Imperial, Neo-Liberal Africa?

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Now that the fanfare and euphoria surrounding what has been called Tony Blair’s passionate denunciation of impoverishment in Africa as ‘a scar on the conscience of the world’ (Lone, 2007), the ‘development buzz’ (Collier, 2007) generated by rock stars and the ‘make poverty history campaign’ has all died down, it seems quite a good time to reflect on the ‘achievements’ to date. These campaigns were preceded by the UN millennium development goals on poverty alleviation, which in turn were followed by the Report of the Commission for Africa. More than a third of the way towards the 2015 goal, it is clear as Salim Lone suggests, that the developed world is falling behind on its commitments to African countries and the plight of many Africans is getting worse. According to Lone, no sub-Saharan African country has met the criteria on poverty alleviation and it would have been unthinkable that Western Governments, which gleefully presided over the creation of new classes of super-rich, would use their considerable influence to push African leaders to pursue policies which would shift resources away from the rapacious national elites towards the poor … Nor was it likely the west would permit Africa to stray from the neo-liberal orthodoxies prescribed for the continent by the World Bank and the IMF.

Readers of this journal would be familiar with the challenge and critical engagement, which the Editorial Working Group has posed to the new orthodoxies of ‘neo-liberalism’ and, in particular, the World Bank and IMF-sponsored structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in Africa. ROAPE, as a collective, has been in the forefront in challenging the assumptions and the ideological underpinnings of SAPs by pointing to the devastating effects it has had on the life of ordinary Africans, their economies and societies in general. These policies that have generated wealth for the elites and created economic growth in a few countries, have brought misery to a billion people for two decades. Furthermore, we have pointed to the fact that neo-liberalism does not constitute a single coherent ideology, but a hotchpotch of economic and political diktats which in turn have weakened the state in Africa as more and more of its functions are outsourced to NGOs, creating ‘less order, less peace and less security’ for the mass of the African people (Ferguson: 2006:39).

‘Democracy’ was dangled as a carrot to the African masses only to be negated as their votes became worthless as the powerful nations supported comprador elements within the political classes regardless of how power was achieved – as is the case in the recent elections in Nigeria. The journal has also drawn attention of the real struggle of the African people against structural adjustment programmes and the attempts by the comprador classes to intensify their oppression through the conditionality embedded in SAPs. ROAPE has published articles on African people’s attempt to create autonomous political and economic spaces (such as the parallel or informal markets) – free not only from a kleptocratic state, but also from
the worse excesses of SAPs which has rendered the state a ‘political monument’. This journal has also catalogued examples of the anti-SAPs struggles waged by various groups and communities, such as anti-SAP revolts and ‘IMF riots’. Other features of these struggles include: smuggling of commodities across national borders; constructing a system of multiple modes of livelihood; and direct challenges to the state through support for social movements challenging state hegemony.

The triumphal arrival of neo-liberals, steeped in anti-dirigisme and the privileging of the market, accompanied the very manifestation of SAPs as the prognosis of African economic ailments in the ‘lost decade’ of the 1980s. Neo-liberal market driven ideology was based on a one-dimensional prognosis to what is a complex problem facing African leaders, but reduced simply to ‘market failure’. The mantra of ‘whatever your economic ailment, deflate’ demonstrates confidence in the market at the expense of public institutions (Stiglitz, 2002). The latter point is particularly true of political institutions which had to bear the brunt of challenges from Paul Collier’s ‘Bottom Billion’ (Collier, 2007; Lawrence, 2007:169-176) in their quest to survive SAPs. Writing about the Fund, Stiglitz (2002) has argued that it has moved away from its original purpose, which was:

*to put international pressure on countries to have more expansionary policies than they would choose of their own accord. Today, the Fund has reversed course, putting pressure on countries, particularly developing ones, to implement more contractionary policies than these countries would choose of their own accord.*

Furthermore, Stiglitz observed that the absence of a coherent and reasonably complete theory has led to policies, which exacerbate the very problems that the Fund was set up to resolve. These policies (anti-dirigisme and deflations) do not endear African states to the Fund or Bank as ‘shoots of development’ and early post-independence innovative social care systems (as was the case with Mozambique) were destroyed at the altar of neo-liberal dogma.

Neo-liberals demanded the rolling back of the state, which was demonised as a ‘lame leviathan’, a ‘vampire’, whilst as Bjorn Beckman has been at pains to warn in the pages of this journal: ‘the neo-liberal project seeks to de-legitimise the state as the locus of nationalist aspirations and resistance’ (Beckman, 1993:20), by drawing on theories of ‘rent-seeking’, ‘patrimonialism’ and state autonomy, whilst obscuring the massive role of state power in the economic domination of imperialism of transnational corporations. The African state was crudely contrasted with the developmental states of Asia as being too interventionist, thereby producing a soporific civil society, whilst in fact the problem is not the depth of the intervention, but the quality.

Given this perceived pathology of the African state, the idea of a ‘developmental state’ was treated with disdain. What was required as far as the IFIs were concerned was a surrogate state, which was manifest in a number of ways. The first potential route was by strengthening the grip of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) (originating from within the imperialist centres) on African societies, which would increasingly appropriate the role and functions of the dysfunctional state. Second, the state could be captured by direct intervention by external powers, as was the case in Somalia by the US in 1993 with disastrous consequences, or more positively by Britain in war-torn Sierra Leone in May 2000. A point which this journal has continued to stress is that imperialist designs are always dynamic and ever
changing, with the sole objective of making the world safe for capital. Thus, in his contribution in this issue, Nikola Kojucharov takes a critical look at the World Bank supervised Chad-Cameroon pipeline project, pointing to the way the World Bank tried to appropriate a major function of the Chadian state, namely the ability to levy taxation, what Kojucharov calls, ‘foreign interference in the economic sovereignty of a nation’. Clearly, the ability of the state to levy taxation is crucial for its survival: not only to deliver social citizenship and the social contract, but also to placate retainers and others who are in the service of the state. Indeed, much of the conflict in contemporary Africa stems from the inability of the state to provide social citizenship and to finance the patron client network or ‘shadow state’. To deny the state access to taxation directly is to put obstacles to socio-political reproduction and to threaten stability and the very existence of the system.

Whilst interrogating the concept of ‘resource curse’, that is, the tendency for resource wealth to impair the economic and political development of a resource endowed country, Kojucharov shows that oil has not improved the standard of living of the Chadian people, with the majority continuing to live on less than $1 a day. In order to discipline the state, the Bank stripped the Chadian state of its sovereignty, which became a major source of conflict between the political class and the officials from the Bank. Kojucharov argues that underlying the unsuccessful conversion of oil revenues into poverty reduction was not simply the World Bank’s policy choice (as most critics have suggested), but that the project was hindered more by the external nature of the World Bank’s policy intervention than by any particular design flaws. In his view, for the project to achieve its goal of poverty reduction, a policy rethink is called for to do away with the complex regulatory frameworks, which hinder the strengthening of institutional capacity.

The case of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline points to the transmogrification of imperialism: not only was the policy designed (like SAPs) to hem Africa even more closely onto the accumulation needs of global capitalism as producers of raw materials and markets for manufactured goods from the imperialist centres, but the agreement was specifically set up to ensure that oil continues to flow to reduce Western dependence on supplies from the conflictual Arabian Gulf and to ensure capital flow to the multinationals, like Esso, that invest in Chad’s oil industry.

In the era of the ‘war on terrorism’, Africa and her natural resources have now assumed major importance, not least because the imperialist centres now have to find an alternative to the perilous Arabian peninsular. Furthermore, the arrival of new players and new markets for African raw materials – namely the Chinese and Indian markets – have helped to valorise African raw materials in the eyes of the imperialist nations. These new actors, in particular the Chinese, have little time for the ‘niceties’ of economic and political conditionality, a major weapon in hemming Africa onto the web of imperialist design. In short, the presence of the Chinese in the ‘new scramble for Africa’s resources’ has forced the IFIs to rethink the policy of conditionality in its old format and to reconstitute neo-colonialism. The case of Chad points to this new design in neo-colonial solutions, which now poses a direct threat to the sovereignty of resource rich states.

Autesserre’s article is a serious critique of the mono-causal explanation for African conflict offered by Collier and his associates (2000:91-112) that ‘conflicts are far more likely to be caused by economic opportunities than by grievance’ (p. 91). Sierra Leone is often quoted as the example par excellence of this thesis with access to blood diamonds seen as the major cause of the war. In reality, the scramble for the
country's diamonds came much later in the history of the war, whilst the underlying causes had to do with poor governance, political and social exclusion and an inept political leadership (Zack-Williams, 1999:143-162). Similarly, Autesserre argues that 'violence in the Congo, although motivated in part by “greed” (the exploitation of natural resources), (also), it is motivated by grievances: issues related to social status, identity and political power.’

She identifies three main reasons for Rwanda’s intervention in the Congo: the threat posed to Rwanda’s sovereignty by the Rwanda Hutu militia in the DRC; the problem of ethnic hatred against Congolese Rwandophones; finally the appeal of the Kivus’ mineral resources, which attracted a large number of Congolese and non-Congolese alike. But she goes on to argue that the greed not grievance argument is too mechanistic and economistic, without looking at the various levels of grievances: the regional, national and local. Whilst regional, national and local dimensions to conflicts are often closely interlinked, yet to ignore local causation or local resolutions tantamount to sewing the seeds for future conflicts.

The Chad experiment raises the thorny question of the future of the nation-state in Africa, which is also the issue discussed in Jacob’s briefing on the poor in a developmental state such as South Africa. As Ferguson (2006) has observed, there is a departure from the ‘thick’ Zambian (developmental) model that failed in the 1980s, towards a private model of the state that is emerging across the oil states. This he refers to as:

> the ‘thin’ Angolan non-nation-state developing natural resources, but enclaved mineral rich patches efficiently exploited by flexible private firms, with security provided on an ‘as need’ basis by specialised corporations, while the elite cliques who are nominal holders of sovereignty certify the industry’s legality and international legitimacy in exchange for a piece of action (Ibid. p.207).

Furthermore, in discussing the ‘non-governmental’ states, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo which he sees as the extreme of the principle of deregulation, Ferguson points out that in weakly governed African states, the question of sovereignty is not one about effective control of national borders or the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, but the ‘ability to provide contractual legal authority that can legitimize the extractive work of transnational firms’ (Ibid.).

The deregulation mentioned above is partly the result of neo-Liberal attack on the African state, which led to the call for privatisation, an important conditionality designed largely to privilege metropolitan capital in its quest for horizontal and vertical integration. It is also highly functional in creating and sustaining a comprador class, which will continue to defend the interests of its class ally, the ruling class of the metropolis. Mayher and Macdonald’s article draws attention to the nature of the discourse on privatisation in South Africa, in particular, the way the media deals with these issues. Unlike many other countries in Africa, there has been relatively little outright privatisation with Public Private Partnership (PPP) being the most popular form of privatisation. Under this system, the state typically owns the service assets, with the service being wholly or partly delivered by a private company. One can only speculate as to the popularity of PPP in South Africa, a country with a well-developed infrastructure and a good crop of technocrats and professionals. One should not lose sight of the racial divide in South Africa, even in the post-apartheid era as the ANC Government embarks on a policy of social engineering to rectify historical disadvantages. Clearly, the outright sale of state
assets will reduce the state’s ability to deliver equity, as only the economically privileged would be able to buy such assets, thus strengthening the economic-colour divide; the existence of a strong labour movement that emerged out of the liberation struggle and a very vibrant civil society may have acted as a brake on any swift, outright privatisation.

The paper by Hansen and Bradbury and the briefing by Usman Tar and Zack-Williams examine new democracies in Somaliland and Nigeria respectively. The first on Somaliland’s tentative steps towards democratisation raises questions about the gerrymandering and succession of ‘freely’ elected leaders. The authors note that the future challenges for democratic renewal in Somaliland include the shift from clan-based forms of political representation and competition to one based on political parties as forums of political representation and competition in a predominantly rural society. Somaliland is often seen as a mono-ethnic society and as such able to avoid the exigencies of politics in multi-ethnic society as the rest of the continent.

The briefing on the Nigerian elections raises some similar questions. It points to the machination of the outgoing President to get his chosen candidate elected amid widespread intimidation, violence and the stuffing of ballot boxes with papers and other electoral irregularities. The level of violence and fear is reflected in the dramatic drop in the price of machetes following the end of voting. Many foreign observers condemned the manner in which the elections were conducted and called for a re-run, but despite these allegations, Britain and the United States welcomed the election of Musa Yara’ Dua, a conservative politician from the North and the hand-chosen successor of outgoing President Olusegun Obansanjo. The new President represents ‘a safe pair of hands’ who would co-operate with the US and the former colonial power, Britain in the ‘war on terrorism’ externally, and domestically. Furthermore, his ‘Godfather’ (a concept that the Nigerian Left have appropriated to refer to wealthy sponsors of patrons), former President Olusegun Obasanjo, could rest assured that he would not be called to account for his stewardship by his successor. This recent development supports Lubeck, Watts and Lipschutz’s (IPR, 2007:1) argument that:

_Nigeria has been a particular target of this shifting energy policy, not only as a strategic ally in the region but also as a ‘front line’ state in the Global War on Terrorism._

The crisis in the oil rich Delta region, where fighting has been continuous, with foreign oil workers and members of their families being captured as hostages by various rebel movements, has raised major concerns about the security of oil supplies from the region. Thus, whilst Obansanjo never got approval from the US or Britain for a third term in office, had they questioned the outcome of the elections more strongly, it may well have encouraged rebels in the Delta region to step up their campaign against the Federal State. Furthermore, Nigeria is an important member of the West African Oil Triangle, which also includes Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, accounting for about 15 per cent of daily imports into the United States (Ibid. p.4), the figure is expected to rise to 25 per cent by 2025 (NIC, 2000). As Ferguson has observed, such findings challenge the assumption of Afro-pessimists that Africa is defined by its marginalisation and its irrelevance, but is defined by its irrelevance. What is being played out on the continent of the ‘bottom billion’ is a new form of imperial neo-liberal engagement.
Bibliography


Séverine Autesserre

As a corrective to the emphasis on national and international reconciliation during peace building processes, I develop here a conceptual analysis of the dynamics of violence during the transition from war to peace and democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo between 2003 and 2006. I locate the sources, at the local, national, and regional levels, of continued local violence during this transition. Through an analysis of the situation in the provinces of North Kivu and North Katanga, I illustrate how local dynamics interacted with the national and regional dimensions of the conflict. I demonstrate that, after a national and regional settlement was reached, some local conflicts over land and political power increasingly became self-sustaining, autonomous, and disconnected from the national and regional tracks. Thus, peace building action was required not only at the national and regional levels but also locally.

A year after the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo officially ended on 30 June 2003, more than one thousand civilians continued to die every day. Most of the deaths were caused by disease and malnutrition and could have been prevented if outbursts of violence had not impeded access to humanitarian aid, especially in the east (International Rescue Committee, 2004). In April 2004, for example, the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs wrote the following situation report:

The security situation was the most worrying this month in North-Kivu, South-Kivu and Katanga Provinces in the Eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo … As a consequence of the fighting and increased tension in these three regions, approximately 30-35,000 people were estimated displaced over the course of this month. In addition to the displacement, [the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs] continued to
receive reports of massacres, cannibalism, rapes, looting, extortion and other serious violations of human rights being committed by various armed groups, leaving questions as to whether or not the protection situation for civilians living in [the Congo] has improved since the war officially ended last year.

Even though the situation improved somewhat in 2005 and 2006, similar reports of tensions and local hostilities could be found in all weekly and monthly UN humanitarian situation reports covering the Congolese transition from war to peace and democracy (June 2003 – December 2006). What were the reasons for the continuation of such a high level of violence?

In June 2003, a settlement seemed to have been reached at the regional and national levels. The foreign troops that withdrew from the Congo in 2002 and 2003 officially remained out of Congolese territory. Normal diplomatic ties, including the exchange of ambassadors, resumed between former enemies. Important developments also took place at the national level, such as the official reunification of the country, the formation of a unified government, the preparation for democratic elections, and a progressive integration of the different armed groups into a single national army.

However, local conflict – at the level of the village, the district, or the community – persisted in the eastern Congo. Political, economic, and social antagonisms generated frequent massacres, massive human rights violations, and population displacement. Although some progress was made compared to the situation during the war, a number of areas in the eastern Congo remained very unsafe, and many Congolese continued to suffer from violence waged by one of the armed groups still active. Why did the national and regional settlements fail to effect peace at the local level?

Many of the international actors I interviewed, especially high-ranking diplomats and UN staff members, do not believe that local causes played a decisive role in sustaining national and regional violence during the war and in the post-war period. During the transition, diplomats, UN staff, and many non-governmental organisations worked mostly on the national and regional cleavages, mediating among, and when necessary putting pressure on, the main Congolese, Rwandan, and Ugandan political and military leaders. Their role at the local level was often nonexistent (Autesserre, 2006).

This article argues for a correction of the emphasis on national and international reconciliation during peace-building processes. National and international violence obviously factor into the establishment of peace. However, focusing on these tensions at the expense of local conflicts is dangerous because local dynamics are important triggers of violence and can become disconnected from the national and international tracks. Nationally- and internationally-focused conflict resolution overlooks important local dynamics that threaten order – or prevent its implementation in the first place.

The article will start with an analytical framework, then I shall seek to locate sources at the local, national, and regional levels, of continued local violence during the transition. I emphasise the importance and distinctiveness of local agendas in the Congo as well as the local dimension of problems usually considered as purely national and regional (i.e., the status of the Rwandophone minority and the presence of the rebel Rwandan Hutu militias). Furthermore, I provide a brief overview of the situation in North Kivu and North Katanga, in order to document how the interlocking nature of these tensions caused violence to spread from one
level to the other. I also demonstrate that, after a national and regional settlement was reached, some local conflicts over land, political power, and ethnic antagonism increasingly became self-sustaining, autonomous, and disconnected from the national and regional issues.

I draw on field observations in Kinshasa and the provinces of Katanga and the Kivus conducted between 2001 and 2006; document analysis; and more than 280 interviews conducted with Congolese politicians, military officers, diplomats, and civil society actors, victims of violence, staff of international organisations, and foreign observers – in the Congo, France, Belgium, New York, and Washington, DC. Given the substantial degree of political tension and uncertainty surrounding the themes of this article, and given the culture of secrecy pervasive in UN and diplomatic circles, most of the people I interviewed preferred to remain anonymous. For this reason, I reference only the data obtained through on-record interviews or in public sources. Unless otherwise indicated, the rest of the information presented in this article comes from the author’s field observations and anonymous interviews.

**Analytical Framework**

The paucity of research on the impact of local violence on the viability of the peace processes constitutes a significant gap in the literature on conflict and conflict resolution. It raises such questions as: What are the local foundations of peace processes? How, precisely, do micro-local dynamics contribute to the failure of a national peace agreement?

Academics and practitioners often share the same flawed interpretation of conflict (Kalyvas, 2003). Most analysts perceive local dynamics ‘as a mere (and rather irrelevant) local manifestation of the central cleavage’ and local actors as mere ‘replicas of central actors’ (Kalyvas, 2003:481). Thus, academics who attempt to explain the success or failure of peace agreement implementation largely neglect the local preconditions for civil war settlements. They usually focus on macro-level parameters, such as the commitment to peace from a ‘major or regional power’ (Hampson, 1996; Downs & Stedman, 2002), the role of international peacekeeping operations (Hampson, 1996; many contributors to Stedman, Rothchild et al. 2002; Walter, 2002), or the existence of signed peace agreements and power-sharing pacts (Hampson, 1996; Walter, 2002). Most of these studies also analyse each warring party as a monolith (Wood, 2002:5), overlooking the impact of intra-party disputes, which, in fact, have crucial consequences (Stedman, 1997; Zartman & Rasmussen, 1997). They miss a critical point: local issues are specific and their dynamics are distinct from those at the national level (Kalyvas, 2003, 2006).

To illuminate the multiple layers and connections among conflicts at different levels, I build on Kalyvas’s (2003, 2006) analysis that local and national dimensions of violence interact through two distinct mechanisms: cleavage and alliance. ‘Cleavage’ refers to the ‘overarching issue dimension’ – this is, for example, ideology, ethnicity, religion, or class – that links actors at the centre to actors on the ground (Kalyvas, 2003:476). ‘Alliance’ is a concept that links the central actors’ quest for national power to the local actors’ quest for local advantages. It ‘entails a transaction between supralocal and local actors, whereby the former supply the latter with external muscle, thus allowing them to win decisive local advantage; in exchange the former rely on local conflicts to recruit and motivate supporters and obtain local control, resources, and information’ (Kalyvas, 2003:486).
In so doing, I challenge a prominent mono-causal interpretation of the Congolese conflict and transition to peace. Building on Collier and Hoeffler’s ‘Greed and Grievance’ argument (2001), journalists and academics alike often reduce the motivations for violence in the Congo to a desire to exploit the massive Congolese natural resources (see for example Naidoo, 2003; Olsson, 2004, and Samset, 2002 for the war period and Global Witness, 2005 and Nest, 2006 for the transition). I consider not only explanations of violence based on resources (or other economic agendas) but also on political and social causes. I show that violence in the Congo, although motivated in part by ‘greed’ (the exploitation of natural resources), is also motivated by ‘grievances’: issues related to social status, identity, and political power.

Identifying the Different Loci of Violence during the Transition

Regional Causes of Local Violence

In March 2005, the UN Security Council denounced Rwanda’s and Uganda’s continuing involvement in supporting the armed groups responsible, among other things, for the perpetuation of violence in the Congo. In particular, Rwandan troops continued to operate in the Kivus and in 2004 the tactics of hit-and-run became common along the border regions (International Crisis Group, 2005:21-22; Institute for Security Studies, 2004; Romkema, 2004; UN Security Council, 2004). Three important incentives were at the root of the Rwandan involvement in the Congo during the transition: first, the threat posed by the continued presence of Rwandan Hutu militias; second, the problem of ethnic hatred against Congolese Rwandophones; and third, the appeal of the Kivus’ mineral resources.

During the transition, armed groups affiliated with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda, or FDLR), a Rwandan rebel group composed mostly of ethnic Hutus, remained heavily present in the Kivus. They included combatants from the 1994 genocide as well as family members of the combatants, refugees, and political opponents forced to flee by Kagame’s crackdown on opposition parties. The Rwandan government often complained about this continued FDLR presence in the Congo and emphasised the threat it posed to its country. Kigali, therefore, threatened several times – notably in November 2004 and in April 2005 – to invade the Congo again should Congolese and international actors fail to solve the FDLR problem. However, only a small number of FDLR had been active during the genocide and the relatively small group of FDLR combatants remaining in the Congolese forests did not seem to pose a real danger to Rwanda. Therefore, many Congolese and international observers claimed that Kigali complained about the FDLR presence in the Congo purely to find a pretext to come back into the Kivus in order to pursue Rwanda’s true interests: protecting Rwandophones and exploiting the Congo's resources.

‘Rwandophone’ means Kinyarwanda-speaking people. In the Congolese context, the term is used to refer to Congolese of Rwandan ancestry (both Hutus and Tutsis). Although many of them descend from families who arrived in the Congo before or during the colonisation period, or shortly after independence (1960), their Congolese citizenship has been hotly contested for the past fifty years. These ethnic tensions have led to local ethnic massacres, such as in Masisi in 1993, and they were one of the reasons for the 1998 war. During the transition, the members of the Rwandophone community of the Congo were subject to considerable discrimination.
and abuse, and many Congolese groups contested their very right to live on Congolese territory. This hatred fed Rwanda’s alleged concerns for a potential ‘genocide’ of Rwandophone communities. Several times during the transition – notably after the May-June 2004 fighting in Bukavu and the August 2004 massacre in Gatumba – Rwanda threatened to go back into the Congo if the Congolese President, Joseph Kabila did not take appropriate measures to protect the Rwandophone minority and stop the anti-Rwandophone propaganda. The ‘indigenous’ Congolese – as ethnic groups that are native to the eastern Congo refer to themselves in order to emphasise that ethnic groups such as Rwandophone are foreign – felt deep resentment toward Rwanda because of its lengthy occupation of the eastern Congo. Thus these Rwandan threats reinforced the anti-Rwandophone feelings among the vast majority of the Congolese people and led to further discrimination and violence against Rwandophones.

