made, crucially, in the drift into war, but also in the approach to land, in tackling the reintegration of fighters and refugees, in unrealistically pursuing the 'Singapore model' and turning away from self-reliance, in seeing the pastoralists as a 'problem,' and, recently, in joining the US-led coalition in the conquest of Iraq.

In those heady days of the Independence celebrations, when we were both among the non-diplomatic, official guests, there was an informal party for these foreign 'friends of Eritrea.' We were encouraged by a short 'thank-you' talk that President Isaias gave in which his first remark was, "What Eritrea will now need most from its 'Friends' is criticism." With hindsight one wonders whether he meant it, but it sounded the right note at the time. However, what has increasingly characterized official reactions since then has been an extreme defensiveness by him and other core members of the regime, which makes them unable to listen to the mildest forms of criticism, whether from Eritreans or outsiders, or to respond to them without vitriolic denunciation.

This is the antithesis of Basil's post-liberation advice. But it is more than timely now to remember Isaias's words and to assert that criticism of the regime like Dan Connell's is the true mark of commitment to Eritrea's people. Indeed, there is little that foreign friends can do

but condemn a process of authoritarian rule, which is for the moment seemingly impervious to reasoned argument but that will ultimately prove unable to resolve real contradictions by commandism rather than dialogue – with the people as well as opponents.

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*The Transition to Democratic Governance in Africa: The Continuing Struggle*

by John Mukum Mbaku & Ihonvbere, Julius Omozuanvbo (eds.) (2003), Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 456 pages; \$85.00, hardback. Reviewed by E. Ike Udogu, Faculty Fellow, Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina

The contributors to the text (Agbese, Ayittey, Ekechi, Fombad, Takougang, Osaghae, Hope, Sr., Kalu, and Vaughan) are seasoned Africanist scholars whose combined publications could fill many a shelf with weighty volumes. Edited by two outstanding academics, Mbaku and Ihonvbere, the book is made up of 18 chapters, Abbreviation and Acronyms, a comprehensive bibliography and Index.

In chapter 1, titled 'Introduction: Issues in Africa's Political Adjustment in the "new" Global Era,' Mbaku and Ihonvbere present the context in which the volume was put together. Indeed, there is no denying the fact that Africa's current political and economic malaise has its origin in colonial exploitation. Thus the euphoria that was expressed by Africans following independence was dashed by disillusionment because the fruits of development that were expected in post-colonial Africa have not harvested. In fact, from the look of the current state of affairs, the situation is unlikely to change any time soon (pp.1-3). This is not because of the lack of effort on the part

African leaders to tackle the problems. It is just that these leaders, in a manner of speaking, have been applying the wrong anodyne drug to the political maladies. Statism, for instance, was thought of as a possible ideological panacea for resolving the negative vices of ethnic politics and economic problems. It didn't work. Therefore, the chapter suggests that a new approach that is informed by the lessons of past mistakes and the implementation of democratic systems based on accountability and transparency is imperative (p. 10).

In chapter 2, professor Ihonvbere laments the snail's pace of the democratization process. The 'Long March' has both external and internal causation. Externally, the Cold War retarded the movement. Internally, the guardians of the state were confused about what to do with the state after they captured it. Thus, in the leaders' confusion and selfishness, they exploited and pillaged the state with reckless abandon while systematically suffocating the civil society that exposed their malfeasance (p. 39). He notes, with optimism, that in spite of the political and economic contradictions and disarticulations in the area, the flames of democracy belching across the continent cannot and will not be extinguished (p. 52).

In chapters 3 and 4 professors Kalu and Ayittey address the economic situation. Kalu alludes to the strengthening of regional economic unions, such as the Economic Community of West African States to tackle regional economic problems especially following the end of the Cold War. This is an important development except that regional political conflicts, as for example Liberia, problematize efforts at improving the economy in Liberia in particular, and the region in general. That Africa is an important region in the contemporary global village was not lost in his analysis. Thus, he argues with conviction that Africa, in spite of the criticism of the

current structure of economic globalization, should seek out a niche in the global economic development in order to eschew further marginalization (p. 58). Ayittey situates African economic woes on poor leadership and insists, to some extent, that observers and critics must desist from blaming current economic problems on external conditionalities alone. The solutions to Africa's economic quagmire must come from within in the continent. This means that African leaders must create the enabling environment for investment, by providing good governance, excellent security system, adequate infrastructure and so on (pp. 97-100).

In chapters 5 and 6 professors Mbaku and Ihonvbere tackle the issue of African political culture. The fact that Africans, particularly the 'educated' tend to impose the values that they learned in European metropolis on Africa often lead to a clash of cultures. Having commandeered the state, as it were, the governing elite proceeded to govern it *ad libitum* without regard to the constitution (pp. 109-110). Democracy is important only if it suited the governing cadre. But genuine political liberalization that extends to the grassroots, is a *sine qua non* for effective governance in Africa. Professor Ihonvbere's analyses in chapter 6 apply to Mbaku's opinions and analyses in chapter 5.

In chapter 7, professor Agbese brought his expertise on civil-military relations in Africa to bear on his analysis. In brief, he emphasizes the extent to which the military's 'bastardization' and misrule of the political systems in much of Africa led to ruination and retardation of the political and economic development on the continent (p.174). In chapter 8, professor Ihonvbere concurs with professor Agbese, but argues for a modality that could lead to the taming of the military (pp.179-199). If political development is to take place in Africa, women must be given not only their franchise but also ushered into the

corridors of political power. Thus, professor Ekechi in chapter 9 elucidates the movement toward the empowerment of women. The fact that women have historically been marginalized in virtually all societies is not lost in his description of events – applauding the Copenhagen, Nairobi and Beijing conferences for emphasizing the centrality of empowering women globally (p.210). Indeed, it is encouraging that women have steadily begun to play important political roles in Africa's progress that is likely to pick up steam in the new millennium.

In chapter 10, professor Fombad looks at the role of the mass media in the democratization enterprise in Cameroon. He expresses satisfaction at the extent to which the media pressed, even in difficult conditions, for the opening of the political space in Cameroon politics. The media's daunting role in bringing into the limelight the political misconduct of the custodians of power, and its advocacy for popular participation will not only promote political legitimacy but also further stability and economic development in Cameroon and Africa (pp.230-235).

In chapter 11, professor Vaughan examines the need to bridge the urban-rural economic gulf in Nigeria in order to further political stability and democracy in the country. The philosophy espoused in the popular reggae lyric, 'a hungry man is an angry man' is not lost in his argument. Elsewhere in Africa, this concern is articulated within the context of the 'politics of the belly'. In Nigeria, however, the Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) was launched with the purpose of ameliorating the food shortage in the federation and linking the rural and urban areas in the polity in order to further 'even' development (pp.249-254). Unfortunately, the top-down approach to the formulation of policies renders implementation of such regimes problematical; indeed, it was a programme that was ruined by

rampant corruption and patronage. The contention and conclusion, therefore, are that for policies to work the local people must see themselves as stakeholders in the implementation and outcome of policies that affect their lives (p.260).

In chapter 12, professor Takougang investigates the crisis of human rights infractions in Africa. In fact, how can democracy be furthered if the rights of those who are expected to legitimize the process are constantly being violated. Takougang provides a blow by blow account of the problematic dimensions of human rights violation in Africa, and narrates how this practice impinges upon the development of democracy in the region. The interlacement of democracy and human rights is explained in this chapter (p.265). More importantly, it stresses the importance of the institutionalization of democracy as a possible remedy for mitigating human rights abuses.

Professor Osaghae examines the issue of ethnicity and democracy in Africa in chapter 13. He looks at how ethnic relations impact on democracy and democratization. Indeed, since ethnic politics tend to be centrifugal, the problem of the 'atomization' of the African society is rendered difficult. This is particularly the case since the central government in much of Africa is insensitive to the needs of some nationalities, especially the ethnic minority groups. So, increasingly these ethnic minority factions seek solace within their ethnic collectivity while distancing themselves from the coercive power of the central government. Unfortunately, argues Osaghae, political entrepreneurs see ethnicity (and more recently religion) as an effective channel through which to compete for power. A genuine democracy should be one that brings in all of the ethnic groups into the process of governance. The groups should be made equal partners in the system, possibly through consociationalism as in the case of Nigeria and South Africa (p.292).