Economic motivations also seemed largely to account for Rwanda’s interest in the eastern Congo. UN and non-governmental organisations noted the discrepancies between the very limited mining resources of Uganda and Rwanda, and their massive exports of cassiterite, coltan, tin, and gold (Global Witness, 2005:4, 24-26; Pourtier, 2004:4; UN Security Council, 2005b: par 85-86). Global Witness’s (2005) case study on cassiterite documented how the Rwandan state was involved in this illegal trafficking: first as the prime beneficiary (the state-owned company Redemi being the major exporter of tin and cassiterite); and second as an armed actor able to secure mining sites when necessary. In addition, Rwandan officials and civilians also benefited from the trafficking because of the ‘important business links’ they had developed with members of the Democratic Rally for Democracy – Goma (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie – Goma, or RCD-G), the rebel group that controlled most of the eastern Congo during the war and was transformed into a political party during the transition. This led to sporadic Rwandan involvement, aimed at influencing or supervising Congolese allies. The six-year conflict had enabled foreign countries to set up systems of exploitation that could continue functioning through Congolese proxies even after the Rwandan or Ugandan armies had withdrawn.

The combination of these security, political, and economic interests led Rwanda to actively support several armed groups responsible for local violence in the eastern Congo. At the end of 2003, Rwanda resumed military support to several Kivu militias (International Crisis Group, 2004). Furthermore, Rwandan officials supported the renegade military officers Laurent Nkunda and Jules Mutebusi during the May-June 2004 fighting in Bukavu and afterwards, helping them recruit soldiers and providing them with heavy arms and ammunition, uniforms, money, and a rear base in Rwanda to regroup and retreat when necessary (UN Security Council, 2004). Rwanda also helped the North Kivu Governor, Eugene Seruphuli (a Rwandophone affiliated with the RCD-G), arm Rwandophone civilians in Masisi and constitute additional local defence militias.

**National Causes of Local Violence**

If regional agendas continued to cause violence during the transition, national dimensions remained similarly influential. The Transitional Government was mostly characterised by a distrust among the representatives of the different ‘components’ of the transition institutions. These were the eight most powerful political or military groups at the outset of the civil war, and they had received an
equal share of representation in the government, the parliament, and the national administration. The government did not work as a team to manage the transition and lead the country, but rather as competitive factions bent on overtaking one another and on enhancing the political, military, symbolic, and financial position of their own parties. Militarily, each component strived to maintain control over its former military assets under the umbrella of the newly unified army, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo, or FARDC). The internal antagonisms were such that the government stopped functioning as an entity during the third year of the transition.

This continuation of high-level hostilities created dire local consequences. In the eastern provinces, the antagonisms between Kabila and the RCD-G fuelled the resistance of all former warring parties to the army integration process. The persistent distrust and lack of integration generated a highly volatile situation in those territories that continued to be controlled by troops affiliated with different factions, and led to both small-scale battles and several bouts of large-scale fighting. The local population was the first to suffer from this fighting: each armed group used violence to deter villagers from supporting some other faction.

The political struggle at the national level also fuelled the hatred against Rwandophones; this hatred remained a pervasive source of violence in the eastern provinces. In Kinshasa, newspapers every day disparaged the Rwandophone community and their political party, the RCD-G: both were presented as the source of the war and of all the problems in the transition, and they were depicted as the ‘Trojan horse’ of the abhorred Rwandese. Leaders from all side of the political spectrum defended a similar point of view, apparently for the sake of electoral advantage. Fuelling ethnic hatred spared politicians the need to develop real political platforms. Rwandophone-bashing was an easy way to show one’s patriotism and to appeal to the majority of the Congolese population. This led to a vicious circle: existing ethnic tensions encouraged national politicians to use anti-Rwandophone rhetoric, which further stirred ethnic hatred, which was an important cause of local violence in the eastern Congo.

In addition, the struggle within the Transitional Government blocked the decision-making process. This, added to the strong interests most representatives had in stalling the transition process (to retain their positions of authority and continue to enrich their coffers, or to benefit from continued immunity from prosecution), caused the transition to progress at a very slow pace. It meant a continued absence of state authority in the east, especially in the rural areas. In the absence of state authority, the justice and police forces acted with impunity. Bias, corruption, and inefficiency were so widespread that these sectors lost all credibility with the Congolese people. At the same time, the lack of legitimate state authority in the east encouraged the continuation of violence, which seemed the easiest road to power and wealth. Thus civil as well as violent crime (including rape and kidnapping) persisted in many areas, unhindered by the non-functioning forces of law and order.

The conditions of impunity and the lack of legitimate state authority in the east also facilitated the illegal exploitation of resources. During the transition, the Congolese armed forces, the Rwandan rebel militias FDLR, the Congolese local self-defence militias called Mai Mai, armed forces of the former rebel movement RCD-G, as well as pro-Ugandan, pro-Rwandan, and criminal groups remained involved in illegal mining (Global Witness, 2005; International Crisis Group, 2005; Romkema, 2004; UN Security Council, 2005a, 2005b). Large quantities of cassiterite, coltan, gold,
diamonds, and palm nut crossed the borders every day and evaded the tax authorities. This situation, in turn, fuelled the absence of state authority in the east: first, by reinforcing the reluctance of many local strongmen to work in good faith with the central authorities; and second, by depriving the Transitional Government of important resources that could have helped it extend its authority.

It also generated local violence in three different ways. First, national actors competed among themselves as well as with local and foreign armed groups (notably Mai Mai and FDLR) for the control of mining sites. This led to frequent fighting over the key mining areas of the Kivus (Global Witness, 2005:4, 8, 16). Second, illicit exploitation of resources enabled all armed groups to finance their war efforts, which further fuelled armed conflict (Staibano, 2005:3; UN Security Council, 2005c). Third, control of mining sites by national or local armed groups caused massive violence against the local population. Global Witness (2005:10) documents that in the mining areas of North and South Kivu, all armed groups committed ‘colossal’ abuses against non-combatants, including ‘killing, rape, torture, arbitrary arrests, intimidation, mutilation, [and] the destruction or pillage of private property.’ These abuses were ‘integrally linked to natural resources ... as they were employed as methods by which to gain control either over resource-rich areas or over the ability to [exploit them].’

In addition, officials in Kinshasa embezzled funds earmarked for the army integration and for the soldiers’ pay. As a result, the soldiers’ commanders did not have the resources to remunerate their troops adequately or provide them with basic supplies and therefore encouraged them to make a living off the local population. Thus all soldiers (belonging to all components) continued to prey on the local population throughout the transition. This meant extorting the local residents, stealing all kinds of valuables in urban areas (money, mobile phones) and harvests or cattle in rural areas, and beating, raping, torturing, killing, or imprisoning those who refused to comply. Abuses by soldiers trying to make a living were so widely reported that they seemed to be the most common form of low-level violence in the east.

**Local Causes of Violence**

If regional and national antagonisms continued to generate high levels of violence at the local level, local conflict was also motivated by distinctly local causes. The main difference between the war period and the transition was that, during the transition, these local agendas became increasingly autonomous from the national and regional tracks.

In the east, at the grassroots level, the problem was not only ‘the most obvious division, ‘everybody against the [Rwandophones]’ but also the ‘hundreds of potential divisions, of local problems,’ which were exploited by commanders and often erupted in violence. One of the main actors at the local level was the Mai Mai militias, local self-defence armed groups formed on the basis of ethnicity throughout the eastern Congo. The Mai Mai are officially considered a national actor (the Mai Mai ‘movement’ sent ministers, deputies, and senators to the transition institutions), but Mai Mai groups have never been unified under a single command structure. During the transition, just as during the war, the Mai Mai ‘movement’ remained a loose network of very different militias following various – and often competing – leaders.
In North Kivu, South Kivu, and North Katanga, a mosaic of alliances and counter alliances separated the numerous ethnic groups in each province. The clan and ethnic tensions were usually articulated in terms of social, economic, and political issues. Clannish, ethnic, political, and social identities remained extremely fluid during the transition and individuals often switched allegiance from one group to another as opportunities arose. The causes of the divisions were intertwined both with one another and with national and regional agendas.

Political antagonisms at the local level fuelled significant violence. Conflicts of succession continued to generate tensions similar to those that had existed before and during the war. During the transition, these were further complicated by the competition between new and traditional authorities. During the war, many traditional authorities (village, collectivity, or territory chiefs) had fled, either to escape ongoing violence or because an armed group had usurped their power. After the war, the return of the traditional authorities to their territories generated a high level of hostility.

In the Osso and Bashali collectivities (North Kivu), the Hunde population reportedly sided with the newly returned traditional chief, himself a Hunde, against the Hutu chiefs who had seized power during the war; in retaliation the Hutu chiefs committed ‘a lot of abuses’ against the supporters of their opponents. Such conflicts between new and traditional authorities were not limited to North Kivu. One of the main problems linked to the repatriation of refugees from Tanzania to South Kivu was the tension likely to arise with the return of traditional authorities to their area of origin. Similarly, in Nyunzu (North Katanga), people living in the camps for displaced people were not the lowest-ranking members of their communities but rather families of local traditional authorities (notably village and collectivity chiefs). Ordinary citizens had been allowed to go back to their villages, but when the chiefs tried to do so, the Mai Mai soldiers who had usurped their power threatened them and forced them to leave again. Articles in the press suggested that this situation was common throughout Katanga.

In addition to local conflict over traditional power, there was ethnic conflict over appointments in state institutions by transitional authorities. For example, in the Shabunda territory (South Kivu) in 2004, the Mai Mai General Padiri (himself a member of the Tembo ethnic group), who was recognised as a leading figure in the Mai Mai movement by the transitional authorities, reportedly appointed only Mai Mai Tembo to important military and administrative positions. This led to several small-scale fights between the Mai-Mai Tembo and the Mai-Mai Rega, until the Mai Mai Rega retaliated by chasing the Mai Mai Tembo from Shabunda territory.

In most cases, such political tensions interfaced with economically motivated hostilities. Political power often guarantees access to land and economic resources, while access to wealth means, in turn, the availability of resources to buy arms and reward troops and to secure political power. In particular, the land problems that had led to massive local violence before and during the war (Mamdani, 2001; Van Acker & Vlassenroot, 2000; Willame, 1997) remained salient in the eastern Congo and often constituted the grassroots dimension of local conflicts (UN Mission in the Congo [Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo, MONUC] 2004).

In South Kivu, land issues were usually the most important source of conflict in rural areas and further problems were expected with the return of refugees. In North Kivu, land problems were ‘the main source of local conflicts’ in Masisi and an
important source of tension between RCD-G and Mai Mai groups stationed in Walikale in early 2004. In North Katanga, the Bembes reportedly attempted to take over land in Holoholo and Kalanga areas. Local tensions over land sometimes erupted into open fighting, such as in Walikale (North Kivu) in June 2004, Bwerema (South Kivu) in December 2004, and Katogota (South Kivu) in November 2005. They also greatly impeded the peaceful return of refugees and displaced persons because those in control of the land after the war threatened to use force to avoid giving it up.

As noted above, competition among fragmented militias for the control of natural resources also remained a major cause of violence in the Kivus and North Katanga. Finally, the need to find the means of survival, and the lack of social opportunities, which had pushed many civilians to enrol in militias during the war (Van Acker & Vlassenroot, 2000), remained salient during the transition. Before the war, most of the Congolese population had faced massive poverty and unemployment. In the east, this situation deteriorated further during the war. Children and teenagers who had grown up during the war had not received proper schooling and thus were not well-prepared for pursuing peaceful and productive activities. Land remained scarce, so young people could not easily acquire fields for farming, and the economic infrastructure was nonexistent. Outside intervention in the east continued to focus on humanitarian issues, and very few development projects were funded in the eastern provinces. In this context, being part of a militia remained the most profitable option.

Militias also remained the only source of social mobility. Individuals and groups – such as the youth and the pygmies – who, because of the war, had attained a status that was previously denied to them, had strong incentives to perpetuate the violent situation that had enabled them to reach a higher social position. Similarly, many Mai Mai chiefs knew that, should peace return to the Congo, they would lose their status as all-powerful, kinglike leaders and become once again mere soldiers – often ill-trained and illiterate. This was one of their main motivations for refusing to be integrated into the army. This persistent violence compounded the danger faced by those perceived as having wronged their neighbours or their communities during the war. It allowed the threat of retaliation to remain the main reason why, two years after the beginning of the transition, many refugees and displaced persons had failed to return to their home villages in the Kivus and North Katanga.7

Local Dimensions of the FDLR Problem

These economic and political issues often motivated local alliances with the Rwandan rebel militias, the FDLR. Given the number of atrocities for which the FDLR is responsible, its leaders’ claims that their troops were often well integrated in the Kivus may have sounded like mere propaganda. However, the FDLR did benefit from the support of many local strongmen.

The Mai Mai, their allies from the war period, often continued to collaborate with the FDLR in both the Kivus during the transition – hiding them, conducting business with them, or enlisting them in their factional fighting against other Mai Mai groups. During the transition, the FDLR even enrolled new allies: soldiers of the Congolese armed forces previously loyal to President Joseph Kabila or to the former rebel leader Jean-Pierre Bemba. A UN official working with the FDLR (interviewed in 2005) reported that these Congolese soldiers were ‘afraid of the FDLR’ and therefore refused to attack them. Because they also were not paid and were poorly disciplined, they were easily bribed by the FDLR into assisting them in taxing and looting the
Congo

In addition to armed forces, local administrative authorities throughout the eastern Congo also collaborated with the FDLR. In the Lubero and Walikale territories (North Kivu), for example, the authorities of the RCD-Kisangani/Liberation Movement largely tolerated the presence of FDLR members, provided they refrained from raping and killing while they looted villages. In South Kivu, there was important collusion and economic ties between FDLR and local authorities. In places like Rutshuru, Lemera, and Kilembwe, Congolese inhabitants reportedly accepted the FDLR living on their territory as long as they refrained from harassment.

The presence of FDLR in the Congo, which usually has been presented as a national or regional problem, was thus very much grounded in local dynamics, which reinforced national and regional interaction. Local alliances were key to perpetuating the FDLR presence on Congolese territory and the violence associated with it. To a high ranking Rally-FDLR official (2005), Rwandan Hutu refugees ‘would not have been able to survive’ without the good relationships they had developed with the local population. FDLR groups were too small and too divided internally; they could not have remained on Congolese territory if they had been required to survive on their own while fighting back all Congolese military forces. On the contrary, support by local armed groups enabled the Rwandan combatants to recruit allies, to fight their opponents, and to hide from the Congolese armed forces (usually former members of the Congolese Rally for Democracy) and UN troops determined to attack them. That local authorities tolerated the FDLR on mining territories also enabled the Rwandan militias to find the economic resources they needed to buy arms and continue fighting.8 Moreover, this local collaboration enhanced the quality of life for the FDLR on Congolese territory and therefore diminished their incentives to peaceably return to Rwanda. Support by local authorities, local forces, and sometimes local populations allowed FDLR forces to live near Congolese villages. In selected places such as Rutshuru, Shabunda, and Kilembwe, this enabled FDLR families to trade goods and services with the surrounding population. In other places, it provided the FDLR with the opportunity to live off the surrounding Congolese population through looting. Kidnappings, rapes, tortures, and massacres accompanied their raids on Congolese villages.

Local Dimensions of the Rwandophone Issue

Contrary to a commonly held belief, the problem of the Rwandophone minority status, which had the potential of jeopardising the regional and national peace settlements, also carried distinctively local stakes. Before the war, the Rwandophone problem was rooted in local conflicts around land and traditional power (Mamdani, 2001; Willame, 1997). During the transition, Rwandophones’ claims on traditional political power – and their associated claims on land – continued to fuel anti-Rwandophone sentiments and to generate violence. Tensions were especially high in provinces where the Rwandophones constituted the largest ethnic group and thus could easily seize local power, such as in Masisi. In South Kivu, Rwandophones were a minority in all territories but their claim of entitlement to traditional representation also met with large resistance. There, the reason was that during the war the rebel movement Congolese Rally for Democracy – Goma had carved up a few territories such as Minembwe where Banyamulenges (Rwandophones native to the South Kivu province) were the majority and could therefore rule the area. During the
transition the Banyamulenges refused to abide by the requests of the ‘indigenous’ communities to return to the pre-war territorial arrangements.

All throughout South Kivu, these political and economic motivations were multiplied exponentially by the departure of Banyamulenges from Uvira and Bukavu in June 2004, after fighting took place there between Rwandophone and troops of the newly unified Congolese Armed Forces. Those who fled vacated the high positions and nice houses they had acquired during the war. ‘Indigenous’ Congolese took over these jobs and houses, refused to restore them to the Banyamulenges who returned in late 2004, and tried to discourage the refugees from coming back and threatening their new wealth and authority. Given these local political and economic stakes, the return of the Banyamulenges who had fled generated many incidents of violence in 2004 and 2005. The most publicised one took place in September 2004 when, after 160 Banyamulenge refugees (mostly women and children) were massacred in a refugee camp in Gatumba (Burundi), reportedly by Congolese militiamen, hundreds of Banyamulenge refugees tried to return to the Congo from Burundi. They were blocked at the border for several days and obliged to stay in the ‘neutral zone’ between the two countries. The first group that succeeded in re-entering the Congo was stoned by an angry mob that reportedly had been organised by local authorities. After that incident, a few Banyamulenges trickled back into South Kivu, but many stayed in Burundi for over a year, afraid to go back.

In sum, during the transition, just as during the war, local violence was motivated not only by top-down causes (regional or national) but also by bottom-up agendas, whose main instigators were villagers, traditional chiefs, community chiefs, or ethnic leaders. The resulting violence was not coordinated on a large scale, but rather it was the product of fragmented, micro-level militias, who tried to advance their own agenda at the village or district level. The following section illuminates the relationships between regional, national, and local dimensions of violence in two eastern provinces.

Interaction between Local, National & Regional Motivations: Understanding the Joint Production of Violence

There was an interaction between the local and the national and regional levels - namely alliances between local actors and national and regional actors. However, throughout the transition, local actors and local agendas became increasingly autonomous and disconnected from the national and regional tracks. In North Kivu, contrary to the commonly held belief, local cleavages remained an important, autonomous source of violence. In North Katanga, local agendas were disconnected from the national and regional tracks and they proved more influential than national and regional issues in generating armed conflict. They led to clashes that neither national nor regional actors could stop, which in turn could have jeopardised the regional and national settlements.

North Kivu: Master Cleavages & Local Alliances

During the transition, North Kivu (see map over) was marred by the combination of tensions among its eight ethnic communities – mostly caused by land and citizenship issues – and by conflicts between the five armed groups present in the province (Democratic Rally for Democracy-Goma or RCD-G, Democratic Rally for
Democracy-Kisangani/Liberation Movement or RCD-K/ML and government forces, Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda or FDLR, Mai Mai, and local defence forces). Most sources have characterised the violence in terms of the master ethnic cleavage (Rwandophones versus other ethnic communities), neatly superimposed and running along the same dividing line as the political cleavage (Kabila versus RCD-G). This reading of the conflict overlooked the key role of local tensions in generating violence.

After large-scale fighting took place around Bukavu in June 2004 and the RCD-G lost control of the South Kivu province, and while the political struggle between Kabila and the RCD-G continued unabated throughout the whole Congo (in particular in Kinshasa), the military conflict between these two enemies continued in one last place: North Kivu. The ‘Petit Nord’ (the southern part of North Kivu) remained the last stronghold of the RCD-G. The former rebel movement maintained absolute control there. The governor (Eugène Seruphuli) and the regional military commander were both RCD-G officials. Up until 2006, rank and files of the Congolese armed forces were not enlisted from each component but instead were exclusively former RCD-G soldiers. They were supported by the three-thousand-strong Local Defence Forces, a predominantly Hutu militia that governor Seruphuli created during the war and that Rwandan forces trained. North Kivu’s financial revenues remained in the province instead of going to the capital, and pro-RCD-G communities continued to hold the economic and social power of the province. As a result, from the Bukavu crisis onward, national politicians – except for those belonging to the RCD-G – thought of North Kivu as the exception: the province least integrated into the transition process and the last holdout, the place Kabila needed to take control of in order to unify the rest of the country. The regional dimension was also present – although less so than during the wars. Rwanda reportedly supported the RCD-G with its financial, military, and political might, and occasionally engaged in fighting against the ethnic Nandes, the Mai Mai, and the rebel Rwandan militias alongside RCD-G troops.

In addition to the soldiers that it progressively managed to send to North Kivu, the Kabila government’s strength in its struggle against the RCD-G in this province came in large part from the allies it had there: the Democratic Rally for Democracy-Kisangani/Liberation Movement or RCD-K/ML, which kept the RCD-G busy on the northern front (along the same front line as during the war); and the Mai Mai, which fought against the RCD-G from within its area of control. Importantly, during the transition both of these allies were anti-RCD-G for provincial and local reasons rather than because of any convictions about the master conflict between Kabila and the RCD-G.

Indeed, since colonisation, North Kivu had progressively seen a strong polarisation between its two most populous ethnic groups, the Banyarwandas (Rwandophones from the North Kivu province) and the Nandes, over the control of the province (Willame, 1997). During the war, the elites of these competing ethnic groups each controlled half of the province and allied themselves with different warring parties – the RCD-K/ML and Kabila for the Nandes, the RCD-G for the Banyarwandas. During the first months of the transition, the antagonism had reached such a point that the Banyarwandas and Nandes suspected each other of harbouring plans to eradicate the other. In May 2004, the province was finally reunified administratively and put under the leadership of Eugene Seruphuli. However, this did not assuage the tensions between Banyarwandas and Nandes. On the contrary, members of non-
Rwandophone ethnic groups living in Goma complained that the RCD-G’s rule had a strong ethnic flavour, and it continued to be associated with Banyarwanda domination. As a result, up until the end of the transition, Nande Mai Mai groups remained extremely active in the ‘Grand Nord’ for fear of a potential Banyarwanda invasion from the south. Despite administrative reunification, the front line between RCD-G and RCD-K/ML forces (allied with Rwanda’s and Kabila’s troops, respectively) remained active. Numerous skirmishes took place there in 2004, 2005, and 2006, and they erupted in a large-scale confrontations around Kanyabayonga in December 2004, Rutshuru in January 2006, and Sake in August 2006.

In addition, Kabila could also count on local tensions between ‘indigenous’ and Rwandophone communities to recruit local allies, both political (as in the Civil Society party) and military (as in the Mai Mai militias) to fight against the RCD-G from within its area of control. In Masisi and Rutshuru, for example, Civil Society representatives and local militias had two reasons for fighting against anything perceived as part of a Rwandophone movement (MONUC, 2004). First, the Hundes and the Nyangas felt that they were the only communities with a rightful claim on traditional (and political) representation. Although the Hutus were the majority population of the Masisi territory and demanded the right to adequate representation at the political and traditional levels, the Hundes and Nyangas saw them as ‘immigrants’ who had arrived during the colonisation or after independence and therefore had no legal claim on traditional power. As explored above, this led to major tensions regarding who could be named chief of a village or a collectivity, such as in the Osso and Bashili collectivities.
Second, Rwandophones (mostly Tutsis) owned about 80 per cent of the land as a result of transactions they had made under Mobutu. However, the Hundes and the Nyangas claimed that the land was traditionally theirs: Mobutu should not have been allowed to sell it because it belonged to traditional authorities. The issue of land ownership was further complicated by the fact that many Tutsis had fled Masisi in the 1990s to escape the ongoing massacres, and either had abandoned their land or sold it at an artificially low price. When they came back after the 1996 and 1998 wars, they found their lands occupied and reportedly took all of it back, by force if necessary, including the land that had been sold legitimately.10

These local antagonisms over political and economic issues were carried onto the military stage, particularly the conflict between the Mai Mai (allied with FDLR) and both the Local Defence Forces militia and the RCD-G. The Mai Mai represented the ‘indigenous’ communities, whereas the RCD-G and Local Defence Forces were accused of siding with the Hutus and the Tutsis. Fighting became more frequent and more violent after the 2004 Bukavu crisis, which generated a complete breakdown of trust between the RCD-G and the Mai Mai. In October 2004, the situation in Masisi became so tense that there was once again a real front line within the province, with both groups committing abuses against people crossing to the other side.