In chapter 14, professor Mbaku examines the issue of property rights and its distribution. Clearly, if there is fairness in the process of allocating the proceeds from a society conflicts could be mollified. The method of extracting mineral resources can be crucial to the ecological balance and the environment in general. African countries, in which the citizens are more concerned about daily survival, are less inclined to protect the environment. Unfortunately, in much of Africa the devastation to the environment tends to be total. This is more so when such resources are housed in ethnic minority areas. Such has been the case in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. But the sustainability of development in Africa will require democracy and peaceful coexistence (pp.301-303). And sustainable development can be promoted when the policy of sensible distribution of the community's wealth is practiced.

In chapter 15, professor Hope, Sr. looks at the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa and the heavy toll that this disease has had on African families (p.323). That democracy has not taken hold in much Africa is of concern to many students of democracy. To exacerbate the problem of improving democratic traditions in Africa is the fact that HIV/AIDS concerns have siphoned away funds that might have gone toward promoting the consolidation of democracy to tackling this epidemic. The need for adequate policies to combat this problem is called for, and such a regime could be more easily derived from systems that are democratic than those societies that are autocratic and totalitarian.

There are many lessons to be learned from the democratic transitions in South Africa and Nigeria, contends professor Osaghae in chapter 16. Drawing from the problematic 1993 elections in Nigeria, Osaghae chafes at the fact that Nigeria that should have served as a model for successful transition to democracy failed the region. In any case, the successful

transition from apartheid rule to democratic rule in South Africa more than made up for the democratic debacle in Nigeria. The transformation in the South African situation, however, should be visualized within the context of decolonization (as in the transfer of power to the majority blacks) and democratization that occurred relatively smoothly in 1994 (pp.344-345). In a way, this experience makes the South African situation rather unique.

In chapters 17 and 18, professors Mbaku, Ihonvbere and Takougang brought their expertise to bear on the role of the opposition to the dominant political parties in government. Most of the opposition parties have had the problems of effectively organizing their factions to serve as the alternative to the party in power. This is partly the case because of the difficulty in separating the personality of leaders from that of the opposition parties. Indeed, not until opposition parties have as their major agenda a commitment to serve the people rather than wanting to grab power in order to exploit the state, their ability to replace the party or parties in government would be farfetched (pp.369-379). The multiple opposition parties in Nigeria's 2003 presidential elections (with confusing platforms) are a good case in point.

In chapter 18, and concluding chapter, professors Mbaku and Ihonvbere provide the following suggestions for improving the democratic enterprise in the continent: The neocolonial state must be reconstructed to provide structures that enhance wealth and sufficient enablements for the peoples' daily survival; Political spaces must be opened up to allow for more participatory and democratic forms of government to mushroom; The emergence of viable regional economic integration groups in Africa (such as the Economic Community of West African States) and The state must be reconstituted in such a way that it attracts the allegiance of its constituent groups

and thereby further national cohesion (pp.30, 408-411).

In all, this is a comprehensive and excellent book that is very useful to both undergraduate and graduate students. It is also highly recommended to political practitioners, policy-makers, university and public libraries.

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## First International Festival of Saharan Film

'Sweet 16', Ken Loach's critically acclaimed film about modern teenage life in the UK, represented the UK at the first International Festival of Saharan Film, held in the refugee camps from November 22nd – 24th. The famous Spanish director Pedro Almodovar travelled to the desert; 16 films were shown in all, with a team of volunteers working round the clock to dub them into Arabic. This is believed to have been the first time that films (as opposed to videos) have been shown in the camps. 35mm projectors were taken from Spain and a 25 by 40 foot screen erected to give the refugees a taste of the real cinema experience, which went down very well, particularly with the younger audience. A full review will be in the next issue of ROAPE.