Local agendas regarding traditional power or land, which led to hostilities at the provincial (Nandes versus Rwandophones) and village (Hutus or Tutsis versus other communities) levels, were therefore as influential as national and regional cleavages in generating violence. However, local conflicts were easily reinterpreted in light of the ethnic and political cleavages, and thus North Kivu politics appeared to be dominated by these master cleavages. In contrast, in North Katanga the master cleavages carried very little weight and the local agendas could hardly be interpreted in light of them.

North Katanga: Uncontrolled Militias Rejecting National Control
The continued insecurity in North Katanga (see map below) was indeed attributable mostly to local factors, which were disconnected from the national cleavages. At first glance, it seemed that Kabila had asserted his control over the province. General Dunia, posted at the southern tip of South Kivu, reportedly served to protect Katanga from enemy attacks from the north should Rwandans resume their attack in the Kivus. Kabila had apparently ensured the loyalty of the administrative and military authorities in the region, either by replacing them or by letting them switch sides. In 2004, the Congolese armed forces stationed in the region were supposedly a mixture of former RCD-G soldiers, Mai Mai groups, and governmental forces. However, this alleged governmental control was a fallacy. In reality, state authority was absent from North Katanga. Even if the security situation there showed a tremendous improvement compared to the war period, many areas in the territory remained plagued by micro-local, uncontrolled armed groups (mostly former Mai Mai), who spent most of their time harassing the civilian population and fighting against the FARDC or among themselves.

During the transition, a rupture indeed appeared between the North Katanga Mai Mai and the Transitional Government. Katangan Mai Mai thought that they had not been adequately rewarded for having saved Lubumbashi, the capital of the Katanga province and the second largest city of the Congo, from the RCD-G and Rwandan troops during the war. In addition, Mai Mai members of the Transitional Government came from the Kivus and Maniema, so Katangan Mai Mai did not feel
either represented by them or bound by the agreements they signed (including the agreement to integrate Mai Mai troops into the Congolese armed forces). The Mai Mai demand for integration in the Congolese armed forces was therefore far less in Katanga than in the Kivus. The problem was further compounded by the reluctance of Kabila’s component to integrate the Mai Mai groups active on the government side of the frontline during the war into the Congolese armed forces. To Kabila’s followers, these Mai Mai groups had fought government forces instead of the foreign invaders; they were therefore enemies.\(^{11}\)

The top military commanders of the Congolese armed forces first tried to convince the Mai Mai to join the unified army, but they had limited success. Thus they changed strategy in late 2004 and organised military operations in many Katangan territories against the remaining un-integrated forces. It led to additional skirmishes and their associated cortege of insecurity and violation of human rights. It also heightened the fallout between the Mai Mai and the Congolese armed forces. The consequences were two-fold. First, in late 2004 and 2005, journalists and humanitarian workers reported constant fighting between the Congolese armed forces and Katangan Mai Mai, notably around Mitwaba, Kongolo, and Malemba Nkulu. Second, state authority totally collapsed in North Katanga, which enhanced the impunity for human rights violations and illegal actions, and therefore further facilitated violence by all armed groups.

In addition to the tensions between the Mai Mai and the Congolese armed forces, frequent fighting took place among the Mai Mai militias over a combination of political, economic, and ethnic antagonisms. At the territory, or village level, Mai Mai groups strived to maintain their power over their former areas of control in order to dominate the administrative and traditional powers, manage mineral-rich areas, divert taxes, and impose all kinds of fines on the population. These political and economic agendas interacted with numerous ethnic tensions: hatred of pygmies and ‘Kasaian’ groups remained widespread while, in each district, the amount of other clan, tribal, or ethnic rivalries continued to simmer away. Unconfirmed information also held that provincial and national actors enhanced these local antagonisms. The result was that fighting among Mai Mai militias and abuses against the local population reached such a point that, near Mitwaba, a new ‘popular self defence force’ was created in order to protect villagers against the Mai Mai – which was ironic because, initially, the Mai Mai militias were born as popular self defence forces tasked with protecting their villages.

During the transition, local agendas were therefore the prime causes of continued violence in North Katanga. National cleavages had very little influence: RCD-G military and administrative authorities had either disappeared or switched sides, and there were no Rwandophones to harass. Regional cleavages were similarly non-influential because foreign armed groups had left the province. The only form of outside influence on North Katanga was an alleged control or manipulation of Mai Mai groups by Kabila and his advisors. Several UN and diplomatic interviewees claimed that Kabila’s advisors manipulated local antagonisms in order to pit Mai Mai groups against one another, but they could not articulate clearly the advisor’s motivations for this manipulation. Katangans usually identified the desire to benefit from the illegal exploitation of resources as the main cause for national involvement in their province. However, none of my interviewees could provide any concrete evidence to support their claims.
Conclusion

My analysis suggests that peace builders involved in the Congolese transition should have addressed local violence for two main reasons. First, the humanitarian cost of local antagonisms that turned violent was staggering. Second, the neglect of local issues could lead only to incomplete and unsustainable peace settlements.

Local manifestations of violence, although often related to national or regional struggles, were also precipitated by distinctively local problems. These included conflict over land, mineral resources, traditional power, local taxes, and the relative social status of specific groups and individuals. Even issues usually presented as regional questions (such as the FDLR problem) or national ones (such as ethnic tensions with Congolese Rwandophones) had significant local components, which fuelled and reinforced the regional and national dimensions.

Local, national, and regional dimensions of violence remained closely interlinked in most of the eastern Congo. Local agendas provided national and regional actors with local allies, who were crucial in maintaining military control, continuing resource exploitation, and persecuting political or ethnic enemies. Local tensions could also jeopardise the national and regional reconciliation: for example, by motivating violence against the Rwandophone minority or allowing a strong FDLR presence in the Kivus. In addition, during the transition, some local conflicts became autonomous from the national and regional tracks, most notably in South Kivu and North Katanga. There, local disputes over political power, economic resources (especially land and mining sites), and social status led to clashes that no national or regional actors could stop. Thus, addressing local issues was key to ending violence and to ensuring the stability of the national and regional settlements. Peace building action was required not only at the national and regional level but also locally.

Concretely, international actors could include local conflict in peace processes by slightly modifying their usual approach to peace building. In all war and post-war contexts, policy-makers should commission applied research to illuminate both the distinctive local dynamics of violence and the local underpinnings of national (and potentially international) tensions. Based on this analysis, international actors should step up their interventions on local conflict in two different but complementary ways. First, donors should increase the funding available for international and local non-governmental organisations specialised in local conflict resolution, either by modifying their assistance priorities or by increasing their aid budgets. To ensure that the additional money funds efficient conflict-resolution programs, donors should build up structures that can identify reliable local peace builders in the provinces as well as in the capital. Second, whenever civil society actors are ill-equipped to address the local tensions (such as when violence is caused by military antagonisms), international political and military actors should step in. The intervention of diplomats and political or military UN staff in local conflict would, on the one hand, deter local warlords and, on the other hand, signal to these warlords a possibility for assistance – and therefore increase the estimated peace dividends.

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**Endnotes**

1. In this article, I use FDLR to refer to all Hutu refugees based in the eastern Congo, including the few not associated with the FDLR movement.


3. Author’s interview with Azile Tanzi, head of mission of *Campagne Pour la Paix*, Goma, 2005.

4. Author’s interview with Jean-Charles Dupin, Humanitarian Advisor for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Bukavu, 2005.

5. Author’s interview with Professor Séverin Mugangu Matabaro, Universite Catholique de Bukavu, 2006.


7. Author’s interview with Vatn, 2005.

8. The incentive to stay in the Congo was all the stronger because the dictatorial nature of the Kigali regime and its harsh treatment of political opponents gave Rwandan Hutu refugees in the Congo little hope for livable conditions in Rwanda. It was further reinforced by the harsh discipline implemented by FDLR top commanders, who would lose the basis of their power if FDLR combatants and civilians left the Congo; many leaders intimidated and sometimes killed the potential deserters they had identified in their ranks.

9. Author’s interview with Tanzi, 2005.

10. Author’s interview with Tanzi, 2005.

11. Author’s interview with Nawezi Karl, University of Kinshasa, October 2004.

**Bibliography**


**Glossary**

**Banyamulenge**: Congolese of Rwandan ancestry living in South Kivu.

**Banyarwanda**: Congolese of Rwandan ancestry living in North Kivu.

**FARDC**: *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo*/Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (integrated national army during the transition).

**FDLR**: *Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda*/Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (Rwandan rebel group composed mostly of ethnic Hutus based in the eastern Congo).

**Kabila, Joseph**: Son of late president Laurent-Désiré Kabila. President of the Congo since 2001.

**Mai Mai**: Local militias formed on ethnic basis throughout the eastern Congo.


**RCD-G**: *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie – Goma*/Congolese Rally for Democracy – Goma (main rebel group during the 1998 war, controlled most of the eastern Congo. Transformed into political party during the transition).

**RCD-K/ML**: *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie – Kisangani / Mouvement de Libération – Congolese Rally for Democracy – Kisangani / Liberation Movement* (small rebel group during the 1998 war, controlled part of North Kivu. Transformed into political party during the transition).

**Rwandophones**: Kinyarwanda-speaking people. In the Congolese context, term used to refer to the Congolese of Rwandan ancestry (both Hutus and Tutsis).

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**SPECIAL ISSUE**

State Failure in the Congo

*by Theodore Trefon, Saskia Van Hoyweghen, & Stefaan Smis (guest editors)*

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The Print Media in South Africa: Paving the Way for ‘Privatisation’

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Since the end of apartheid, national and local governments in South Africa have been involved in the commercialisation and marketisation of a wide range of public services. This article examines the responses of the mainstream media to these neo-liberal initiatives, looking specifically at English-language newspapers and their coverage of water, electricity and waste management services. We explore the extent to which the print media can be deemed to be in favour of privatisation as well as the more subtle, discursive ways in which it covers these issues. We argue that these corporate media outlets in South Africa generate and perpetuate a neo-liberal discourse on privatisation, but that this dialogue is neither omnipotent nor monolithic. Nevertheless, it is exactly this façade of objectivity which gives neo-liberalism its hegemony. By appearing to give equal space to different points of view there is a perception of balance in the press that obscures the more subtle, opinion-making discourses that generate neo-liberal biases. We conclude with a brief discussion of what might be done to counter this neo-liberal authority.

The ‘privatisation’ of municipal services has been a flash point for public policy debates around the world. From New York to Buenos Aires there have been loud and often heated disagreements about the merits and demerits of private sector involvement in essential services such as water and electricity. This is true of South Africa as well, where governments at all levels have been transforming the nature and scale of public ownership and public management.

Although the trend began in the late 1980s under the neo-apartheid National Party government, it was not until the election of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994 – and the solidification of the ANC’s electoral base with local government elections in 1995/6 – that the push to privatise services began in earnest. So thorough has this shift been that even the Free Market Foundation of South Africa can claim – with obvious delight – that the ‘privatisation of state-owned assets [has been] a guiding economic principle of South Africa’s first democratically elected government’ (Spindler, 2004:1).

Strictly speaking, however, there has been relatively little outright privatisation in South Africa (and hence our use of quotation marks around the word). Although some state entities have been sold in whole or in part to private investors (e.g. Telkom) most private sector involvement in state services in South Africa has been in the form of public-private partnerships (PPPs).
With PPPs, the state typically owns the service assets (e.g. a water treatment plant) but the service may be managed and operated in whole or in part by a private company. Some PPPs involve small firms on short-term contracts (e.g. meter reading) while others may involve large multinationals responsible for all aspects of a service operation for more than 20 years. But regardless of size, PPPs have served to dramatically transform the philosophy and day-to-day operation of service delivery in South Africa. As a result, PPPs are often referred to as a form of privatisation in the critical literature on the subject because of the transfer of decision making and accountability from public to private hands (Barlow & Clarke, 2002; McDonald & Ruiters, 2005a; TNI, 2006).

Also of interest here are the creation of stand-alone ‘business units’ in South Africa – service entities that are wholly owned and operated by the state but which are set up at arm’s length from municipal or national governments and expected to operate like a private company in terms of investment decisions and the recovery of operating costs (if not profits). This ‘corporatisation’ of services (strongest in water, waste management and electricity in South Africa) is not privatisation in the strict sense of the word either, but the results can be similar in terms of access to services for the poor and uneven patterns of investment and service quality (Shirley, 1999; McDonald & Pape, 2002; Smith, 2003).

In some circles in South Africa this privatisation and corporatisation of services has been met with much enthusiasm. The private sector itself has been supportive of these initiatives (with many large multinational service firms having established offices in the country) as have neo-liberal NGOs and research bodies (such as the Centre for Development and Enterprise). Funding agencies such as the World Bank and USAID have been active proponents as has the South African state which put considerable efforts into promoting privatisation and corporatisation via official websites, public information sessions, and advertisements in newspapers.

This support for ‘privatisation’ – in its various manifestations – forms part of a larger trend towards neo-liberal policy making in South Africa. While not uncontested in the country, there is a large and growing scholarship which argues that the South African state has become increasingly neo-liberal in its orientation and that this neo-liberal ideology has become increasingly hegemonic (Bond, 2000a, 2000b; Marais, 2000; Hart, 2002; Narsiah, 2002; Desai, 2003; McDonald, 2007).

But neo-liberalism in general, and privatisation in particular, has also met with much resistance in South Africa. The country’s largest umbrella labour organisation – the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) – has organised anti-privatisation strikes and marches involving several million workers. There has also been a mushrooming of community groups and non-governmental organisations opposed to privatisation (e.g. the Anti-Privatisation Forum, Anti-Eviction Campaign) as well as academics debating the matter.

Where has the South African press stood on the matter? In this article we look at the English-language print media over a four and a half year period, from May 2000 to October 2004 – a particularly intense time of debate over privatisation in the country and a period for which we had access to a comprehensive database of print media reporting. The focus of our study is the four core municipal services of water, electricity, sanitation and waste management, but the results have implications for privatisation initiatives in other sectors as well.
Our analysis involves a large database of newspaper articles, opinion pieces and letters-to-the-editor about these core services to determine the extent to which the print media could be deemed to be in favour of, or opposed to privatisation (as we have broadly defined it). We are also interested in the quality of this newspaper coverage (i.e. how informative and analytical it is), in part because of the confusion that sometimes appears in the press about what exactly constitutes privatisation. Also included is an examination of the more subtle, discursive aspects of this media coverage in order to comment on the potential impacts that the South African press may have had on popular perceptions around the privatisation of municipal services as well as on policy making. For this we develop a conceptual framework on hegemony, looking at the discursive tools employed by the media to construct and/or strengthen dominant ideologies.

Our position is not a simple one. Although we argue that the oligopolistic corporate media in South Africa generates and perpetuates a neo-liberal discourse on privatisation, severely constraining the possibilities for alternative opinions to be heard or policies to be developed, this discourse is neither omnipotent nor monolithic. In fact, at first glance there would appear to be a relatively balanced coverage of privatisation debates in the South African English-language press, with an almost equal number of pro- and anti-privatisation articles in our sample, and many that attempt to provide ‘both sides’ of the argument. Alternative voices are heard and there are journalists and editors within the mainstream South African press that are sympathetic to anti-privatisation positions, if not in agreement.

But it is exactly this façade of balance, we argue, which gives neo-liberalism such hegemony in South Africa. By appearing to give equal space to different points of view there is a perception of ‘freedom of expression’ and ‘balanced reporting’ which obscures the more subtle, opinion-making discourses that generate biases in press coverage on this issue.

We begin our analysis with a brief conceptual overview of hegemony and the media in order to situate ourselves within this broad interpretive framework. This is followed by a description of our sample, the methodological techniques employed in our analysis, and their outcomes. We conclude with a brief discussion of how print media coverage may have affected popular and official discourse and policy making on privatisation in South Africa and what might be done to counter this neo-liberal hegemony.

### Hegemony & Mass Media in South Africa

Marxist scholars have long argued that the media plays a key role in shaping public opinion in favour of the interests of capital (Althusser, 1971; Murdock & Golding, 1977; Hall, 1982; Murdock, 1982; Fairclough, 1989, 2001; Ferguson & Golding, 1997). Although Marx himself did not develop a detailed analysis of the processes and power relations that contribute to this dynamic, the following quote from *The German Ideology* (1968:21) is often cited in studies of mass communications:

> The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.

This is not to suggest a deterministic view of the role that class plays in influencing the media. As Murdock and Golding (1977:19) note:
At one level we can look at the ownership structure of the media, controlled as it is in most countries today – South Africa included – by a handful of corporations with the same general interests as other fractions of capital in securing the conditions for rapid market growth through neo-liberal policy reforms such as liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation. In this respect, media operates like any other capitalist enterprise, seeking ways to improve its profit potential through expansion and cost-cutting and applying pressures on states for particular political and economic reforms (Murdock, 1982; Herman & McChesney, 1997).

The media is also a vehicle for capital in general in promoting itself (i.e. through advertising). Since advertising is typically the largest source of revenue for print and electronic media companies, it is in the interests of these media firms to create an ideological medium conducive to market-oriented growth. The latter can be done in part by ensuring market-friendly content within which advertisers would want to promote their products and services. Editors and journalists who share this market ideology are more likely to be hired and to have their material published, and the same can be said of opinion editorials (op-eds) and letters-to-the-editor – what Herman and Chomsky (1988) refer to as a form of ideological ‘gatekeeping’.

But on its own this is still an inadequate and overly deterministic account of the media and ideology. Most large media outlets operate in more subtle ways. As Murdock and Golding (1977:22) point out, the production of ideology is not purely economistic, arguing that ‘[Marx] used the notion of determination and conditioning not in the narrow sense but in a much looser sense of setting limits, exerting pressures and closing off options.’

Gramsci described this process as one of constructing rule by consent whereby capitalist classes, and those who benefit indirectly from their success, establish hegemony through the world of ideas rather than through (mere) force, creating a stronger and more stable form of rule. As Fairclough (2001:34) explains it:

> There are … in gross terms two ways in which those who have power can exercise it and keep it: through coercing others to go along with them, with the ultimate sanctions of physical violence or death; or through winning others’ consent to, or at least acquiescence in, their possession and exercise of power. In short, through coercion or consent. The state includes repressive forces which can be used to coerce if necessary, but any ruling class finds it less costly and less risky to rule if possible by consent. Ideology is the key mechanism of rule by consent, and because it is the favoured vehicle of ideology, discourse is of considerable social significance in this connection.

Peet (2001:57), in his analysis of neo-liberal hegemony in post-apartheid South Africa, points to the media as part of a cluster of institutions that ‘organise discursive flows’ and give ‘legitimacy’ to ideas. Other ‘centres of persuasion’ include universities, funding agencies, business federations, government departments, think tanks and private companies – what Peet refers to collectively as the ‘Academic-Institutional-Media (AIM) complex’. These institutions, according to Peet, have been ‘captured’ by neo-liberalism in South Africa, disseminating a consistent set of ideas shaped around a particular policy agenda. There are, argues Peet (2001:59), ‘competing tendencies within [this] AIM complex’,1 and counter
hegemonic voices from outside it, but the end result is a David and Goliath battle of ideas, with research reports, conferences, policy papers, academic publications, donor funding and media coverage all being overwhelmingly neo-liberal in its orientation, serving to narrow (even crush) the potential for alternative ideas and discourses. The public impression of this debate, however, is one of objectivity, professionalism and a level playing field – a myth perpetuated by the dominant voices themselves. It is these complex, mediated and non-coercive spaces of public discourse that we want to unpack in this article.

Research Methods
Our discussion is based on a review of 647 news articles, op-eds and letters-to-the-editor taken from 34 English-language South African newspapers and wire services from May 2000 to October 2004 (see Appendix A for a list of all of the print media sources). The majority of these items were articles written by staff journalists (86% of the total), but there were a significant number of op-eds (9%), editorials (2%) and letters-to-the-editor (3%).

The sample was collated from an online database of print media collected by the Municipal Services Project (MSP) through a weekly search of websites of all major English-language newspapers and wire services (such as the South African Press Agency) as well as government websites which carry relevant press clippings (such as the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry). In some cases, this data was supplemented by articles from hard copies of major newspapers. All of the articles in the sample were explicitly related to the privatisation and corporatisation of municipal services in South Africa as they related to four core municipal services (water, electricity, sanitation and waste removal).

The sample provides a broad chronological representation of one of the most important and controversial periods of privatisation and commercialisation in South Africa. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the articles are spread throughout the review period, with spikes in coverage coinciding with pertinent events such as local government elections in December 2000, anti-privatisation strikes organised by Cosatu in August 2001 and October 2002, and various flare-ups in community resistance to service cutoffs and evictions in 2003 and 2004. The sample therefore provides good coverage of key public policy debates on the commercialisation of services.

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**Figure 1: Number of News Items on Subject of Privatisation**
May 2000 - October 2004

![Graph showing number of news items on the subject of privatisation from May 2000 to October 2004.](image-url)
There are, however, a few methodological limitations to our analysis. The first is that we confined our study to the text of articles, omitting photographs and other potentially important opinion-shaping representations. Second, millions of South Africans are functionally illiterate and may not, as a result, be affected by newspaper reportage, but the print media remains an influential source of news for policy makers in the country and impacts on other forms of media such as television and radio (Harber, 2002; Jacobs, 2004). Third, while English papers are the most dominant there are important isiZulu, Sesotho, Afrikaans and other African-language newspapers that help to shape public opinion. However, English is the lingua franca of political discourse in the country and with the advent of on-line newspapers the sphere of influence of the English-language press is only likely to grow in the future.

**Pro- vs. Anti-Privatisation Articles**

All 647 articles in our sample were reviewed and subjected to two interrelated content evaluations. The first was an assessment of each article’s pro- or anti-privatisation position, ranked on a scale of -5 (strongly anti-privatisation) to +5 (strongly pro-privatisation). Pro-privatisation articles were characterised by statements, quotes, and/or information that promoted the agenda of corporatisation and/or privatisation. This included the promotion of all forms of private sector involvement in service delivery (e.g., outsourcing, management contracts, outright divestiture) as well as corporatised restructuring and the promotion of full cost recovery on services. Anti-privatisation articles, by contrast, were those that were largely critical of privatisation and corporatisation (to varying degrees). If an article gave equal/balanced coverage to both sides of the debate it was rated as neutral and given a score of 0.

**Figure 2: Pro vs. Anti-privatisation New Items (by news agency) May 2000 - October 2004**

![Figure 2: Pro vs. Anti-privatisation New Items](chart.png)
In total, 41% of the sample was classified as pro-privatisation, 38% as anti-privatisation, and 21% as neutral. A breakdown by news agency showed some interesting variations, however, with Business Day printing by far the largest number of pro-privatisation pieces (102) and having the largest proportion of their coverage classified as pro-privatisation (62%) (see Figure 2 for data on news agencies with at least 10 articles in the sample). Other newspapers were more balanced in their coverage (e.g. the Sunday Times – the most widely read newspaper in the country – with an equal number of pro- and anti-privatisation articles). In a few cases the balance was tipped in favour of anti-privatisation coverage (e.g. the weekly Mail & Guardian where 54% of articles were assessed as anti-privatisation to some degree).

**Analytical vs. Unanalytical Articles**

Articles were then evaluated according to their degree of analysis (with -5 representing ‘very unanalytical’ and +5 representing ‘very analytical’, with gradations in between). An unanalytical article is one that would, for example, make a statement on the merits (or demerits) of privatisation without explaining what the author meant by ‘privatisation’ or how these arguments can play themselves out in practice. An analytical article, by contrast, would describe the particular form(s) of privatisation being discussed, the pros and cons of different forms of privatisation (or the similarities between them), and perhaps offer evidence to illustrate these points.

This supplementary analysis was added to our investigation exactly because so many writers did not clarify what they meant by privatisation or adequately explain the similarities/differences between its different variants. While recognising the difficulties of providing lengthy discussions of a complex subject matter, it was nonetheless possible to discern articles that made little or no effort to explain difficult or contentious topics and those that were able to provide some useful conceptual information and/or practical reference points.

In this supplementary analysis we begin to see a much less balanced picture of reportage, with more than two-thirds (69%) of the articles in our sample considered unanalytical and only 21% being considered analytical (with 10% being given a middle/neutral rating of 0). Figure 3 (over) provides an illustration of this assessment, sorted by news agencies with at least 10 articles in the sample.

The newspaper with the largest number of unanalytical pieces was Business Day, with 100 of its 164 articles (61%) falling into this category. The Mail & Guardian was the opposite with 46 of 68 pieces being characterised as analytical (63%) (the only newspaper in our sample to have a majority of its articles being classified this way).

This lack of analysis may be a reflection of a ‘dumbing down’ of journalism in South Africa – a phenomenon that Duncan (2003:8) blames on the low wages of journalists, but which has been raised in more general terms by others (de Beer & Steyn, 2002; Steyn & de Beer, 2004). It may also reflect an ingrained ideological bias amongst journalists and editors towards the marketisation of municipal services and a related willingness to allow unproblematised assumptions and positions on the topic to be published.

This latter point is demonstrated, in part, by the fact that there was a much larger proportion of pro-privatisation articles that were unanalytical than there were anti-privatisation articles. In other words, articles in favour of privatisation were much
more likely to make unsubstantiated assumptions about the benefits of marketisation than anti-privatisation articles were to make unsubstantiated arguments about the negative aspects of marketisation. Pro-privatisation articles would, for example, speak to the ‘successes’ of a privatised venture but fail to mention any problems associated with it. Others would acknowledge past or potential problems but still argue that ‘there is no alternative’, leaving the reader with a very constrained understanding of the range of debates on the matter.

Anti-privatisation articles, op-eds and letters were not immune to this kind of unanalytical writing, sometimes spouting crude anti-privatisation rhetoric and offering little in the way of quantitative or qualitative scrutiny or comparative insight. For the most part, however, anti-privatisation pieces tended to be more substantive and reflective than their pro-privatisation counterparts. Not all of these ‘analytical’ pieces would be considered good journalism – there were often confused and problematic lines of argument – but the effort to provide context and analysis was much more evident and more consistent in the anti-privatisation cluster.

The higher quality of writing from those opposed to privatisation may be due to the fact that many of these articles were written by people not affiliated with a newspaper and who may have had the time and expertise to construct a more detailed, reflective article. The demands of the newsroom do not always allow for the degree of analysis one would like and we must be careful, therefore, not to be unfairly critical of busy, multi-tasking journalists and editors for not providing the same depth of analysis as a person writing a one-off letter or opinion piece.

Figure 3: Analytical vs. Unanalytical News Items
news agency) May 2000 - October 2004

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This line of argument does not, however, explain the fact that many of the pro-privatisation op-eds that we reviewed also lacked analytical rigour, falling into the same superficial and assumption-driven patterns as staff journalists. Not all pro-privatisation opinion pieces and letters-to-the-editor fell into this category—some of the most sophisticated writing in our sample came from academics, government officials and think tanks in favour of privatisation—but the majority of pro-privatisation articles fell into the unanalytical category, further illustrating the argument that ideas which fall within a dominant ideology may come in for less meticulous scrutiny in the English-language press.

**Media Frames**

We move now to the more discursive aspects of our review, beginning with an assessment of ‘media frames’, in an attempt to identify and assess the most dominant ideological concepts and arguments employed in the articles. Gamson and Modigliani (1989:3) define a media frame as ‘a central organizing idea, or frame, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue’. Similarly, Entman (1993:52) describes frames as a way to ‘select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation’.

Some media frames are intentional and explicitly stated, but often they are implicit, inadvertently capturing a particular world view. According to Gitlin (cited in Feree et al. 2002:14): ‘Frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organise the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports’. When writers and editors select ideas and phrases to construct a story line, they are often buying in to a much wider world view which they may or may not believe in or understand themselves but which can convey powerful ideological messages.

We identified a total of 17 frames in our sample (nine of which fell into the pro-privatisation camp and eight of which fell into the anti-privatisation camp), with a total of 1037 instances of these frames appearing in the sample (see Table 1 over). An initial list of 15 frames containing certain arguments for and against privatisation were identified after a preliminary reading of articles. As articles were analysed, any new frames that appeared were added to the list. The final list of 17 frames included two additional frames, ‘I’ and ‘L’ below. All frames within the articles fell into these 17 categories.

All of the articles in our sample had at least one clearly discernable frame, and many had two (hence the total of 1037). Those with more than one frame tended to be either pro- or anti-privatisation, but some articles had pro- and anti-privatisation frames (another indication, perhaps, of the somewhat confused and largely unanalytical nature of journalism on this topic in South Africa). There were 522 instances of pro-privatisation frames and 515 instances of anti-privatisation frames in the sample.

On the pro-privatisation side, the most frequent frame was ‘A’ (‘there is no alternative to privatisation’). At 220 occurrences it dominated the pro-privatisation discourse and was the most frequent frame of the entire sample. Frame A is also the most ideologically loaded and inflexible of the frame concepts. The argument, essentially, is that the public sector is inherently corrupt and inefficient and that there is no point in exploring alternatives that do not involve the private sector or private sector operating principles.
Table 1: Media Frames Related to Privatisation: May 2000 – October 2004

**Pro-privatisation Frames**

**A** State-run services are inherently weak, unaccountable, corrupt, bankrupt and inefficient. There is ‘no alternative’ but to corporatise/privatise since the private sector brings efficiency and financial viability.

**B** Privatisation is ‘pro-poor’ because it ensures better delivery for the needy by being more efficient, more accountable to the poor, and by providing the necessary capital for infrastructure investments and upgrades (capital that the public sector does not have).

**C** Privatisation and corporatisation attract foreign investment, which helps the South African economy grow, thereby creating more jobs.

**E** Making people pay for their services will help conserve scarce resources and help ‘consumers’ to see the ‘true’ economic value of the services they receive.

**G** State-owned monopolies on service provision place risks in hand of taxpayers. It is better to shift that risk to the private sector.

**H** People who criticise privatisation use incorrect information, manipulate the public, are trying to undermine the state/ANC and are out-of-step with the majority of South Africans. Included in this frame are anti-striking messages (e.g. that most workers are not behind the anti-privatisation strikes, that strikes are purely political, that unions refuse to engage meaningfully with government on these issues, and that they are undermining public services and the economy as a whole).

**I** Government is privatising, but cares about and/or is working towards addressing the needs of South Africans living in poverty, including workers.

**J** There are problems with privatisation, but they can be managed.

**L** There is no need to worry because the government is not ‘privatising’; rather, it is establishing state-owned companies, facilitating public-private partnerships, outsourcing, and restructuring.

**Anti-privatisation Frames**

**N** Privatisation leads to corruption.

**O** Communities are frustrated by privatisation-related policies and are resisting. There is a groundswell of resistance to privatisation and corporatisation.

**P** Essential services such as water, sanitation, electricity, and waste removal are human rights and should be provided by the public sector with a focus on ensuring the service is provided rather than a focus on profit and cost recovery. Included in this frame is the argument that these services are Constitutional rights and that some privatisation and corporatisation initiatives are unconstitutional.

**R** Under privatisation and corporatisation, service providers become less responsive to the needs of the poor because the focus shifts to cost recovery and profit, resulting in service cutoffs, limitations, evictions, and property seizure. Related to this frame are associated health impacts.

**S** Under privatisation/corporatisation workers suffer through job losses and lower pay/benefits. Top executives, by contrast, see huge increases in salaries and benefits.

**W** When services are outsourced or privatised the public has much less control over service provision as accountability shifts from elected officials to company management and shareholders. Included in this frame is the argument that resources such as water and electricity are public goods and should remain in public hands and be delivered by the public sector.

**X** The implementation of aggressive cost recovery under corporatisation and privatisation has exacerbated the extreme inequities inherited from the apartheid system (the rich get richer and the poor get poorer).

**Y** International financial institutions, governments, and multinational corporations pressure governments all over the world through loans, aid, and debt relief to privatize and attract foreign investment. Included in this frame is the argument that privatisation facilitates an economic relationship that is another form of colonialism.
It is difficult to say with certainty what impact this line of argument might have on South African newspaper readers, but given the frequency with which this frame appeared, and the 'neutrality' that might be ascribed to it (given that in most instances this frame was delivered by regular journalists and not by opinion writers), it could be a major contributor to a public perception that privatisation is 'common sense'.

The other three most common pro-privatisation frames are also revealing. Frame B ('privatisation is 'pro-poor' because it leads to better service delivery') appeared 73 different times, and fits with the ANC's (and the World Bank's) position that commercialisation is being done in the interests of the poor. This is a direct counter attack to the anti-privatisation argument that privatisation is being done in the interests of capital and elites, and has come to dominate official government discourse on all service delivery reforms – at all levels of government – and has crept into the neo-liberal academic literature as well (see for example SACN, 2004). In some respects this is a sign that the dominant discourse has felt pressure from competing discourses, changing its language to deflect anti-poor criticisms. Fairclough (1989) calls this 'creative restructuring' of language.

Frame C ('privatisation attracts foreign investment and is good for the economy and jobs') occurred 58 times in the sample and can be seen as another attempt to directly counter anti-privatisation critics who have argued that private capital is not interested in job creation and that privatisation results in net job losses. Here we see a commitment to the official government line that commercialisation is good for the South African economy, combined with a faith in the ability of the private sector to produce jobs.

Frame H ('people who criticise privatisation use incorrect information, manipulate the public and are out-of-step with the majority of South Africans') appeared 61 times. With this frame we see an attempt to discredit the intellectual skills and personal integrity of anti-privatisation critics and to make these groups and individuals appear anti-ANC; even unpatriotic. While not an entirely unexpected or unique debating tactic for a controversial public policy matter such as this, the use of this frame was frequently mean-spirited in its tone (even from 'objective' staff journalists), making for remarkably heated attacks on anti-privatisation critics while contributing little to the substantive questions at hand. The targets of these attacks included union officials, community-based organisations, academics and NGOs, with 'ultra-leftist' being one of the most popular ways to attempt to discredit a person or organisation (other terms include 'infantile leftists', 'self-styled leaders' and 'short-minded individuals').

Some writers even portrayed anti-privatisation groups and individuals as immoral and unlawful and as intentionally misrepresenting facts. Much of the source of this language was from government officials, with journalists unquestioningly reproducing highly controversial statements of a personal/ideological nature without questioning their validity or providing context. One example is the following remarks made by the former Minister of Public Enterprises, Jeff Radebe, in 2001, widely reproduced verbatim in the press:

*The so-called Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee has become part of this criminal culture [of challenging privatisation by not paying for services]. Its campaign has resulted in the destruction of Eskom’s assets [the parastatal electricity provider] ... The representatives of [this group] have proven that they will do anything, including telling lies to the community,*
order to realise its political ends. Such people cannot be regarded as the genuine representatives of our people.\footnote{\textsuperscript{5}}

Anti-privatisation articles were not immune from these kinds of \textit{ad hominem} attacks, but they tended, on the whole, to be more focused on substantive issues. The most common anti-privatisation frame was R (‘the private sector is less responsive to the needs of low-income people’), with 216 occurrences. This was followed by frame S (‘workers suffer through job losses, lower pay and fewer benefits’) which occurred 162 times, and P (‘essential services are human/Constitutional rights and should be provided by the public sector’) which occurred 35 times. These anti-privatisation frames were most common in op-eds and letters-to-the-editor, raising the question once again as to how they would be interpreted by readers and whether they would be seen as less ‘objective’ than articles by staff journalists (though there were sophisticated anti-privatisation frames employed by staff journalists as well).

It is also useful to note how these frames appeared chronologically in relation to key privatisation events (such as the Cosatu-organised anti-privatisation strikes in August 2001 and October 2002). Figure 4 illustrates a timeline for the most common pro- and anti-privatisation frames (A, B, R and S). From this timeline it is evident that particular media frames were employed around specific events, with Frame S appearing to be the most incident-sensitive (another indication of the opinion-based character of much of the anti-privatisation writing). The pro-privatisation frames peaked around these events as well, but frame A (‘there is no alternative’) appeared consistently throughout the period under study, with the most sustained impact on newspaper readers and public opinion.

**Critical Language Study**

Our final look at the data provides the most abstract, but potentially most important, insight into media coverage of privatisation. Here we look at the actual terminology employed in the media frames to further illustrate the deep ideological bias that permeates pro-privatisation journalism on the subject.
We have adopted a method of discourse analysis outlined by Fairclough (1989), in which he argues that language is used strategically – though not always intentionally – to compete for ideological position, and as a tool to exert power over others. For Fairclough (1989:32), this is a struggle between classes that manifests itself – in part – as discourse, with mass media being a key terrain: ‘The way in which orders of discourse are structured, and the ideologies which they embody, are determined by relationships of power in particular social institutions, and in society as a whole. We therefore need to be sensitive in critical language analysis to properties of the society and institutions we are concerned with’. The objective of this analysis is to examine words and grammatical choices for their expressive, experiential, and relational values. Fairclough (1989:112) describes these different values as follows: Experiential – ‘a trace of and a cue to the way in which the text producer’s experience of the natural or social world is represented’; Relational – ‘a trace of and a cue to the social relationships which are enacted via the text in the discourse’; and Expressive – values dealing with ‘subjects and social identities’.

When analysing a text’s vocabulary for experiential values, one looks for the ‘classification schemes’ that reflect a particular discourse (e.g., privatisation, efficiency, financial viability, cost recovery are all part of classification schemes common to neo-liberalism). In addition, ‘rewording’, ‘overwording’, ‘ideologically contested words’, and ‘ideologically significant meaning relations’ are also possible clues to the way discourses manifest within a text (Fairclough, 1989:110-113).

When analysing a text’s vocabulary for relational value, analysts look for euphemisms and any ‘markedly formal or informal words’. In examining a vocabulary for expressive values, particular attention should be paid to what the author might be trying to express by choosing one particular word instead of other word options. It is important here to look for metaphors and their ideological significance (Fairclough, 1989:116-120).

Grammar must also be scrutinised for experiential, relational, and expressive values. Fairclough suggests that we identify which types of process and participants predominate, whether or not agency is clear, and whether or not sentences are active or passive. For example, an article might say, ‘The municipality cut off water to residents of this township,’ or it might say, ‘Water was cut off to residents of this township.’ In the latter, agency is unclear, leaving the reader without an explicit understanding of who was responsible for the cutoffs.

We applied all of these methodological tools in a detailed analysis of a sub-sample of our data set (30% of the articles), helping us uncover subtle (and not so subtle) attempts to present privatisation initiatives in their best possible light, to make public sector options appear inherently flawed, and to villainise opponents of privatisation.

To illustrate these points we have selected a few examples from our sample. The first comes from a Financial Mail article in November 2000 (‘Water Privatisation Incentives Go Under the Bridge in Johannesburg’), written by a staff journalist in what appears to have been an attempt to write a balanced review of the decision by Johannesburg City Council to contract out the management of its water services to a private consortium. The article was rated as +1 (pro-privatisation) and -2 (unanalytical) in our coding system.
In the article the journalist reports that, ‘The council’s advisers told Johannesburg that if the water utility were run efficiently, revenue over the five-year life of the contract could range between R350m and R1.4bn’. The positive attributes of the term ‘efficiency’ are used here in relation to the contract and illustrate elements of a neoliberal classification scheme, implying that the city will save enormous sums of money by using a private management firm, while at the same time suggesting that the previous (public) system was inefficient.

The article also states that the private partners have ‘committed to turning around the Water & Sanitation Utility of Johannesburg … and transfer[ing] skills to a new, black management team’. Here it is argued that the private consortium is ‘committed’ to upliftment, particularly for black South Africans, making the contract a pro-poor and socially progressive development (unlike the previous public sector arrangement, presumably). The journalist goes on to note that the corporation seeking the contract ‘took account of local conditions’ and ‘has experience in countries similar to SA’, demonstrating its ‘commitment’ to socio-economic performance and making it a ‘charitable’, ‘world-class’ operator. All of this phrasing is an implicit or explicit endorsement of this particular privatisation initiative, despite the journalist’s attempt to provide a neutral account of the contract.

A pro-privatisation article from The Mercury (‘Durban Hit by 28% Rise in Price of Water’, 29 May 2001) illustrates a different set of discursive trends – ones which attempt to blame the poor for weak public sector performance and to criminalise their activities. In this piece the journalist notes that, ‘The city’s water department, sitting with a R96 million accumulated deficit, has incurred further costs running into millions’, and goes on to blame these losses on ‘townships which used water without paying for the service’, quoting the executive director of Durban metro water services as saying that ‘non-payment for water by some residents had forced the council to operate on a bank overdraft’. The implication here is that township residents are free-riders and a drain on the municipal coffers, with no effort being made by the journalist to situate ‘non-payment’ within the larger political and economic context of struggles over water delivery and other basic services in Durban. The notion of a ‘culture of non-payment’ is used to blame the poor for public sector inefficiencies, despite the fact that research has increasingly demonstrated that it is ‘an inability to pay, rather than an unwillingness to pay, that lies behind poor payment compliance’ (SACN, 2004:91; see also McDonald, 2002).

But perhaps the single most important language problem relates to the use of the word ‘privatisation’ itself. Seldom employed in pro-privatisation articles, one finds instead much softer euphemisms such as ‘partnerships’ and ‘restructuring’ (although the institutional make-up of these arrangements are often left unexplained). The same applies to ‘corporatisation’, which is typically referred to as a ‘business unit’. Stripped of inherent political or economic meaning, and imbued with neutral, even positive, connotations (who could be opposed to a ‘partnership’?) this new privatisation discourse diverts attention away from the deeply ‘private’ and/or ‘corporate’ character of many of these transformative efforts and the negative inferences often associated with these words (for an extended discussion of why the term ‘privatisation’ remains an appropriate way to define different forms of commercialisation see McDonald & Ruiters (2005b:14-24)).

To be fair, journalists and editors have not invented this new language – much of it can be traced to the World Bank and the South African government – but the press
has picked up on this new terminology and uncritically used it or reproduced it in their coverage of privatisation debates, serving to de-politicise (or, more accurately, re-politicise) the very meaning and intent of commercialisation efforts.

Even more striking, perhaps, is that elements of this neo-liberal discourse appear in many of the anti-privatisation articles as well. In some cases this would appear to be the result of journalists or op-ed writers reporting on, or expressing an opinion on, anti-privatisation positions but offering, in the end, a confused and sometimes contradictory set of arguments and terminology to express them.

Use of the terms ‘partnership’ and ‘efficiency’ feature dominantly here, but many of the other neo-liberal words and phrases described above were found in anti-privatisation writing. One example is the use of language that blames and/or criminalises the poor. In an otherwise strongly anti-privatisation article in the Daily News (‘Chatsworth Tenants Declare War on City Authorities’, 21 May 2001), the author refers to township residents ‘flouting the law’ and ‘illegally reconnecting electricity supplies’. Rather than portraying community protests against commercialisation as acts of civil disobedience, and ones aimed at obtaining what many see to be Constitutional rights to basic services at an affordable cost (Leibenberg, 2004; Flynn & Chirwa, 2005), anti-privatisation protestors are characterised as ‘angry tenants’.

In some cases this use of neo-liberal language by anti-privatisation writers was intentional. Typically this was the product of a journalist or editor who claimed to be opposed to privatisation but insisted that public-private partnerships, corporatisation and other forms of commercialisation do not constitute ‘privatisation’ per se. The editor of the Mail & Guardian made just such a claim in a feature article in June 2004, arguing that it is ‘plain wrong’ to say that ‘South Africa has undergone a massive exercise in water and electricity privatisation’. Instead, she argues, ‘[o]nly four of 284 municipalities – and relatively small ones at that – have contracted out the management of water. As for electricity supply – none, none of it has been privatised’. The writer fails to mention that some five million people are serviced by these privatised water systems in South Africa and that virtually every water and electricity utility in the country has been corporatised to some extent.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the English-language press in South Africa has provided what would appear, on the surface, to be a relatively balanced coverage of the privatisation debates over core municipal services, with an almost equal number of articles for and against privatisation and many that attempt to provide ‘both sides’ of the argument. But the quality of this news coverage, the source of the news items, the kinds of information packages used to explain the debate, and the actual phrases and terminologies employed, have the effect of solidifying privatisation as a dominant discourse, turning the tide in its favour and limiting the possibilities of anti-privatisation discourse and debate.

The degree to which this media coverage influences public opinion and policy making is difficult to ascertain with certainty, but it is an important part of a larger neo-liberal shift that has altered the political and ideological landscape of South Africa over the past 15 years and which has helped to pave the way for the privatisation and commercialisation of core municipal services in the country.
But having made this argument about the importance of text in policy debates we close the paper with an important caveat, cautioning readers against an over-emphasis on discourse analysis and highlighting the need for continued investigation into the more material aspects of privatisation. As Harvey (1996:80) notes in his review of discursive research:

To privilege discourse above other moments is insufficient, misleading, and even dangerous. Errors arise when examination of one ‘moment’ is held sufficient to understand the totality of the social process. Again and again we will find slippages of the sort that convert a dialectically correct statement like ‘there is nothing outside of the text’ into false statements that ‘everything can be understood through texts’ (or, worse still, ‘everything is a text and can be understood as such’) and equally false practices that seek to use, say, the deconstruction of texts as the privileged (and sometimes the only) pathway to understanding.

It is essential, therefore, not to lose sight of the fact that there is a larger material basis for privatisation in South Africa. Understanding the political economy of what Harvey (2003) calls ‘accumulation by dispossession’ must remain at the heart of privatisation investigations and challenges. In this respect it is essential to see privatisation as part of a larger accumulation strategy in South Africa; one that assists capital with access to large and relatively untapped markets for capital investment and profit, providing an outlet for overaccumulated domestic and foreign capital, creating opportunities for multi-tiered service delivery and helping to create conditions for a wider mass consumption society (Bond, 2000a; McDonald, 2007).

The link we want to stress here is the connection between text and the reproduction of these material relations. Language is not, in and of itself, a driver of privatisation, but it plays an integral (and dialectical) part in shaping the ways in which capital is able to penetrate the service sector and legitimate its role therein. It is essential to make the links between these larger (and ever changing) structural features of privatisation and their discursive manifestations.

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Endnotes

1. There are, for example, competing positions on the issue of immigration within the mainstream media. Although there would appear to be a shift towards a neo-liberal perspective on keeping the South African borders open for access to skilled and unskilled labour for capital, xenophobic rhetoric and anti-immigrant sentiment continues to permeate the South African press (McDonald & Jacobs, 2005).

2. The database can be viewed on the MSP website under ‘In the News’ at www.queensu.ca/msp.

3. In 1995 it was estimated that 10 to 15 million South African adults were ‘functionally illiterate’. Rural Africans had the highest illiteracy rates (at over 80%), but a surprising 40% of whites could not read at a Standard Five level (statistics are from a Harvard/University of Cape Town study undertaken in 1995 as reported in the Mail & Guardian, 2 June 1995).

4. Senior government officials and politicians have been particularly vitriolic in their attacks, with the former Minster, and Director General, of Water Affairs (Ronnie Kasrils and Mike Muller
respectively) standing out in this regard. In an article in the Business Day on 10 August 2000, Muller said of two ‘infantile leftists’ that ‘Academics should lead the intellectual debate rather than mislead the students, local government and labour cadres they seek to influence with a sloppy mix of lies, half truths and shoddy out-of-date research’.

5. We are indebted to Sean Jacobs for bringing this particular quote to our attention.

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Somaliland: A New Democracy in the Horn of Africa?

Stig Jarle Hansen with Mark Bradbury

With a constitutionally-based and popularly elected government, the Republic of Somaliland, which broke away from Somalia in 1991, has a democratic system matched by few other countries in Africa and the Middle East. However, Somaliland’s independence has not been recognised internationally. Moreover, developments in neighbouring countries suggest that people in Somaliland will face serious challenges in entrenching a democratic political system. This article takes as its point of departure Georg Sorensen’s (1998:3) definition of democracy. His definition is employed, together with the history of elections in the region, to explore the challenges people in Somaliland face in establishing a democratic political system, in this sense the article aims to explore the challenges of the future, rather than analyse the processes of the past. These include, among others, the shift from a clan-based form of political representation and competition to one based on political parties as forums for political representation and competition, the urban-based nature of political discourse in a still predominantly rural society, and the absence of a strong independent media.

In 1991 the Republic of Somaliland broke away from Somalia. With a constitutionally-based and popularly elected government, the Republic of Somaliland has a democratic system matched by few other countries in Africa and the Middle East, although Somaliland’s independence has not been recognised internationally. However, the history of the region indicates that the Somali political system faces several challenges. In order to understand these challenges one has to establish an analytical framework, a definition of democracy that could provide some guidance to what such challenges can consist of, and which specific areas of the political structure to examine.

The term democracy comes from a combination of two Greek words: *demos* (people) and *kratos* (rule). Accordingly, democracy has been defined as ‘rule by the people’ (Sorensen, 1998:3). A demand for ‘rule by the people’, although seemingly straightforward, requires a definition of who ‘the people’ are and an agreement on mechanisms for their political inclusion or exclusion. For example, should émigré or diaspora communities have political rights in their country of origin, and should there be age restrictions on political participation? What is the most appropriate form of popular participation, and how can the rights of minority groups be accommodated?

Moreover, democratic systems vary and these variations are the result of a number of factors. First, the form they take can be influenced by a country’s stage of capitalist
development and pre-existing institutions. They may, for example, be a result of elites attempting to hold on to their power, as in the case of the Upper House of Parliament in Great Britain where the elite sought to entrench their powers by creating an institution that is not subject to democratic elections. Popular participation also varies between democratic systems. It can take a restricted form, where the citizens' role is limited to influencing their elected representatives to whom they have delegated full powers (Schumpeter, 1976), or may take a more comprehensive form with an emphasis on individual rights (Held, 1987). In such systems, citizens are free to determine their own lives, as long as they do not negate the rights of others. Another form of democracy – described by Arndt Lijphart (1984) as the ‘consensus model’ and practiced in Scandinavian countries – is based on an expectation that the elected leaders will strive to achieve the greatest degree of consensus amongst the citizens and political parties.

Second, forms of democracy can also be influenced by culture. Claude Ake (1993) outlines an ‘African model’ of democracy based on African traditions of political participation. However, as African political systems take many forms, it is difficult to conceive of a single model of democracy in Africa. In Somali society – a society famously described as a ‘pastoral democracy’ (Lewis, 1961) and influenced by Arab and African culture – traditional political institutions and practices have, as we shall see, been particularly pertinent to efforts to establish a liberal democracy in Somaliland.

While being conscious of the various models of democracy that exist, it is helpful to establish some basic criteria to distinguish a democratic political system from a non-democratic one. In his classic treatise ‘On Democracy’, Robert Dahl (1988) argues that in a democratic system there must be three fundamental elements: effective participation whereby all citizens must have an equal and effective opportunity to make their views known on the formulation of public policy; voting equality, whereby every citizen must have an equal and effective opportunity to vote, and that all votes must be counted as equal; and an enlightened understanding, whereby, within reasonable limits, every citizen must have an equal and effective opportunity to learn about relevant policies and their probable consequences (Ibid. p. 9).

Few, if any, of the existing states in the world actually fulfil the requirement of one person, one vote. Some electoral arrangements, such as the majoritarian system of the United Kingdom, can result in the party with the largest popular vote gaining a larger number of elected representatives than is actually proportionate to their vote. Moreover, the principle of one person one vote is often unfulfilled due to age restrictions, the use of quotas for underrepresented minorities, traditions, and the variable size of constituencies. As will be seen in Somaliland, in some societies, the introduction of a majoritarian system of one-person-one-vote can, if employed rigorously, restrict the representation of women and minority groups in a country’s political institutions.

Sorensen (1998:12) takes Dahl’s, Schumpeter’s and Held’s models as a point of departure and establishes more flexible criteria. He asserts, first, that a democratic system requires that all positions of effective authority in government – both parliamentary and cabinet positions – must be open to meaningful and extensive and non-violent competition amongst individuals and organised groups (or political parties) at regular intervals; second, a democracy also requires a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies; third, eligibility for public office must be broadly defined ensuring that no social group is
excluded; and fourth, there should be a high degree of civil and political liberties, including freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom to form and join organisations. One could add to this the right to alternative sources of information.

In the rest of this article we use these criteria to examine the challenges facing Somaliland in institutionalising a democratic political system. These criteria are used only as points of departure for analysis of the process of democratisation in Somaliland rather than to make a judgement on the existing political system. In this sense, the criteria are rather to guide our focus than an analytical framework employed rigidly to evaluate if Somaliland is a democracy or not. This also allows the article to focus on some of the very case- and region-specific factors influencing the political system in Somaliland. Following Tilly (2003), this allows us to examine democracy as a process and, additionally, to take into account non-western Somali democratic practices.

Somaliland: An Historical Background

Before looking at contemporary challenges facing Somaliland we outline briefly its recent history. The Republic of Somaliland, comprising the former regions of northwest Somalia, was created in May 1991 when the leadership of the Somali National Movement (SNM) declared that they were dissolving the union between the former colonial territories of the British Somaliland Protectorate and Italian Somalia established in 1960. The Somaliland authorities assert that rather than being a secessionist state, the sovereign independence of Somaliland has been restored, a status it held for five days between 26 June and 1 July 1960 when it united with Italian Somalia to form the Somali Republic (Somaliland Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002).

So far no country has recognised Somaliland’s sovereignty, although a number of countries have shown sympathy with its cause. South Africa has formally declared that Somaliland fulfils the Montevideo criteria for statehood and it also accepts the Somaliland passport. Furthermore, the African Union (AU) is considering Somaliland’s application for membership and has indicated a willingness to deal with it as an ‘outstanding case’ (ICG, 2006:3).

The first political election in Somaliland territory dates back to February 1960, when the Legislative Council of Somaliland was formed under the British colonial administration. The decision by the elected council to unite with Italian administered Somalia was popularly supported, although discontent with the union began to surface as northerners felt increasingly marginalised by the concentration of socio-economic and political developments in the south. Somaliland’s political elite nevertheless played a prominent role in Somalia’s post-independence politics and all the leaders of Somaliland’s present-day political parties were previously high-ranking civil servants or prominent politicians in Somalia. Alienation from the Somali state grew among northerners in the latter years of Siyad Barre’s military dictatorship (1969-1991). The centralisation of political power by the regime and its policies of economic expropriation estranged the predominant Isaaq clan in northwest Somalia. A large influx of Somali refugees from Ethiopia into Somaliland following Somalia’s defeat in the 1987-88 war with Ethiopia over the Ogaden, further strained the economy and the environment of the region. The humanitarian assistance and preferential treatment accorded to the refugees by the government, most of who were from different clans to those resident in Somaliland, exacerbated
social tensions. In 1981 mounting grievances with the regime led to the creation of the Somali National Movement (SNM) which fought a ten year insurgency against the Barre regime.

With its base in neighbouring Ethiopia, the SNM recruited its fighters mostly from the Isaaq clan. In 1988 a peace agreement between Somalia and Ethiopia forced the SNM to take desperate measures to attack and briefly capture the northern cities of Hargeisa and Burco. In response, the government bombed Hargeisa and carried out harsh reprisals against the Isaaq civilian population. Africa Watch (1990) estimated that between 1988 and 1989 up to 60,000 civilians were killed and half a million people fled to Ethiopia. The ranks of the SNM were swollen by those who fled and most non-Isaaq’s were purged from the SNM. Many members of the SNM who had previously supported a united Somalia now argued for independence. The declaration of Somaliland’s independence in May 1991 followed the overthrow of Siyad Barre in January 1991 and was precipitated by the hurried installation of Ali Mahdi as President of Somalia by one faction of the United Somali Congress (USC) without prior consultation with the SNM.

The declaration of Somaliland’s independence was announced at a gathering of the SNM and northern clans in the city of Burco. With a hastily written Charter, the SNM was granted a mandate by the gathering to govern for two years and to prepare the country for elections. This proved to be an impossible task given the government’s lack of resources and the destruction wreaked upon the territory by ten years of war. Within a year splits inside the SNM and a failure to disarm clan militias threatened to drag the country into civil war. This was averted through a series of clan peace conferences (shiiir beeleed) brokered by clan elders and backed by civil activists and business people.

The conference held in the town of Borama over several months in 1993 proved to be decisive. At Borama, a Charter for government and mechanisms for controlling and disarming the militia were agreed, and the SNM relinquished power to a civilian government whose President Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal was nominated by an assembly of elders. The structure of government agreed at Borama fused indigenous forms of social and political organisation with western-style institutions of government, in what became known as the ‘beel system’ of government. This consisted of an executive president and a bicameral parliament, comprising an Upper House of Elders and Lower House of Representatives, whose members were nominated on a clan basis by an electoral college of elders (Bradbury et al. 2003). This clan-based power-sharing system provided the basis of government for eight years. Despite two years of civil war between 1994 and 1996, it brought a high degree of stability to Somaliland. The last country-wide shiiir beeleed was held in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, from October 1996 to February 1997. In addition to re-electing Egal as president, the attendant elders approved a draft constitution and a schedule for a transition from the clan system of governance to a democratic, multi-party system. At first it appears perverse that the elders would support a move, which ostensibly sought to weaken their status, but there were a number of other pressures – those from the diaspora to democratise. Another was a wish to get funds from donors as well as international recognition, which even the elders were eagerly awaiting. The Hargeisa conference marked the beginning of five years of stability in Somaliland.

The transition from a system of selected representation to elected representation in Somaliland’s political institutions has occurred in four stages. In May 2001 a
plebiscite approved a constitution, which provides the framework for a democratic political system. This was followed by elections to 23 district councils in December 2002, the formation of three national parties, presidential elections in April 2003 and, finally, elections to the Lower House of Parliament in September 2005. All of these elections have been deemed relatively free and fair by foreign observers (Abokor, et al. 2005; Hansen & Linderman, 2003; Abokor, et al. 2002)

**Meaningful & Extensive Competition**

But to what extent are these new institutions producing a democratic transition as set out in our introduction and what role does local political culture play in determining the nature of this potential democracy? The adoption of a multi-party political system and elected representation requires an environment that allows for meaningful competition. And meaningful competition requires competing political alternatives. These alternatives need not be ideologically grounded, but must have clearly distinguishable political agendas and strategies to deal with social, political and economic challenges. In Schumpeter’s (1976) version of democracy, an election is more about removing political leaders that fail to perform, rather than a contest between ideological or political agendas. In Somaliland we see a hybrid form of government, which mixes clan and party politics and is conditioned by the historical layers of political institutions and actors.

Somaliland’s constitution limits the number of political parties to three. Of the six ‘political organisations’ that fielded candidates in the district election, three won sufficient support to become accredited national parties: UDUB (The United Democratic People’s Party), Kulmiye (The Unity Party) and UCID (The Justice and Welfare Party) (Bradbury et al. 2003). A critical challenge faced by the parties is to sustain themselves as political organisations that offer distinct policies and a meaningful political and social agenda.
In all three elections UDUB, the party founded by the late president Mohamed Ibrahim Egal and led by his successor President Dahir Rayale Kahin, has maintained its position as the governing party, holding the largest number of seats in the district elections, narrowly winning the presidential race, and but loosing the majority in the parliament during the parliamentary elections. Although UDUB does not have an ideologically defined political programme, the party’s campaign focused on the continuity of governance structures, stability and experience of government, which give UDUB some of the characteristics of a right of centre ‘conservative’ party.

Kulmiye is led by the veteran politician – Ahmed M. Mohamoud ‘Silanyo’ – a former Minister of Planning (1969-1973) and Minister of Commerce (1973-1978, 1980-1982) in Siad Barre’s government, the longest running leader of the SNM between 1984 and 1990. Silanyo was also Minister of Finance (1997-1999) and Minister of Planning (1999-2000) in two of Egal’s Somaliland administrations. The party leadership also includes several other leaders from the SNM, and this is used by some of it members to give the party a popular political legitimacy.

The Justice and Welfare Party (UCID) is the party with the most clear-cut ideology, promoting itself as a Scandinavian-type social democratic party. This is influenced by its founder Faisal Ali Farah ‘Warabe’ who lived in Finland and several of its founding members have lived in Scandinavia.

In the Horn of Africa, competition between political parties has often been off-set by a breakdown in party structures. In Ethiopia, for example, the opposition has been notoriously fragmented and attempts to create larger political coalitions have been mired with problems. Ruling parties in the region have also sought to engineer the fragmentation of opposition parties in order to entrench their own positions. They have usually been more successful at maintaining their own party unity and loyalty, through use of money and state resources. However, they have also been affected by lack of party discipline.

Such political party fragmentation was also prominent in the last period of democratic government in Somalia, between 1960 and 1969. The first independent government of Somalia in 1960 was a coalition of four major political parties: the southern Somali Youth League (SYL), which was the dominant party, the northern based United Somali Party (USP), the Somali National League (SNL), and the Hisbiga Digil Mirifle (comprising members from the Digil Mirifle clan). The coalition collapsed when Muhamed Haji Ibrahim Egal and several other prominent members of the SNL withdrew and joined with politicians from the SYL to form the Somali National Congress (SNC). Although this was a demonstration of national unity, the realignment of politicians also illustrated the weakness of party discipline. The SYL succeeded in retaining power in the 1964 election, in which 21 parties participated, but the lack of party discipline was to have extreme consequences. Parliamentary voting on certain issues was done in secret which weakened the party’s control over its members; parliamentarians who nominally belonged to the SYL often voted with the opposition. Consequently, despite SYL’s overall majority, the government came close to resignation in 1966, because it lost a vote in the parliament. The weakness of party structures had a clear influence in the 1967 elections, during which Egal defected from his new party and rejoined SYL. The Party fragmentation normally occurred along lineage lines. This reached a new extreme in the 1969 election which was contested by 62 parties, mostly representing one man and his lineage. The Somali Republic was fundamentally damaged by the conspiracy of silence that
concealed the extent of clan influence over politicians. In the case of Somaliland, being open about it and examining the extent of clan power in politics is essential if the country’s fledgling political democracy is to develop and strengthen.

However, the fragmentation of the parties in the Somali republic was also due to other factors. Party fragmentation was fuelled by the way candidates were required to raise their own funds for their campaigns. As the parties lacked the resources to support their candidates a majority of the 1,002 candidates standing in the 1969 elections were self-funded. I. M. Lewis estimated that some may have spent as much as £15,000 of their own money, a considerable investment at a time when the annual budget for the entire country was only £15 million (Lewis, 1972:397). The lack of party support meant that the candidates relied on their clans to raise the funds needed, being one of the few efficient fundraising structures. As many of the candidates were former civil servants who had quit their jobs to stand for parliament, candidates and clans had an interest to see a return on their investments. This may have motivated the mass defection from the opposition to the SYL after the election once its victory was confirmed. Given the limited reach of the Somali media at the time and high illiteracy rates, much of the public was uninformed about policy issues, and understandably voted according to lineage loyalties. The influence of the clan system on politics was patently obvious to Somalis. But it was the rampant misuse of government funds during the 1969 election, and the use of the army for campaign purposes, that caused widespread public dissatisfaction with the government and helped to pave the way for the dictatorship of Siyad Barre. This was a sad end for a country that had experienced in the 1960s the first peaceful democratic transition of power in Africa.

There are some striking continuities between the 1960-1969 political process in Somalia and the legislative elections in Somaliland in 2005, which highlight some of the challenges of instilling a democratic system in Somaliland. One such similarity is the continuing influence of ethnic or clan based loyalties. Although the Somaliland elections were intended to mark a progression from clan-based politics to multi-party politics, the Somali lineage system continues to have a strong influence on the political system. During the parliamentary elections, clan leaders had a role in nominating party candidates, providing the parties with lists of candidates from which to select those most able to run for office. Candidates interviewed by the authors estimated that it was necessary to spend US$30,000 to run a campaign. As the parties had few resources, candidates relied on their own resources or funds raised through their clans to finance their campaigns. Furthermore, there was little to distinguish between the parties in terms of policies. Voters were therefore more easily mobilised around parochial clan issues and promises of gifts than by political arguments. Ideological cleavages between the parties were either non-existent (between Kulmiye and UDUB) or, in the case of UCID, so weakly developed that even the parties’ own MPs failed to realise that the party was supposed to be Social-Democratic/Socialist. The extent of vote-buying was unclear, but was a troubling development in Somaliland. For MPs nominated by their clan and reliant on them for finance, the potential for a conflict of loyalty between the clan and party must have been strong. This was illustrated in the parliamentary elections, when five out of six candidates from the Essa clan decided to boycott the election over the allocation of parliamentary seats to the Essa, despite heavy pressures from their respective parties.
The situation in Somaliland is also characterised by relatively young parties made up of older political organisations and factions. Kulmiye incorporates several political factions. One includes former SNM military commanders who were associated with a marxist tendency within the movement and are commonly referred to as the ‘Red Flag’ (calan cas). Another comprises a small religious group, and a third includes members of the ‘Hargeisa Group’ of civil activists famous for their stand against the Barre regime. Although the name Kulmiye – the ‘Gathering’ or ‘Unity’ – implies that it is a party that unites disparate tendencies, these differences are a challenge to party discipline. Prior to the parliamentary elections, UCID had avoided any challenges to party unity, partly because it had limited support. However, following the big gains it made in the parliamentary elections, the party may begin to experience internal divisions.

In 1960, conscious of the problems associated with political parties, Somalilanders took steps to minimise the potential for political fragmentation by restricting the number of parties to three and banning MPs from changing parties whilst in parliament. However, this does not guarantee party discipline in parliament today, where the lack of a party whip leaves room for MPs to vote against their own party. UCID indeed faced a rebellion from one of its MPs in the first session of parliament and sought to remove him from parliament by ejecting him from the party. The case was sent to court and UCID lost (interview with Warabe, 2005). One strategy by UCID to instil party discipline has been to inculcate a Scandinavian-style social democratic ideology among its MPs. But, the ideological consciousness amongst MPs is generally weak. UDUB can potentially use the state coffers to create party loyalty, by bestowing rewards on loyal MPs. However, not only is this illegal, but history also illustrates that such strategies do not necessarily guarantee success.

Since the elections in September 2005, it appears that public profile of the parties has diminished. Offices have been closed due to lack of resources. The parliamentary sub-committees have cross-party membership and by all reports are not split along party lines. There is more coherence amongst the candidates of the two oppositional parties, but at times it seems like the coherence have merged the two party groups into one. The scramble by politicians after the district elections for posts in the new national parties and the alliances of convenience that were formed, illustrated the opportunistic nature of politics and the absence of loyalty to the parties and their policies. The parties’ links with and control over members elected in their name to the district councils has been tenuous. Paradoxically, party discipline and unity could worsen if Somaliland receives international recognition, and if the one political issue that unites the parties and their members is removed and the government begins to benefit from direct foreign support. Several conflicts between the lower house of the parliament and the cabinet of president Kahin has emerged during the spring of 2007. The electoral commission nominated by the president was voted down by the lower house of parliament, which it according to the constitution had the power to do. However, the parliament prolonged the mandate of the sitting commission, going beyond the powers granted to it by the constitution. Kahin unconstitutionally vetoed the budget suggested by parliament, a provocative budget which suggested cutting the expenses of the presidents’ office back to the 2004 level. The paradox is that these issues, which are indicators of a struggle between parliament and president partly because of lack of precedence, might prevent the emergence of fissures within the parties, they create the need for unified fronts, and political issues larger than the quarrel over the use of resources for local patronage.
The limited experience of conducting politics through political parties and the weak party structures increase the likelihood that clan will have a large influence on Somaliland politics. The politicians will have a form of constituency, but it will be a clan based. This has several consequences. The influence of the clan means that women are under-represented in political institutions. Moreover, the mix of clan and party nominations lack transparency and leaves the system open to clientism as formal party rules for nomination are disregarded. These problems are likely increase popular pressure for a review of the constitutional restrictions on the number of political parties or the development of mechanisms that would enable the de-selection of a party that fails to deliver. In April 2007, a new party, Qaran, was established. Since the Somaliland constitution (articles 22 and 23) allows Somalilenders to create political parties, it is only the participation in elections that is restricted; the party lives an uneasy existence and its status in upcoming elections is uncertain at best.

**Political Participation**

As we outlined at the beginning, for Sorensen public participation in the selection of political representatives and in policy formulation is a defining feature of a democratic system. Since public pressure forced the SNM leadership to break with Somalia in 1991, public participation has been a feature of the political system. The Borama conference and other clan conferences were large-scale public consultation exercises. The Somaliland constitution enshrined the right of universal suffrage and changed the system of selecting government from a college of elders to individual voters. The level of public participation in the elections and degree to which communities in Somaliland are adequately represented in parliament can therefore be a measure of Somaliland’s democratic credentials.

A total of 670,320 valid votes were counted in the 2005 parliamentary election. The turn-out was lower than some had speculated and less than half the 1.3 million ballot papers that were printed for the election. Nevertheless, it was considerably higher than in the preceding district and presidential elections, with turn-outs of 440,067 valid votes and a total of 488,543 respectively. The absence of a census and voter registration or a post-election voter survey makes it difficult to determine whether the turn-out was a reasonable representation of the eligible voting population in Somaliland. Determining the representative nature of the poll is made more complex by some marked differences in regional votes between the three elections. However, the fact that in the three elections the western regions of Woqooyi Galbeed (Hargeisa region), Awdal and Saaxil accounted for over 60 per cent of the votes cast, is probably a reasonable reflection of the concentration of Somaliland’s population in the west of the country. Furthermore, the fact that the largest numbers of votes were cast in Woqooyi Galbeed also attests to the rapid growth of the capital Hargeisa since the end of the war.

These regional patterns of voting also reflect historic socio-economic differences between Somaliland’s regions. Better transport and infrastructure, shorter distances for voters to travel, better media coverage, more intense campaigning and voter education and a more sedentary population also facilitated a higher turn-out in the west. The smaller number of votes in Somaliland’s three eastern regions of Togdheer, Sanaag and Sool can, in part, be accounted for by the smaller population and the fact that it is more nomadic than in the west of the country. Despite efforts to extend the elections to rural areas, the infrastructure required for elections favors settled rather
than nomadic populations. It is likely, therefore, that a substantial part of the
nomadic population, which accounts for a significant proportion of Somaliland’s
population, did not vote. The lower poll in eastern Somaliland is also accounted for
by the fact that several districts of Sool and eastern Sanaag regions and one district
of Togdheer did not participate in the polls. Somaliland’s authority over these
regions is contested by the Puntland State of Somalia to the east, and since 2003
Puntland has taken control over several of the larger towns. Threats from
populations in these regions and the Puntland authorities to disrupt the elections
left the Somaliland Electoral Commission with no option but to ‘postpone’ elections
in several districts in these areas. This partially accounts for the lower overall poll in
eastern Somaliland.

Clan loyalty was very important in the politics of the Somali Republic 1960-1969
despite claims by politicians that it had little influence. The Somali Republic was
fundamentally damaged by the conspiracy of silence that concealed the extent of
clan influence over politicians. In the case of Somaliland, being open about and
examining the extent of clan power in politics is essential if the country’s fledgling
political democracy is to develop and strengthen. The non-participation in the
elections of most of the Warsangeli clan populating eastern Sanaag and the
Dulbahante clan in Sool and Togdheer in the elections has important implications
for Somaliland. The participation of people in these areas could have affected the
outcome of the elections. While the 2002 district election to a certain extent
consolidated the Somaliland state by establishing popularly elected councils that
recognise the authority of the Hargeisa government and pay taxes to it, the non-
participation of populations in eastern Sanaag and Sool effectively served to shrink
the Somaliland polity and make politics in Somaliland more exclusive (Bradbury et
al. 2003). The lack of political structures that recognise the authority of the
government in Hargeisa weakens the Somaliland government’s claim to represent
the people of these regions.

As noted, the adoption of the multi-party system has done little to move Somaliland
away from clan-based politics. For example, the 2003 elections were postponed
several times until agreement was reached over the demarcation of constituency
boundaries and a formula was agreed for distributing the 82 parliamentary seats to
Somaliland’s six regions. The first postponement occurred when Gadabuursi elders
and MPs from Awdal region rejected the election bill on the grounds that they would
end up with fewer seats than they held. A feature of the power-sharing beel system
has been its inclusiveness in terms of clan representation. Since 1991, non-Isaaq
clans have been represented in both the executive and legislative wings of
government and after the 1997 Hargeisa conference, minority groups gained
representation in the legislature. But the adoption of a majoritarian electoral system
has produced ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. Although the three party system encouraged
the emergence of multi-clan alliances, at a local level people voted along clan lines.
The clan composition of district councils reflects the major clans in the district, while
smaller clans and minorities are not represented.

The 2005 parliamentary elections did not produce any dramatic changes in popular
support for the parties, but the clan composition of parliament did change (Abokor et
al. 2006). The clearest changes were the increase in Isaaq and Gadabuursi
representation in parliament, and the decline in the number of seats held by the
Harti and ‘minorities’. Despite an increase the popular vote, the Dulbahante and
Warsengeli people of Sool and eastern Sanaag lost four parliamentary seats. This
will only increase their sense of marginalisation within Somaliland. The number of Esa MPs also declined, largely as a result of four candidates withdrawing from the election prior to polling day. The ‘minorities’, who gained representation in Somaliland’s second parliament, retained only one seat in the legislature.

Within the majority Isaaq clan family, the three largest clans – the Habar Awal, Garhajis and Habr Jeclo’ – all gained seats, while the smaller Arab and Ayub both lost seats (Ibid.). Within the Isaaq the most significant change was the increase in Habar Yunis politicians in parliament. The clan is represented in all the parties and across Somaliland (with the exception of Awdal region) and they potentially command the single largest ‘clan block’ of votes in parliament. This is a significant change from the mid-1990s, when the Habar Yunis belief that they were under-represented in parliament was one of the grievances behind the civil war. The equitable representation of the three major Isaaq clans should mitigate such ructions in the future. Other changes can be found at the level of sub-clans, with some of the larger and politically stronger lineages losing ground to smaller lineages, due to the larger lineage fielding too many candidates. The impact of these changes, if any, will only become apparent over time. The lack of participation and representation amongst the Harti clans of eastern Somaliland, however, has to be addressed because in the long term it could destabilize the country.

That clans function as a unit of political mobilisation also leads to a lowering political participation, particularly along gender lines. The beel political system was criticised, because it excluded women from representative politics. The Somaliland constitution gives women the same political rights as men. In all three Somaliland elections, women exercised their right to vote by turning out in large numbers. Very few women, however, were put forward by the political organisations as candidates. And those who were nominated stood little chance of being elected as they were put low down on the candidate list. Women were selected by the parties rather than being proposed by the clan, but as they could not guarantee to deliver the vote of their clan there was no incentive for the parties to select female candidates. Interviews collected by one of the authors indicates that the lack of will to vote for female candidates again was partly a result of the structure of the clan system in which a wife is often married into a different clan, creating doubts about her loyalties both towards the husband and the father’s clan. Consequently, only two women from over 2,000 candidates were elected onto municipal councils and only two of the 246 parliamentary seats were won by women (Ibid.). Accordingly, women – who constitute a majority of the adult population and the voting public – and who contribute significantly to local government revenues through small businesses, have no direct voice in these councils and have only a marginal influence in parliament. Their lack of success has convinced women advocating for political participation to advocate for a quota of seats for women in parliament.15

However, it is important to underline the successful aspects of Somaliland political participation. While party-based politics has not removed the influence of clan politics, the large number of candidates in the elections, the large turn-out of voters and the active participation of the clans did ensure the broad participation of the public in the electoral process, with the exception of Sool and eastern Sanaag. The nature of political debate has also ensured that the elections linked local district and regional politics to national politics. Rather than Hargeisa dominating the national debate, therefore, local politics have had an influence on national-level politics and likewise the election results will impact on political relations at a local level.
Civil Liberties, Political Liberties & Access to Mass Media

Political philosophers, from John Stuart Mill (1989) to Amartya Sen (1999), have argued that the existence of a free press is essential to a democratic system, as a means of preventing conflict and protecting civil liberties. Mill (1989: 19-25), for example, argued that a public press that creates an arena for free debate ensures a transparent political system. The key problem is that the print and electronic media has only a limited coverage in Somaliland, with the newspapers having a small circulation. Four media companies publish four dailies in Somali, three weeklies in English and three weeklies in Arabic. The biggest Somaliland paper is Jamhuriya, which only has a daily circulation of 2,000-2,500 copies, as well as 1,000 in London. The smallest, the government-owned Mandeq has a circulation of approximately 500 (Dualeh, 2005:155-156). Likewise radio (with the exception of the BBC) and television broadcasts having a restricted coverage. This limited media presence made it difficult to promote a Somaliland-wide political discourse during the elections.

Somaliland toyed with the idea of adopting a press law based on the Ethiopian one but rejected the idea, and the Somaliland press is consequently freer than in Ethiopia. However, reporters who criticize government are regularly jailed. In 2004, the Somali Journalist Network reported four different cases of journalists being arrested on duty. Nonetheless, the media get away with severe criticism of the government, and papers such as Hatuf and Jamhuriya regularly publish highly critical articles, as well as cartoon caricatures of prominent politicians. Seemingly the relationship between the Somaliland government and its press were developing to the better, and was of an entirely different nature than the equivalent relationship in neighbouring countries as Ethiopia, but the trend changed.

On 2 January 2007, Yosuf Gabobe Yusuf Abdi Gabobe, Somaliland Times editor (Somaliland Times being the English version of Hatuf) and also the chairman of Haatuf Media Network and Ali Abdi Dini the editor of Haatuf daily newspaper were arrested together with Mohamed Omar, because of a critical article accusing the president’s wife of corruption. It is open to debate whether the articles that the charge was based on were defamatory according to Somaliland law. However, The Somaliland courts choose to follow the chaotic precedence from Ethiopia, invoking the harsh Somali Penal law of 1963 instead of Somalilands press law, this although the latter law explicitly states that it should have precedence. The fact that one-third of the printed press in Somaliland (the Hatuf media group’s newspapers) was severely hit (if not destroyed; the license of the Hatuf media group was withdrawn by the time of writing) by the court actions, show how vulnerable the Somaliland press is. Although the charged journalists were pardoned by the president because of foreign pressure, the above described juridical precedence has not been revoked.

All the Somali papers covered the political debates during all of the elections, while also discussing clan issues. Themes, such as corruption within the government, government gerrymandering, the contested eastern regions, the level of tax in Berbera port and its impact on trade were all covered by the press. The small number of newspapers and their financial fragility means that the print media is vulnerable to political manipulation and the suppression of free debate. Additionally, The Somaliland newspapers are largely an urban phenomenon that have limited impact in a country that has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world (World Bank/UNDP, 2003). This is a serious obstacle to strengthening democracy in Somaliland. Political issues are not brought out to the countryside, opening debates on, for
example, the influence of clan considerations on voting preferences, as well as of outright buying of votes.

Radio, or TV, could offset the effect of illiteracy, as well as the limited circulation of the printed press. However, the range on the Somaliland radio and TV stations is limited. Moreover, the largest broadcasting institutions, Somaliland National TV and Radio Hargeisa, are owned by the government, and their coverage is limited to areas around Hargeisa and Sahil region. The range of information available to the public, including exposure to political debates, is therefore limited. In addition to this, the broadcast media is biased towards the government. Somaliland National TV coverage of the 2005 elections was clearly skewed to the government and Radio Hargeisa allocated more time to the government candidates. Ironically, the only media that is able to reach the rural nomadic population is the BBC Somali Service. However, the BBC is restricted from covering political debates in Somaliland in depth, because it has to treat Somaliland on equal footing with the other parts in Somalia.

This lack of media scrutiny is exacerbated by a weak civil society. A strong civil society is often claimed to be important element in a functioning democracy. According to Francis Fukuyama (2004:30) it has the possibility to enhance accountability. However, the civil society in Somaliland is elite driven, often dependent on external donors. The relatively small size of the Somaliland elite ensures that connections between local NGOs, parties, and clans are strong, and civil society organisations are seldom seen as neutral. Moreover, although being reasonably efficient in educating voters during the elections, they generally fail to engage the Somaliland rural population outside election times.

Conclusions

The series of democratic elections since 2002 have brought significant changes to the political system in Somaliland. They have served to consolidate Somaliland as territorially-defined political entity, with all the regions within its borders (with the exception of Sool and eastern Sanaag) having elected councils and elected representatives in government. The introduction of universal suffrage and the creation of political parties that are not based on clan mark a significant attempt to change the system of kinship-based politics. The achievements in Somaliland are in many ways remarkable in a region more often associated with authoritarian regimes and conflict.

There are however challenges looming over Somaliland’s new democracy. Somaliland’s political parties are weak, due to their young age, lack of resources, and lack of ideology. The continuing influence of clan politics is clear. While this ensures extensive political participation, it also weakens the function of the political parties. This is unlikely to change while the rural population remains outside the political discussions. Factors as the lack of party funding for candidates (creating dependency on funds provided by clan), young and fragile party organisations, lack of media channels to channel the themes political discussions to the country side, will contribute to an a large group of clan focused voters in Somaliland. If the Somaliland media fails to politicise the rural population, their electoral choices will be influenced by the clan and the gifts they bestow, in this sense Somaliland might fail to politicise its electorate, they will be kept outside the political discussions, only aware of clan factors. As a result significant segments of the Somaliland population failed to participate in the elections and are not well represented in the parliament.
The adoption of winner-takes-all majoritarian electoral system has done nothing to enhance the political participation of women and the representation of minority clans. A lack of resources and a robust legal framework restricts the ability of the media to play a role in safeguarding civil liberties. This all means that Somaliland’s fledgling democracy could unravel. As Charles Tilly (2003:37) has commented, ‘contrary to the comforting image of democracy as a secure cave into which people can retreat forever from the buffering of political storms, most regimes that have taken significant steps toward democracies for the last two centuries have later de-democratised, at least temporarily’.

The experiences of neighbouring countries, as well as the history of the Somali Republic, indicates that this potential ‘de-democratisation’ need to be addressed. Somaliland’s solutions might also be interesting in a region with many political systems facing similar challenges; hopefully Somaliland can show the way to handle such problems. Indeed it must address these issues, or it might follow the many negative examples of other entities in the region.

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Endnotes
1. Somaliland is a Muslim country, and culture, social customs and the legal system are all influenced by Islam, and by economic ties to the Middle East
2. For a comprehensive discussion over the issue see Still (1981)
3. Personal communication Iqbal Jhazbhay
4. For example, the current Minister of Finance, Hussein Ali Dualeh, participated in a coup attempt in 1961 aimed at restoring Somaliland’s independence, but went on to hold important positions in the Somali army, and in the Somali diplomatic services during the civilian governments of the 1960s and during the Siyad Barre years. (Dualeh, 2002: 1-103)
5. This is reflected in its name, udub, which refers to the forked pole that supports the roof of the traditional hut, which is also the party’s symbol.
6. Its Vice Chairperson is Abdiraman Aw Ali ‘Tolwa’, also a veteran of the SNM.
7. The party’s third chairperson, Amina H Mohamoud Warsame studied in Sweden; the Agricultural Secretary Dr. Cabdiraxmaan Jaamac Ducaale, has a Masters degree from Norway.
8. Of the 123 seats SYL won 73, the new SNC won 11, and the Digil Mirifle party won 3.
9. All of the new MPs defected except for the former prime minister Abdirazak Haji Hussein
10. The nick-name *calan cas* has long been used to disparage groups with left-wing tendencies, and more generally to any group that opposes the incumbent government and the status quo. During the SNM years it referred to a group of Soviet-trained military officers, several of whom were imprisoned by Ahmed Silaniyo while he was Chairman of the SNM. Several of these officers became allies of Silaniyo and Suleiman Gaal in the early 1990s in opposition to Somaliland’s first government.
11. Not all members of the Hargeisa Group, also known as UFFO, are members of Kulmiye.
12. Somaliland already has a political structure that can take advantage of the positive sides of the clan system in the clan based and clan-selected Upper House of Elders, known as the Guurti.
13. In Awdal region, for example, the vote changed from 24 per cent of the total vote to 14 per cent and back to 24 per cent in successive elections, while in Togdheer the vote changed from 15 per cent
in the district elections to 24 per cent in the presidential elections and back to 17 per cent in the parliamentary elections. See Aboker et al. (2006:19)

14. The elders of the Dhulbahunte and Warsangeli clans living in these regions initially consented to the declaration of Somaliland’s independence and the political arrangements agreed at the 1993 Borama conference. But a growing sense of political marginalisation within Somaliland led many of them to throw their weight behind the formation of the semi-autonomous Puntland State of Somalia in 1998, which is based on an alliance of Harti clans, which includes the Dhulbahunte and Warsangeli and the Majeerteen of north-east Somalia. The contested authority in Sool and eastern Sanaag has mostly been peacefully managed, but in December 2004 the Somaliland and Puntland armies briefly clashed. A ceasefire currently pertains in the regions and prisoners were exchanged in November 2005.

15. The previous parliament rejected this proposal in 2003.

16. The Ethiopian laws regulating the press are confusing and overlapping, the oldest are from the reign of emperor Haile Selassie

17. In 2002 SLNTV had slightly more than 2000 paying viewers, the Burco branch had 100, and there were estimated to be 400 pirate viewers in the entire country. The total number of viewers was estimated to be 15,000, by Boobe Yuusuf Ducaale (2005).


19. On the 13 September the Somaliland National TV gave the entire evening program to UDUB from 8 p.m. to midnight, without allotting the same time to the other parties. On 14 September, after receiving written complaints from the opposition parties, the Electoral Monitoring Board warned the SLNTV authorities to desist from violating the Code of Conduct. After an additional warning, and a formal letter sent to the Director of the SLNTV station, as well as the President and all the leaders of the opposition parties, the TV station changed their coverage, and the two opposition parties were generally satisfied.

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Poverty, Petroleum & Policy Intervention: Lessons from the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline

Nikola Kojucharov

The ‘resource curse’ – the tendency of resource wealth to impair natural resource exporting countries on various economic and political dimensions – has shown some of its strongest manifestations in Africa’s petro-states. For this reason, the World Bank’s recent attempt to engineer an accountable and transparent oil economy in one of Africa’s poorest and most corrupt countries – Chad – deserves close scrutiny and critical analysis. Although the World Bank has conducted the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project with the belief that the ‘resource curse’ can be mitigated through sound economic and fiscal policies, the results thus far suggest that Chad is doomed to repeat an all too familiar fate of economic turmoil and political strife. This article draws on the disappointing realities since Chad’s first oil exports, and examines three major factors underlying Chad’s unsuccessful conversion of oil revenues into poverty reduction: institutional capacity constraints, socio-political incompatibilities, and subversive interactions with external lenders. Although the majority of critics attribute the project’s failures to the World Bank’s policy choices and management, this analysis suggests that the project has been hindered more by the external nature of the World Bank’s policy intervention than by any particular design flaws. Given the shortcomings of the Bank’s intervention, this article considers plausible revisions to the project, and draws policy implications for future development endeavours of this nature.

The economic promise of natural resource abundance has proven a bitter reality for countless nations around the world. Time after time, countries exporting resources such as oil and diamonds have seen enormous amounts of revenue pass through their hands, yet have emerged with fragile economies in which resource wealth has exacerbated the very problems it was envisioned to solve. This ‘resource curse’ has shown some of its strongest manifestations in sub-Saharan Africa’s petro-states. In Nigeria, over 30 years of oil exports and $350 billion in associated revenues have coincided with a 34% increase in the number of people living on less than $1 a day (Pegg, 2005:20). In Angola, Gabon, and Sudan, oil has not only induced economic instability, but also encouraged massive corruption and civil conflict (Pegg, 2005:2).

Despite these grim realities, the ‘resource curse’ is not an inherent feature of all natural resource exporters. Botswana, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Chile are some economies which have transformed their resource endowments into substantial growth and poverty reduction. Their success has fostered a growing belief among the international community that the ‘resource curse’ may ultimately be corrected, if not prevented, with the appropriate mix of economic policy and fiscal responsibility.
Africa’s newest oil exporter, Chad, has served as the premier ‘test site’ in which the lessons of both successful and failed resource exporters have been synthesized into a set of ‘anti-resource curse’ policies. As one of the poorest countries in the world, Chad did not have the financial or institutional capacity to extract its landlocked oil reserves and bring them to market. Realising this situation, the World Bank and its lending agencies joined forces with a consortium of oil companies and international creditors in order to finance Chad’s oil development, and to demonstrate that policy intervention could reverse the ‘resource curse’. Consequently, since its inception in 2000, the $4.2 billion Chad-Cameroon Petroleum Development and Pipeline Project (referred to hereafter as the CCPP) has represented not only the largest private sector investment in Africa, but also the single best case study of external policy management as a weapon against the ‘resource curse’ (Gary & Reisch, 2005:8).

The success or failure of the CCPP is therefore significant on several levels. On one level, the project is an application of economic theory to government policy. As such, its outcomes can reveal the potential challenges of imposing general policy models on countries with highly individualised political and economic characteristics. On another level, it embodies a foreign interference in the economic sovereignty of a nation, and thus offers insights into the interaction between powerful international lenders and small and impoverished borrowing nations.

In analysing these two levels, this article poses the following key questions: 1) to what extent has the World Bank followed best practice in its structuring of the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project? 2) what results has the Bank’s intervention produced so far and 3) why have these early results occurred, and what do they reveal about the effectiveness of policy intervention against the ‘resource curse’?

This article finds that oil has not improved Chad’s standard of living. The country remains plagued by a lack of basic infrastructure, energy, and health services, and the majority of people continue to live on less than $1 a day. Moreover, the persistence of such deplorable conditions has placed extreme strains on the CCPP, and has spawned a wave of threats and accusations amongst the project’s principal actors. A consensus has emerged that these early CCPP failures are largely due to flaws in the World Bank’s policy choices and project implementation (Pegg, 2005; Gary & Reisch, 2005; IAG, 2004, 2005). However, such arguments ignore the significance of the source of the intervention. By designing all the rules for revenue management, the World Bank stripped Chad of its oil sovereignty. The foreign ownership that resulted has proven to be a major source of the project’s conflicts and continued renegotiation. This article therefore posits that the early success of the CCPP has been hindered more by the external nature of the World Bank’s policy intervention than by any particular flaws in the substance and implementation of the project’s policies. This argument proceeds as follows.

First, we outline the mechanisms which enable the ‘resource curse’, and then describe the best-practice policies the World Bank has chosen to address these mechanisms. After demonstrating that four years of oil flows under this policy structure have failed to improve the living conditions of Chad’s people, we examine three potential factors underpinning the CCPP’s shortcomings: institutional capacity constraints, socio-political incompatibilities, and subversive interactions between Chad and the project’s external actors. Further analysis reveals that these
three causal factors are all symptoms of the World Bank’s external policy intervention. The limitations of external intervention therefore explain the discrepancy between a well-informed development project and its sub-par results. We conclude by considering plausible revisions to the CCPP, and by drawing implications for future projects of this nature.

The ‘Resource Curse’

The ‘resource curse’ is an extensively documented economic phenomenon. In a seminal study, Jeffrey Sachs and Andrew Warner (1995) used a sample of 95 developing countries from 1970-1990 to demonstrate a robust negative correlation between natural resource exports and economic growth. Richard Auty (2001) also found that between 1960 and 1990, resource abundant countries experienced GDP per capita growth rates that were two to three times lower than those of resource poor countries. These empirical realities raise the key question, ‘why have resource-rich countries have performed so poorly?’

The mechanisms that transform large resource revenues into poor economic performance can be grouped into two categories – economic and behavioural. Both affect the accumulation and distribution of wealth within a country, but the economic mechanisms stem from forces such as exchange rates and commodity prices, while behavioural mechanisms are mainly issues of governance and fiscal management.

Economic Mechanisms

The economic mechanism most closely associated with the ‘resource curse’ is the ‘Dutch Disease’, which distorts the domestic economy in two ways. First, the export of the country’s resource leads to a large inflow of revenue which raises people’s incomes and subsequently their demand for local goods and services. The increased demand for these products drives up prices in the local economy, and if oil revenues are not evenly distributed among the population, those at the bottom end of the distribution suffer an increase in their cost of living. Second, rising domestic prices mean that local goods become more expensive relative to foreign goods (Corden & Neary, 1982:830). This relative price change is an appreciation of the real exchange rate, and harms domestic exporters by making it harder for them to sell their goods abroad at competitive prices.

The other major economic mechanism stems from the vulnerability of resource exporters to shocks in international commodity markets. The market prices of natural resources such as oil, gas, and minerals are very volatile in the global economy. Governments therefore frequently face inconsistent revenue streams, and find it difficult to follow disciplined fiscal policies and to plan long-term budgets. Public expenditures that are earmarked during boom periods cannot be sustained during bust periods unless massive deficits are incurred (Tsalik, 2003:7-8). As a result, resource-exporting economies often find themselves pressed for funds, and, amidst mounting debts, are unable to grow.

While these economic mechanisms create obvious hardships for resource exporters, not all countries have allowed these pressures to negatively impact their growth. Consequently, there seems to be a crucial intervening variable – governance – that determines the net effect of resource wealth on economic growth (Ross, 1999:5).
Behavioural Mechanisms

In turn, the second set of ‘resource curse’ mechanisms stem from the fiscal behaviour of governments. Resource wealth expands the horizons of governments and creates incentives for large expenditures. This spending tendency is reinforced by citizens’ expectations for quick and substantial results. Consequently, governments tend to invest in grandiose infrastructure projects which, while impressing citizens and promising modernisation and development, often carry low returns (Yates, 1996:25). Evidence of this behaviour, such as a mountain-top resort in Venezuela and an extravagant new airport in Saudi Arabia, is abundant in resource-rich nations throughout the world (Gary & Karl, 2003:22).

Although these lavish investments quickly deplete public funds, societal pressures for spending and growth remain. As a result, governments begin to borrow heavily from abroad, and over time, find themselves buried in deficits and under fire from an unsatisfied populous.

In addition to boosting government’s appetite for spending, resource windfalls also become the primary source of government revenue, and thus alter the fiscal structure of an economy. This concept is more well-known as ‘rentier state theory’, first advanced by Hossein Mahdavy (1970). Because governments receive a steady stream of external rent, they are relieved of the need to collect domestic revenue through taxes (Luciani, 1987; Yates, 1996:15). Freed from the fiscal transparency and responsibility that are normally demanded by taxpayers, these rentier states consequently become less accountable to their citizens (Yates, 1996:15).

Such an environment inevitably becomes a breeding ground for corruption7 and rent-seeking.8 Removed from any systems of transparency, public officials are free to extract favours and additional revenues by awarding import quotas, industrial licenses, or construction contracts (Gary & Karl, 2003:21). This behaviour leads to a systematic diversion of resources away from priority sectors such as health and education, and results in a general disregard for low-income groups in the population. It is no surprise, therefore, that natural resource exporting countries are ranked among the most corrupt in Transparency International’s World Corruption Index (Gary & Karl, 2003:22).

In sum, the ‘resource curse’ results from a combination of economic distortions and fiscal mismanagement. The accrual of resource revenues leads to an appreciation of the real exchange rate, and not only hurts the international competitiveness of domestic producers, but also raises prices in the local economy, effectively increasing people’s cost of living. The only way to offset these losses is to redistribute the resource wealth among the people, either through direct payments, increases in wages, or investments in their living standards (health, education, etc.). If this

<table>
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<th>Table 1: Summary of ‘Resource Curse’ Mechanisms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
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<td>• Dutch Disease</td>
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<td>• Revenue Volatility</td>
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<td>• Increased Borrowing and Debt Accumulation</td>
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<td>• Decreased Quality of Public Spending</td>
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Source: Author’s own synthesis of the academic literature.
happens, then people acquire the financial means to potentially rise out of poverty. However, when a poorly managed and corrupt government hoards resource revenues, and invests in impractical low-return projects instead of its people’s basic needs, then the country is often worse off than it was before its resource boom.

The Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project

Chad has many of the textbook vulnerabilities that make a country susceptible to the ‘resource curse’: a primitive economy, political instability, fragile public institutions, and a history of financial mismanagement. Since winning its independence from France in 1960, Chad has been ravaged by decades of civil war between northern Islamic groups and southern Christian factions (Uriz, 2001:215). Frequently changing governments have seized power either through military coups or rigged elections, and have fostered an intolerant and bureaucratic environment in which any type of change is difficult, let alone widescale economic reform and policy restructuring. Since 1990, President Déby has ruled under the facade of ‘democracy’, even though civil society is powerless in preventing him from using resource revenues ‘to promote the interests of his (northern) clan rather than those of the nation’ (Uriz, 2001:218). All these factors have earned Chad the rank of the seventh most corrupt nation in the world, according to Transparency International (2006).

Economically, the situation is even more dismal. According to United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), Chad is the seventh poorest country in the world (UN, 2006), with a per capita income of $650 a year, and a population of 9.7 million people, 80% of which live on less than $1 a day (IMF, 2007c; World Bank, 2006b). Only three out of every ten people have access to clean water, and electricity is available to 1% of the population (World Bank, 2006b). The infant mortality rate is 124 out of every 1,000, and those who make it past childhood face a life expectancy of only 44 years, with one doctor for every 29,000 inhabitants (World Bank, 2006b; UN, 2006). Given the inefficiency and uncompetitiveness of Chad’s agricultural export sectors – cotton and cattle – oil does indeed represent the only real hope for economic development (IMF, 2004:11).

Against this backdrop, the CCPP, signed and approved on 6 June 2000, aims to extract an estimated 1 billion barrels of oil from the Bolobo, Komé, and Miandoum oil fields in the Doba region of southern Chad. Due to country’s landlocked nature, a 1,070 km pipeline was built in order to transport the oil from the Doba fields, through Cameroon, and into an export facility at the Cameroonian coast of Kribi (Figure 1 over). More than half of the CCPP’s $4.2 billion cost⁹ was shouldered by a consortium of three oil companies – ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco, and Petronas (Malaysia). The European Investment Bank and other credit agencies financed the rest, with the World Bank providing only $293 million in loans.

At a maximum production capacity of 225,000 barrels per day (bpd), the pipeline promises to bring $5 billion in oil revenues into Chad’s economy over a 25-year period.¹⁰ Realising the transformative potential of such a sizeable sum, the World Bank made a concerted effort to design a Revenue Management Program (RMP) that would combat each mechanism of the ‘resource curse’ and channel oil revenues to the most impoverished sectors of the population.
The Structure of Intervention

With regards to the Dutch Disease, the most commonly advocated strategy for combating real exchange rate appreciation is to store revenue earned from oil exports in offshore accounts, and bring it into the domestic economy gradually (Stiglitz, 2004). This way, local producers and consumers have more time to adapt to ensuing changes in prices, output, and income.

Another recommendation is to save a portion of revenues that flow into the economy in order to minimise the other major economic mechanism – the vulnerability of oil exporters to fluctuating prices (Shaxson, 2005:319; Ross, 1999:306). In years when oil prices are high and revenues exceed expectations, surpluses should be deposited into a ‘stabilisation’ fund which can then be tapped in periods when low oil prices lead to revenues that are insufficient for predetermined budget allocations. This way, governments can smooth expenditures over time, and restrain their temptations to borrow.

With these policy models in mind, the World Bank stipulated that all direct oil revenues earned by Chad – both in the form of royalties and dividends – had to be stored in an offshore escrow account with Citibank in London. A key component of this account was a stabilisation fund, where any funds exceeding earmarked budget expenditures would be deposited.

With respect to the behavioural mechanisms of the ‘resource curse’, the Bank realised that a budget template would be necessary in order to prevent Chad from investing oil revenues in projects with little promise for poverty alleviation. As a result, the RMP called for 72% of Chad’s direct revenues to be allocated to five major priority sectors – education, health and social services, rural development, infrastructure, and environmental and water resource management. Another 13.5% of these revenues were allocated to Chad’s treasury for ‘discretionary spending’, while 4.5% were designated for the Doba oil-producing region. Finally, the remaining 10% went to a Future Generations Fund (FGF) in order to save for Chad’s post-oil era (Gary & Reisch, 2005:98-100; World Bank, 2000).

The RMP’s budget template, however, only set rules for the earmarking of oil revenues, and did not establish guidelines for how specific projects would be chosen, implemented, and monitored. For this separate function, the Bank formed a special oversight committee – the Collège de Contrôle et de Surveillance des Ressources Pétrolières (CCSRP) – comprised of Chadians from both government and civil society. To support the CCSRP’s operations, and to foster a transparent environment for oil-financed projects, the World Bank also commissioned four external monitoring bodies: the International Advisory Group (IAG), which makes frequent field visits to Chad and identifies any weaknesses or abnormalities in the CCPP’s implementation (IAG, 2006), the Inspection Panel, which serves as the public forum in which citizens harmed by the CCPP can file protests, and the External Compliance Monitoring Group (ECMG) and Comité Technique National de Suivi et de Contrôle (CTNSC), which monitor the oil consortium and hold it to strict social and environmental standards.11

Finally, in order to ensure that Chad had the institutional capacity to implement the RMP’s policies, the Bank invested a total of $41.2 million in two capacity-building projects – the Management of the Petroleum Economy Project (MPEP), and the Petroleum Sector Management Capacity Building Project (PSMCP). Both of these projects were designed to offer technical assistance and training to Chadian workers.
in order to facilitate the revenue management process (World Bank, 2006a). The RMP’s legal and institutional elements demonstrate how closely the World Bank followed best practice in its structuring of the CCPP. In light of this seemingly bulletproof structure, the disappointing early results of the CCPP are rather counterintuitive.

Growth Without Gain
On a purely macroeconomic level, the CCPP has had a tremendous impact on Chad’s headline indicators. Between 1990 (the year President Déby came into power) and 2000 (the year the CCPP was approved), Chad’s real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by an annual average of only 1.6%, with negative growth rates in four of those years. During the pipeline’s construction between 2001 and 2003, however, average GDP growth jumped to 10% as the oil consortium built and renovated over 300 miles of roads and bridges and spent close to $500 million on local goods and services (Vesely, 2003:36). After the pipeline became operational in October 2003, the surge in oil production and exports prompted an astonishing 33.6% increase in GDP, giving Chad the highest growth rate in the world by the end of 2004 (Table 2 over). In addition to enlarging Chad’s national income, booming oil exports have helped to swing the country’s current account from a deficit of -47.4% of GDP in 2003 to a surplus of 1.8% in 2006. Furthermore, the revenues accruing to the government from these oil exports have lowered Chad’s external debt from 50.2% of GDP in 2003, to 20.5% in 2006.

With regards to the Dutch Disease, Chad has largely insulated its real exchange rate from the pressures of large revenue inflows. Domestic prices (displayed in Table 2 as the inflation rate) have not shown any definitive increasing trend since 2003, and have fluctuated mostly on the basis of changes in food prices, which are determined primarily by Chad’s harvest season as opposed to oil revenues (IMF, 2007b:1). Overall, Chad’s real exchange rate (relative to the US dollar and US prices) appreciated roughly 2% during the peak oil export period of 2004-2005 – not nearly enough to seriously damage Chad’s export competitiveness (IMF, 2007a:10).

Chad has also shielded itself from the volatility of world oil prices by adhering to the Bank’s prescribed principles of precautionary saving. All oil revenue inflows exceeding the annual budget requirements have been deposited into a stabilisation fund (Gary & Reisch, 2005:72). In 2004 and 2005, these deposits amounted to $19.9 million, approximately 4.9% of the $399 million in gross oil revenues earned during that period. Additionally, Chad has exhibited fiscal discipline and transparency by complying with the expenditure provisions of the RMP. The government has used oil revenues to repay its debt to project lenders, and to invest the prescribed 10%
in the Future Generations Fund and 4.5% in the Doba oil-producing region. After these deductions, Chad designated the remaining $67.7 million in 2004, and $178 million in 2005 for spending on the RMP’s priority sectors (World Bank, 2005).

In this sense, the policy structure of the CCPP has been enforced by the Chadian government. The economic mechanisms of the ‘resource curse’ have been seemingly counteracted with strong GDP growth, a stable real exchange rate, and saving in the stabilisation fund, while the behavioural mechanisms have been mitigated by responsible public spending. Although this progress suggests a bright future for the project, the realities on the ground tell a different story.

Four years after the first outflows of oil, the majority of Chadians continue to live in mud huts with a minimal source of income, and little access to water and sanitation services. One of the World Bank’s hopes was that the CCPP would generate new jobs for Chadians, and provide valuable training for the largely rural and unskilled population. However, even at the height of pipeline construction in 2002, the CCPP employed only 7,382 Chadians (EssoChad, 2005:56). Ever since the completion of the pipeline, this employment number has declined steadily, and at the end of 2006, only 6,436 Chadian nationals remained under contract with ExxonMobil (EssoChad, 2006:55).

At the same time that oil operations have failed to induce economic improvements, they have also exacerbated a host of pre-existing social ills. In particular, the influx of foreign workers spurred by the CCPP has resulted in significant increases in crime and prostitution (Pegg, 2005:15). Indeed, only three months after oil exports began, jobless immigrants flooded the Doba region, and robberies more than tripled, forcing local residents to start padlocking their huts (Wax, 2004). Furthermore, the increase in foreign workers boosted the potential for local women to profit off of prostitution. The consequent rise in commercial sex operations encouraged the spread of AIDS along the pipeline, and placed additional strains on Chad’s primitive health care system. Since many Chadian project workers originated from outside Doba, there is now a heightened concern that they will return home and spread the disease to their local regions (Chesla, 2003).

As a whole, the early results of the CCPP present an interesting puzzle. A booming Chadian oil sector has brought high GDP growth and steady decreases in public debt, and yet these economic gains have not substantially improved living conditions. Although it is tempting to attribute these failures to the behavioural

| Table 2: Selected Economic & Financial Indicators for Chad |
|---------------------------------|----------|--------|--------|-------|-------|
| Indicator                       | 2003    | 2004   | 2005   | 2006/E| 2007/P|
| Real GDP (annual % change)      | 14.7    | 33.6   | 8.6    | 1.3   | -1.2  |
| CPI Inflation (annual % change) | -1.8    | -5.4   | 7.9    | 7.9   | 4.0   |
| Current Account Balance (% of GDP) | -47.4  | -4.8   | 1.1    | 1.8   | 5.3   |
| External Debt (% of GDP)        | 50.2    | 35.0   | 27.0   | 20.5  | 24.1  |

Source: International Monetary Fund (2007c); E = estimate, P = Projection.
mechanisms of ‘the resource curse’, the World Bank’s policy intervention has clearly forced Chad to invest oil revenues in priority sectors, and to do so through transparent processes and institutions. Why, then, has the Bank’s intervention proven so powerless against ‘the resource curse’?

Tracing the Fault Lines

Capacity Building & Two-Speed Development
The first potential explanation stems from the observation that the CCPP was actually two different projects being conducted simultaneously. One project was purely physical, and involved the construction of the pipeline, as well as the infrastructure needed to maintain its functionality: roads, supply depots, and repair facilities. The second project was institutional, and focused on building Chad’s oil revenue management capacity through improved regulatory frameworks, administrative training programmes, and technical and legal supervisory bodies. While these two projects seem complementary in nature, when the World Bank was first conceptualizing their implementation, it stressed the need for them to occur sequentially, and for ‘capacity to be in place prior to the beginning of the (CCPP’s) major infrastructure works and long before the first projected oil’ (Gary & Reisch, 2005:81).

In reality, however, pipeline construction began a mere four months after project approval, with oil flowing to international markets a full year ahead of schedule.

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Figure 2: Chad-Cameroon Pipeline
The unexpected acceleration of the CCPP’s physical components has led to what the Bank’s primary external monitoring group, the IAG, has called the ‘two-speed nature’ of the CCPP (IAG, 2001:3).

This sequencing failure has placed negative pressures on Chad’s institutions in two major ways. First, key organisations such as the CCSRSP have been forced to assume their roles with only limited functional capacity. In May of 2004, Therese Mekombe, vice president of the CCSRSP, publicly complained about how her oversight committee was ‘understaffed, underfunded, and deprived of information by the Chadian government and the oil consortium’ (Doyle, 2004). Indeed, up until late 2003, the CCSRSP didn’t even have an office facility, let alone the computer and internet access needed to monitor the Citibank escrow account once oil started flowing (Gary & Reisch, 2005:55). Despite such technical deficiencies, the CCSRSP was placed in the position of carrying the full weight of a booming oil economy in July 2004.

Second, the failure of new institutions such as the CCSRSP to develop on time has placed an added strain on Chad’s existing institutions which have been pushed beyond their area of comfort and expertise, and burdened with management operations that were not present in Chad’s pre-oil economy. In 2002, for example, Dinanko Ngomibe, the budget director in Chad’s Ministry of Finance, voiced his complaints that ‘in terms of human capacity, we’re not ready [to handle the work load]’. ‘Less than 25% of [my] colleagues in the civil service know how to use computers, even when the electricity works’ (Delescluse, 2004:47). Without the help of a fully functioning CCSRSP, the Ministry has been virtually powerless with large-scale budget allocations and electronic revenue transactions.

To the extent that the World Bank overwhelmed Chad with complex regulatory frameworks and management processes without first strengthening institutional capacity, the CCPP’s poor results can be partially attributed to a failure of sequencing. While this critique implicates the World Bank’s hubris and poor management skills, it also highlights the fact that Chad’s civil society and institutions were severely weak and inexperienced to begin with. The notion that Chad had built-in impediments to a successful economic agenda serves as the basis for the next potential cause of the CCPP’s shortcomings.

**State Characteristics: Economic Ideology & Social Cohesion**

Although so far, Chad has demonstrated a poor ability to transform its oil wealth into poverty reduction, Paul Stevens (2003a) has demonstrated that other natural resource exporters such as Botswana, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Chile have achieved drastically greater success. Stevens argues that these four nations were ‘developmental states’ which avoided turning into ‘predatory states’ (Stevens, 2003a:18; Evans, 1995). The developmental state is one in which the ruling elite derive their legitimacy not from a de facto claim to power, but from a demonstrated ability to deliver economic growth (Stevens, 2003a:19). The developmental state thus imposes on itself institutions which encourage transparent policy making and restrain the abuse of power (Stevens, 2003a:19). In contrast, the predatory state is one in which the ruling elite exploit the national economy for the sake of their own personal enrichment (Stevens, 2003b:17).

Stevens cites Botswana as a developmental state that has exhibited model fiscal discipline in managing its diamond revenues over the past 40 years. By curbing its
expenditures through a revenue stabilisation fund, and creating an anti-corruption directorate, Botswana has ‘deliberately constrain(ed) its freedom in order to limit temptations arising from (large inflows of) revenue’ (Stevens, 2003a:10; Sarraf & Jiwanji, 2001:10-11). Chile and Indonesia have demonstrated similar fiscal restraint in managing their resources, and have also promoted trade liberalisation with the intent of diversifying their economies and encouraging competitiveness among domestic producers (Stevens, 2003a:18).

On the surface, the policies adopted by these ‘success story’ nations are similar to those outlined in Chad’s revenue management programme – namely the stabilisation fund and the corruption-monitoring CCSRP. However, the crucial difference is that these policies were imposed and administered from within, and not by an external entity such as the World Bank. Moreover, these four nations seemed to have ‘strong elements of frugality built into their psyche’, something which was noticeably absent in Chad’s leadership (Stevens, 2003a:18). In consultations with the Chadian government in 2004, for example, the IMF reported that officials showed extreme reluctance in saving revenues as part of a stabilisation mechanism (IMF, 2004:14).

Although Chad’s ineffectiveness in administering economy policy was partly due to this lack of discipline, it also reflected a lack of cohesion within Chad. Botswana benefited from a ‘small and largely homogenous’ population, which promoted unity in the country’s developmental orientation, especially among government officials (Stevens, 2003a:11). This is clearly not the case in Chad, where decades of civil war have left a legacy of North-South tensions and ethnically-charged rebel movements.

Chad’s ongoing civil conflicts are also in contrast to Malaysia, which governed under a ‘plural society model’, and made a conscious effort to unite different ethnic groups and empower indigenous peoples such as the Bumiputera (Shamsul, 1997:243; Stevens, 2003a:16). Because this group constituted close to 55% of the population, investments in their welfare stimulated growth and development throughout the economy, especially in the rural sector (Abidin, 2004; Stevens 2003a:16).

In Chad, this kind of mentality has not been present, and apart from a provision calling for the representatives in the CCSRP to be from both Muslim and Christian communities, ethnic and religious diversity was not seriously taken into account in the CCPP’s design (Delescluse, 2004:48). Since Chad’s oil reserves are concentrated in the country’s southern Christian region, and Déby’s government is composed primarily of northern Muslims, this oversight was an open invitation to conflict and nepotism. Indeed, once Chad received the World Bank’s first set of loans for capacity building, the government distributed the funds in such a way that the majority of people receiving technical assistance and training belonged to Déby’s northern ethnic group (Delescluse, 2004:48).

On the whole, going into the CCPP, Chad was maladapted to a natural resource-driven economy, and not only incapable of responsibly managing large revenue inflows, but also somewhat unwilling. Consequently, the World Bank was placed in the difficult position of trying to constrain ‘predation’ by persuading Chad’s ruling elite into a ‘developmental’ mindset (Stevens, 2003a:19). This process required a large degree of interference in Chad’s sovereignty, and the tensions resulting from this intervention are perhaps the most significant factor contributing to the CCPP’s early failures.
Clashing Sovereignties & Subversive Interactions

As altruistic as the World Bank’s intervention in Chad appears, it has imposed numerous demands on Chad’s government while offering few concessions. It is no surprise then that the CCPP’s elaborate regulations and supervision have provoked resentments among Chadian officials, and heightened their incentives to exploit project loopholes and attempt to regain leverage in the revenue management process. There are several revealing examples of Chad’s government being guided by these incentives. In December 2000, only six months after the CCPP had been officially approved, President Déby used $4.5 million of a $25 million signing bonus from the oil consortium in order to purchase weapons. Bonuses and indirect revenues are not covered by the CCPP’s revenue management framework, and Déby exploited this loophole in an attempt to assert his position on Chad’s national priorities. ‘Without security there can be no development programs’, Déby stated at the time, referring to the violent unrest and pressures he faced from rebel groups in the north and south of the country (Runyan, 2001). Although he eventually agreed to repay the $4.5 million from the national budget, his actions cast early doubts over the goodwill of the Chadian government. These doubts were reignited in January 2006, when he amended the CCPP’s revenue management law (Law 001) to eliminate the Future Generations Fund and allow for more discretionary government spending and weapons purchases. The World Bank was outraged at this breach of the CCPP’s poverty-reducing mission, and suspended the project indefinitely (cutting off Chad’s access to oil revenues in the process) until finally reaching a compromise in July 2006.

Déby’s resistance against the World Bank’s intervention has also extended into the institutional realm, where he has attempted to control the composition of the CCSRP. In February 2004, he appointed his brother-in-law Idriss Ahmet Idriss to the post of Director of Chad’s Central Bank, automatically giving him a spot on the CCSRP. Given the fact that in Chad, the separation of power between the executive, judiciary, and legislative branches is not highly pronounced, the four other CCSRP members from these branches of government can also be viewed as being uncomfortably close to Déby (Massey & May, 2005:259).

The oil consortium and its royalty contracts with Chad were yet another factor constraining Deby’s influence over oil policy. Chad’s original 1988 contract with the oil consortium entitled the government to only 12.5% of royalties. In 2004, however, international prices for Brent crude oil were soaring above $50 per barrel, while Chadian crude, due to its greater impurities and higher transportation costs, was selling at a discounted rate of only $20 per barrel. Frustrated by his government’s ultimate share of revenues, Déby lashed out at the oil companies, accusing the consortium of ‘swindling, opacity, and fraud’, and of intending to ‘bleed the Chadian economy dry’ (Massey & May, 2005:272). More recently, in August 2006, Déby ordered two of the consortium’s members – Chevron and Petronas – to cease operations in Chad and leave the country, claiming that they failed to pay $450 million in overdue taxes (Walters & Faucon, 2006).

The fact that Déby has felt the need to rebel against his foreign financiers, and to undermine the cooperation that is essential to a development project of this nature, suggests that the CCPP has embodied a fundamental failure of external intervention. Nearly seven years into the project and four years since the first batch of oil exports, Chad, the World Bank, and the oil consortium are still trying to negotiate the rules and mechanisms for calculating and distributing oil revenues. Given this fragile
regulatory framework, it is not surprising that the institutions designed to assist with the CCPP’s implementation have not been able to operate effectively.

**External Intervention: The Common Denominator**

At this point, it should become clear that none of the three causal factors examined blame the substance of the CCPP’s policies for Chad’s poor development results. Instead, the overarching culprit seems to be the World Bank’s attempt to implement these policies externally, and to create political will and institutional capacity in a country mired by nepotism, civil conflict, and corruption. Each causal factor is therefore largely a symptom of the Bank’s external intervention.

The two-speed nature of the CCPP resulted from the World Bank’s insistence that oil exports commence even when critical institutions such as the CCSRP were not yet fully operational. Because the RMP was structured and imposed externally, Chad felt that it could allow the World Bank to compensate for any domestic institutional deficiencies once revenue inflows began. This over-reliance on the World Bank would likely not have occurred had Chad been allowed ownership of the revenue management process from the beginning.

In terms of socio-economic characteristics, Chad had neither the developmental mindset to enforce economic policy in a booming oil sector, nor the social unity and counterbalancing centres of authority to prevent Déby from hoarding oil revenues or favouring certain social groups. Through external intervention, the World Bank hoped to serve as both a behavioural modifier and a regulator of corruption. However, it is painfully clear that World Bank economists are not a viable substitute to domestic bureaucrats – they are, after all, only policy advisors and not policy implementers.

Finally, the World Bank’s desire to see the RMP successfully implemented led to an insistence that Chad sacrifice its oil sovereignty. By placing Chad’s royalties in an offshore bank account and limiting their use to Bank-specified priority sectors, the World Bank fostered an atmosphere of mistrust and begrudging cooperation. The dynamics of this relationship made Déby more preoccupied with regaining leverage over the project than with pursuing compromise and ensuring that Chad’s oil wealth was successfully transferred to the poor. It is doubtful that his attempts to undermine the RMP would have occurred with such frequency had the Bank allowed the Chadian government more input into the revenue management programme.

**Changing Interdependence & the Future of the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project**

In many ways, the tensions created by the World Bank’s control of Chad’s economic policies have transformed the CCPP from a joint development initiative into a fundamentally counterproductive struggle for authority. Not only does this atmosphere continue to impede the strengthening of local institutions, but it also raises serious doubts as to whether Chad and the World Bank can constructively share long-term control of the CCPP.

Now that Chad’s oil infrastructure is in place, and the pipeline is fully operational, the dependence dynamic between Chad and the World Bank has changed significantly. With oil revenues rapidly flowing into Chad, the World Bank’s
leverage as a financial donor is slowly waning. As Chad edges closer to paying off its debt, it can afford to move away from compliance with the World Bank’s policies and to install its own regulatory institutions and policies (Gary & Reisch, 2005:86).

In this context, the World Bank is in extreme danger of dropping out as an actor in the CCPP. If the 2004 dispute over oil prices between Chad and the oil consortium is any indication, Chad is gaining negotiating power on the basis of its rising oil income, and is becoming more confident in its ability to confront the oil companies and bargain for a higher share of royalties (Eriksson & Hagströmer, 2005:59). Déby’s government has already demonstrated its intent to challenge the oil consortium by establishing a new state oil company – the Société Tchadienne des Hydrocarbures – and by threatening to hand Chevron and Petrona’s’s shares to this company (Africa Confidential, 2006:4). These aggressive inclinations foreshadow the emergence of a two-actor scenario in which the long-term details of the CCPP are settled solely between Chad and the oil consortium.

The threat of this two-actor scenario makes the World Bank’s recent suspension of funds to Chad (in January 2006) an even more crucial crossroads. The standoff can be viewed as a desperate attempt by the Bank to maintain a stake in the CCPP because, as Eriksson and Hagströmer (2005:61) argue, the public will most likely blame the Bank, and not the oil companies, if the project were to fail. The Bank’s desperation is reflected in the memorandum signed with Chad in July 2006 to end the CCPP’s suspension. The resolution is a seeming concession on the part of the Bank since the only major difference from the original project agreement is that previously, Chad had to pledge 72% of all direct oil revenues to poverty-reducing sectors, while now, it must allocate 70% of both direct and indirect revenues. Granted, this revision is not trivial, since in 2007, indirect revenues will amount to an estimated $1.3 billion (Africa Confidential, 2006). However, the Bank has given Chad a full year to develop a new budgetary framework before the new spending regulations are signed into law. In the meantime, direct revenues continue to accumulate, and once indirect revenues start flowing, there is no guarantee that Déby will not once again renege on his promises.

Ultimately, the ongoing renegotiation of the CCPP’s regulatory structure has also forced the oil consortium to decide whether to honour its royalty contract with Chad, or support the World Bank’s accusations that Chad’s behaviour compromises the CCPP’s poverty-reducing nature. So far, the oil consortium seems to have wilted to Chadian pressures. After Déby accused Chevron and Petrona’s of tax evasion, both companies agreed to pay undisclosed compensation sums in order to ensure their continued presence in Chad’s oil fields (Africa Confidential, 2006:4). Therefore, it appears that the CCPP’s central goal of improving Chadian living standards will continue to remain obscured – not only by political and legal disputes between Chad and the World Bank, but also by the profit-seeking behaviour of the oil companies.

**Conclusion**

Despite all the international optimism that the CCPP initially evoked, it is now clear that Chad’s dream of oil wealth and poverty alleviation, and the World Bank’s hope of defeating the ‘resource curse’, will have to be put on hold. Granted, after only four years of oil flows, it is ultimately too early to deem the project a complete failure. Nevertheless, it is particularly distressing that the majority of conflicts have concerned the principles which are most crucial to the CCPP’s long-term effectiveness – cooperation and synergies between the Chad and the World Bank,
enforcement of priority sector budget spending, impartiality of the CCSRP, and transparent contracts with oil companies. Without a substantial strengthening of these fundamental issues, the overarching goal of economic growth and poverty reduction will be increasingly difficult to achieve.

With these shortcomings in mind, it seems logical to revisit one of the major questions posed at the beginning of this article: can policy intervention prevent the ‘resource curse’? Given the article’s central argument, the tentative answer is ‘yes’, but only in the presence of three conditions: 1) the intervention comes from within the resource exporting country; 2) the institutions administering economic policy have the prerequisite capacity to manage large-scale financial flows; 3) all political actors demonstrate a sustained commitment to transparency and accountability.

These conditions are highly idealised, and indeed, that is why they run contrary to some of the more realist arguments made by other scholars. Stephen Krasner (2004:12), for example, reasons that an appropriate remedy for the CCPP is for the World Bank to intrude even more on Chad’s oil sovereignty, and to personally appoint the members of the CCSRP (Pegg, 2005:20). However, Krasner’s rationale seems rather tenuous because the World Bank’s intrusion and conditionalities have themselves been a major driving force of the CCPP’s conflicts and failures. Even before oil flows from Chad began, development experts such as Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, the United Nations Special Representative for West Africa, contended that overloading poor countries with ‘too many regulations and conditionalities’ ... kill(s) the potential for local institutional growth and ‘develop(s) conditions for corrupt practices’ (US House of Representatives, 2002).

A more extreme revision to the CCPP is proposed by Sala-i-Martin and Subramanian (2003:18), who argue for the creation of a ‘virtual’ non-oil economy where the World Bank transfers oil rents directly to citizens, and prevents revenues from reaching the hands of corrupt officials (Pegg, 2005:24); this approach is also fairly unreasonable. If Chad’s government lacks the institutional capacity to properly manage oil revenues (as the early experiences of the CCPP demonstrate), then it seems unlikely that an uneducated population would be able to handle such large sums of money. Indeed, during the construction phase of the CCPP, rural farmers who had their land damaged by the pipeline and were compensated by the oil consortium, tended to spend their rewards on alcohol, prostitutes, and overnight stays in N’Djamena’s hotels (Eriksson & Hagströmer, 2005:51).

The shortcomings of Krasner’s and Sala-i-Martin and Subramanian’s alternatives underline the practical obstacles to using external intervention as an ‘anti-resource curse’ strategy. Corruption and weak institutional capacity can only be addressed by governments that take ownership of their policies, and understand not only their own technical limitations, but also the social landscape within which they operate. The successes of Malaysia, Botswana, Indonesia, and Chile are a strong testament to this assertion.

In the end, these conclusions offer important insights into the role that external actors can realistically play in promoting the development of resource-abundant nations. While Scott Pegg (2005) claims that the CCPP was a ‘one-off’ event that came about as a result of unique circumstances, the reality is that new resource booms are likely to occur in many developing countries in the near future. In light of the increasing scarcity of oil, as well as the growing global demand for energy, industrialised nations have embarked on searches for new sources of oil. With
hydrocarbon riches constantly being discovered in Africa, the continent has become the centre of this new ‘energy scramble’. The US, in particular, has repeatedly expressed an intent to diversify its oil supplies away from the Middle East, and has increased its purchases of African oil from 13% of its total oil imports in 2002 to nearly 20% at the end of 2006 (Volman, 2003; Gary & Reisch, 2005:5). 22

The global tilt towards African oil means that the continent will soon be swarmed by oil companies from India and China, many of whom tend to invest without any apparent concern for the environment or for corruption and human rights. 21 Given recent increases in world oil prices, these companies will expect larger returns on their investments, and will be more willing to set up extraction facilities in Africa’s poor and politically unstable countries without seeking the risk mitigation services of international financial institutions (IFI’s) such as the World Bank (Pegg, 2005:22).

In this sense, it becomes even more important for new natural resource exporters to handle resource revenues on their own terms, and to actively implement sound economic and fiscal policies. Although these countries may suffer from technical and institutional weaknesses similar to Chad’s, they are not powerless in managing natural resource economies.

Indeed, despite all its troubles and setbacks, Chad has shown some promising signs of progress. A recent IAG report observes that the different sectors of government have begun to align their supervisory and monitoring operations, and that ‘priority ministries (now) have a better understanding of budget execution procedures’ (IAG, 2005:iii). The CCSRP, in particular, has made significant strides in its ability to distribute oil revenues and ensure their proper use. In the Doba oil-producing region, a new modern school has recently been constructed, along with two water towers that will expand the region’s drinking water supply (World Bank, 2007). Institutional capacity building, it seems, is a slow and delicate process that cannot be forcefully accelerated by external actors. Countries must instead be allowed to calibrate their institutions to a resource-driven economy through internal reform.

For Chad, this adaptation may have already been irreversibly damaged by the World Bank’s external pressures. However, as this article has argued, a successful prevention of the ‘resource curse’ for future natural resource exporters is not out of reach. Theoretical knowledge and policy prescriptions are available in the public realm from a variety of IFI’s, academic economists, and NGO’s. Countries simply have to be willing to use this information without having it forced upon them by external actors. In the end, World Bank failure to understand this concept is the main reason why the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project remains a hopeful model as opposed to a successful reality.

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Endnotes

1. The term ‘resource curse’ was first used in academic literature by Richard Auty (1993). Terry Lynn Karl (1997) has also referred to the same phenomenon as the ‘paradox of plenty’.

2. The World Bank Group lending agencies that are relevant to the CCPP are the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which lends primarily to middle-income countries at commercial interest rates, the International Development Association (IDA), which provides near
interest-free loans to very low income countries, and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which lends to the private sector.

3. The characterisation of the World Bank’s involvement in the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project as ‘policy intervention’ is advanced by Pegg (2005).

4. The term ‘Dutch Disease’ was originally coined to explain the negative effects of North Sea oil revenues on industrial production in the Netherlands during the 1970s.

5. For a formal economic treatment of the ‘Dutch Disease’ using the tradable/non-tradable goods model; see Alan Gelb et al. (1988) and Corden & Neary (1982).

6. A first-class explanation of governance comes from Daniel Kaufmann (2005), who defines the term as ‘the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. This includes the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored, and replaced (the political dimension); the government’s capacity to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies (the economic dimension); and the respect of citizens and the state for the country’s institutions (the institutional respect dimension).’

7. Corruption is broadly defined as the abuse of public office for personal gain.

8. Rent-seeking refers to the pursuit of government policies or programs that transfer income to one person or group at the expense of others. The term was introduced by Anne Krueger (1974).

9. Although the project cost was originally estimated at $3.7 billion, ExxonMobil revised this figure to $4.2 billion in October 2004; refer to Gary and Reisch (2005:6).

10. The original estimate was $2 billion, but high oil prices in the past few years have made it clear that this figure will be closer to $5 billion; see Gary and Reisch (2005:35).

11. An analysis of the numerous environmental issues pertaining to the CCPP is beyond the scope of this article. For a sample documentation of these various risks and impacts, consult Horta, Nguiffo & Djiroibe (1999).

12. Author’s calculations based on data from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators 2006.

13. This growth rate inevitably declined in 2005 and 2006 as oil production volumes stabilised, and, according to IMF (2007c) projections, will likely moderate further in the future as oil production reaches capacity and export growth tapers off.

14. The current account is the sum of a country’s trade balance (the difference between exports and imports) and its net investment income (the difference between domestic holdings of foreign assets and foreign holdings of domestic assets).

15. Chad’s inflation rate is highly sensitive to food prices, and the deflation in 2003-04 appears to have been a result of a plentiful harvest and falling food prices. Similarly, a drought in late 2004 raised food prices and inflation in 2005, while a spike in meat prices was largely responsible for the high inflation in 2006 (IMF, 2007b:1)

16. Chad’s local currency, the CFA franc, is pegged to the euro. The euro appreciated considerably relative to the US dollar between 2004 and 2005, meaning that the CFA franc, by virtue of being pegged to the euro, also appreciated relative to the dollar. Since movements in Chad’s domestic prices did not show any consistent trend during that time period, the real exchange rate appreciation of the CFA franc relative to the US dollar seems to have been driven primarily by the move in the nominal CFA franc/dollar exchange rate.

17. Figures are derived from the data in Gary and Reisch (2005:71-76). The author assumes responsibility for any errors in calculation.

18. As of 15 January 2006, the Future Generations Fund account had a balance of $36.2 million.

19. Chad’s central bank is the Bank of Central African States, which also conducts the monetary policy of Cameroon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Congo, and Gabon.

20. Brent is a North sea crude blend which is used to set a benchmark price in the world oil market.
21. Author’s interview with Sandra Barnes, Professor of Anthropology and Director of the African Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania, 7 February 2006. See also Pegg (2005:22).

22. Author’s calculations based on data from the US Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration.

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Emerging Spaces for Debating Africa & the Global South

Usman A. Tar & Shiraz Durrani

As reported in recent issues of this journal (ROAPE 110 and 111), there has been phenomenal blossoming of scholarly and policy focus on Africa and other marginalised regions of the world. In intellectual circles, this has ‘spread beyond the normal confines of “Africanist” publications with a substantial amount of comment and analysis reaching more generalist readership’ (Brown, 2006:111). In this article, we note that while some events – in particular, those that seek to portray the West as ‘benevolent’ – are grandiosely publicised (e.g. G8 Summits, theLive8 ‘Make Poverty History’ concert and so on), others are relatively less publicised – for instance, anti-globalisation events such the World Social Forum – understandably because they seek to challenge predominant modes of thinking and ideology. Our focus is on the latter which we note is conquering greater public and intellectual imaginations. We argue that these novel spaces are now drawing attention to fundamental issues that are less recognised, indeed avoided, in mainstream spaces.

On 25 April 2007, the Department of Applied Social Sciences (DASS) at the London Metropolitan University hosted a Workshop on the theme Trade Unions, Democracy and Working Class Struggles in Africa. The event was attended by more than 45 people both from within the University as well as external academic and community groups. Three speakers delivered unusual but provocative papers. A Press Statement released shortly after the event states its background and raison d'être:

The attention of the world is increasingly drawn to Africa with its vast resources and the continent’s inability to match the growth in other regions such as South and East Asia. The 1960s saw independence from colonialism in many African countries with many hopes of a new era of growth and development. There was an expectation that working class and trade union movements would join hands with political movements and strengthen democracy and development. An in-depth look at the forces that the working class represent was the theme of the latest in the increasingly popular series of debates and lectures organised by the Department of Applied Social Sciences of London Metropolitan University (DASS, 2007).

This event is part of a wider programme designed by DASS to provide a much-needed space for debating matters of class struggles, inequality and exploitation – not only in Africa, but throughout the world. This is a welcome development in a world dominated by neoliberalism where ‘left thinking’ has been marginalised. In this article, we argue that the DASS event and similar forums organised throughout the world are a novel attempt in intellectual circles to focus on how social forces in the global South are coming to terms with the challenges of neo-liberal globalisation, democratisation and development. However, emerging debates should not be
divorced from previous historical, intellectual projects, particularly those that flourished during the Cold War.

**Neo-liberalism, Globalisation, ICT & the Rise of Critical Voices**

It is misleading to claim that scholarly interest in Africa is a new phenomenon; scholars and policy makers have always debated on almost every issue ranging from state-building to primitive accumulation. Consider, for instance, the stockpiles of ideas generated during Cold War – there is more than enough to read! However, given the changing mutations of ideas and political ideologies that frame them (for instance from ‘liberalism vs. communism’ or ‘bipolarity’ before 1989 to ‘neo-liberalism’, ‘unipolarity’ and ‘globalisation’ thereafter), it is impossible for scholars and politicians to remain captive to old ideas. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the roots (including eccentric flavours) of current ideas and movement in previous ones. For instance, much earlier, scholars engaged with trade union movements in Africa (the theme of the DASS event), in rigorous and productive ways. Key examples include D. I. Davies (1966) on *African Trade Unions* and Robin Cohen and Richard Sandbrook (1975) on *The Development of an African Working Class: Studies in Class Formation and Action*. This latter book contained thirteen chapters grouped into three parts: a) initial stirrings of working class consciousness, b) contemporary workers’ organisations and c) contemporary action (resistance).\(^3\) The key point that emerges from these two examples is that there is a common thread that runs across previous and current attempts in debating Africa.

The DASS event earlier alluded to cannot be divorced from the current radical forums, particularly amongst Southern scholars and activists seeking to proactively engage, even confront and deconstruct the painful challenges posed by globalisation and neoimperialism on lives and livelihoods of subaltern social forces and groups in developing countries. This is indeed an incremental stride aimed at empowering local peoples – those at the receiving end of elite-centred policies nurtured at all centres of global capitalist power: metropolitan (London, Washington, Seattle, Paris, New York, Gleneagles) and/or peripheral (Johannesburg, Abuja, Delhi, Rio de Janeiro) – and reinforcing their visions and struggles. There is a need to contextualise the current intellectual and policy terrains, and the emergence of radical voices seeking to ‘talk truth to power’, share experiences and forge alliances on issues of exploitation, inequality, class struggles.

The marginalisation of critical thought in the aftermath of *Washington Consensus* – a world riven with neo-liberal dogma and policies with all their repressive tendencies – has no doubt thwarted any genuine alternatives to these very same ‘ideas’ – particularly those which are seen to be apologetic of ‘left’ ideology and, therefore, treacherous to the internationalisation of liberal idealism. As Harrsion (2005:1303) notes:

> Neo-liberalism has fully settled into our lexicon of concepts for making sense of Africa’s (and global Southern) development over the past 20 years ... neo-liberalism emerged as a synonym for the mainly externally directed attempt to remove the state from the economy.

In achieving these ends, the centres of global capital (Western governments; bilateral and multilateral donor agencies etc.), have sought to deploy, both by design and default, a number of repressive tools, including the marginalisation of the so-called ‘anti-establishment’ forces (such as labour movements) regardless of their contribution to the ideals of ‘democracy’ (however defined), and the contingent empowerment of ‘state’ or ‘civil society’ (a strategy of convenience, de-
fined by how far either the state or civil society promote the expansion of market capitalism). This has created a ‘contradiction between the so-called “democratic claims” of the neo-liberal agenda and the autocratic approach adopted by powerful countries and institutions behind it’ (Tar, 2006:76). The contradictions of neo-liberalism and, by extension, mainstream capitalism are embedded in its logic:

Neo-liberalism aspires, in its ideology and practice, to intensify the abstractions inherent in capitalism itself: to separate labour power from its human context, to replace society with the market, to build a universe out of aggregated transactions (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000:305).

The DASS lecture series aspire to confront the endangerment of alternative ideas inherent in the logic of neo-liberal capitalism. In particular, it aims to give voice to those silenced by this logic through new communication technologies:

to highlight the contribution of leaders, movements and ideas that have shaped the world. Many of these have been forgotten, marginalised or deliberately hidden from public view. People everywhere are increasingly using new possibilities created by forces of Information and Communications Technologies to liberate their minds and using alternative ideas to shape a new world where people are at peace with each other. Information about emerging ideas and social movements around the world can now be shared instantaneously (DASS, 2007, our emphasis).

In a rapidly changing world, the DASS debates and lectures aim to create a place to think, debate and develop ideas so as to raise awareness about issues and ideas that are changing the face of the world today:

we believe that it is only when our horizons are broadened that we can hope to meet the challenges we all face today – at social, environmental and political levels.

It is only when scientific ideas shape our thinking that we can create a world at peace with itself (DASS, Ibid.).

DASS’s critical but innovative stance (see also Durrani, 2007:187-200) is not an isolated event. For instance, in 2001 (5-6 October) the Department of Latin American and Caribbean Studies (LACS) and the Centre for Latino, Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CELAC) at the State University of New York, Albany organised a similar conference on Workers and Democratisation in Americas: Shifting Productive Structures, Social Identities and Labour Strategies. The organisers of this conference argue that:

Globalisation has brought about increasing levels of social vulnerability for the majority of Latin American workers. Yet, at the same time – through firm relocations, internationalised production and distribution networks, increased flows of capital, commodities and labour, international trade/investment agreements, and cross-border solidarity campaigns, globalisation is also increasing the interconnectedness of North, Central, South, and Caribbean societies and social actors.4

The geographic emphasis of DASS and others cover the three most marginalised and deprived regions of the world – Africa, Asia and Latin America – which are, nevertheless, striving to play an increasingly important part in the 21st century – both materially as well as in terms of science, arts, culture, ideas and ethics. They are also coming to terms with massive technological challenges invented mainly in Europe and North America. The point is, that with increasing internal and external contradictions facing these societies, a new creativity can be seen everywhere. New ideas are being forged in fierce debates at universities, factories, workplaces, on the air waves, in the media and on the streets.
Another point is that, in spite of concerns about ‘digital divides’ (see e.g. Ya’u, 2004; Thomson, 2004), globalisation and information technology have paradoxically made it possible to forge ties beyond traditional boundaries, and create forums for discussing issues of public concern whether or not they are palatable to the powers that be. Throughout the world, a variety of forums have mushroomed to provide space for critical discussion and to protest against exploitative policies. A few examples are worth mentioning here:

1) **Transnational Networks** such as The World Social Forum formed by civil society groups in the global South to protest the ills of neo-liberal globalisation, to share experiences and narratives, and forge collaborative networks to confront a common enemy.

2) **The World Movement for Democracy**, formed in Durban, South Africa to reflect on democracy and inclusion, share expertise and experience in democracy promotion and build strategies on solidarity (see Abdul-Raheem, 2006 & Bujra, 2006 for first-hand reflections on recent meetings of the World Social Forum).

3) **Virtual Networks** promoted through instantaneous facility for communication and political action provided by the internet. A key example is the Pambazuka News: ‘the authoritative pan-African electronic weekly newsletter and platform for social justice in Africa’ is creating a new space in two ways: first is its wide perspective which encompasses the whole of Africa; second, it takes an unashamedly Pan-African perspective ‘for progressive social change in Africa’. For the first time a new voice has emerged championing the rights of working people in Africa. It carries insight into issues that the traditional Western-based media do not deal with; for example, the greed for oil that is fuelling the ‘wars’ in Somalia and Sudan.

4) **Intellectual Networks** are closely related to those identified above, but is also a domain in its own right because actors within it survive by argument and philosophy. To them, all human phenomena are subject of investigation. By intellectuals we mean those engaged on issues of human good. Though they are by no means united, there is a significant scope for unity amongst many with shared political values; for instance, networks of radical scholars or die-hard academics who have participated actively in the ideological struggles of the Cold War era, as well as young academics who are waking up to the adverse effects of neo-liberalism. No doubt, radical intellectuals (and their formal and informal networks) represent the most resilient, but also highly divided, of all anti-capitalist and anti-establishment forces. Key examples of radical intellectual forums include scholarly societies and publications such as the *Review of African Political Economy*, an activist journal seeking to combine political activism with intellectual debate, and think-tanks such as The Third World Forum based in Dakar, Senegal.

5) **Media Networks** such as Al-Jazeera have sought to provide both a rallying point for anti-establishment voices, and a countervailing space for news and documentaries that are contrary to, or critical of, those perpetuated by mainstream western media houses like Cable News Network (CNN), Voice of America (VOA), American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), The Times, Foreign Affairs, and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBD).

**Trade Unions, Democracy & Popular Struggles in Africa**

This section gives account of the DASS event in which the authors of this article were closely involved. A rationale for this reflective account is to provide a first-hand description of how issues of democracy and popular struggles are increasingly pushed to the core of intel-
lectual and policy discussion, and how the plight of subaltern classes – in particular, their struggles for livelihoods and inclusion – are attracting growing attention.

The evening started with a warm welcome by Prof. John Gabriel, Head of the Department of Applied Social Sciences. The first presenter, Chris Coates, gave a presentation on the massive collection of Trade Union Congress (TUC) collections at London Metropolitan University dating back to the colonial period. She highlighted the rich archival materials – newsletters, correspondence, and books – as well as classified colonial documents relating to trade unions in Africa. The visual and graphic images and resources highlighted in the power point presentation vividly demonstrated the hardships encountered by African trade union movements, and the popular forces they represent, in colonial Nigeria, Gold Coast, Tanganyika, Kenya, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe among others, at the turn of the 20th century. The presentation included what were then classified colonial documents relating to incarceration of labour leaders, including hints of ‘jungle justice’, such as documents on the kangaroo trial of labour activists – as issue raised by Rattansi in a subsequent presentation.

The second presentation by Usman Tar dwelt on the need to understand the materialist foundation of organised labour and democratic struggles in Nigeria and Africa at large. Tar’s paper, based on an ethnographic research carried out in Nigeria, examined the contested relationship between the state and ‘civil society’ (in its aspect as organised labour) in the country’s democratisation. The paper drew attention to the need to understand the relationships in terms of state-society confrontations and struggles – that is, the materialist and existential factors beneath an appearance of
anti-state and democratic struggles staged by labour movements, identified in Nigeria as the earliest and the most enduring veterans of the struggles. The Nigerian labour movement is arguably one of the most developed, but also divided and hierarchical, social movement in Africa. Its consistent but controversial profile in engaging the state on a wide range of issues – workers rights, public welfare, human rights, democratisation etc – has been characterised by both success and failure. Nevertheless, he argued, the Nigerian labour was/is certainly at the forefront of socio-economic and pro-democracy struggles. He also argued that the state – both during military rule and civilian democratic era – played a key role in reproducing socio-economic and political inequality and generating, in the process, anti-state, anti-hegemonic activity from the labour movement. In so doing, the Nigerian state simultaneously rewarded pro-state elements and castigated progressive elements within the rank of labour movement. Where necessary, the state invented repressive laws to impose ‘order’. In confronting difficult circumstances created by the repressive state – structural adjustment, retrenchment and militarism – the Nigerian Labour Movement demonstrated both organisational strength and weakness, whilst also forging difficult alliances with ‘liberal’ NGOs in confronting a common enemy – the state.

While accepting the difficulties facing the trade union movement in Nigeria, Tar traced the role played by organised working class in Nigeria’s search for democracy. While there was some support of the labour movement, others joined the liberal bandwagon of NGO-isation. Too often, the two (labour and NGOs) have joined forces in confronting repressive policies of the military state. With a membership of four million, the trade union movement in Nigeria is a powerful force in the struggle for genuine democracy in the most populous country in Africa. Tar, however, urged caution in explaining the real problems facing this sector: almost 50% of Nigerians live on less than $1 a day. Another key factor is limited funding: the only ‘credible’ source of revenue for the labour movement are membership dues (sadly, this too is regulated by the state and employer organisations). With the state then subsidising unions, power often goes to the state and the trade unions are thus not able to achieve full autonomy to struggle for workers’ rights. Added to this are other divisive conflicts within the membership of trade unions: religious and ethnic differences (a common trend in Africa). This places a huge restriction on the ability of unions to present a formidable front for engaging the state on democracy and social welfare.

The third talk by Prof. Piyo Rattansi on the life and times of Makhan Singh and the trade union movement in Kenya, drew from Rattansi’s personal reflection (being a contemporary of Singh) and on the biography of Makhan Singh written by Zarina Patel as well as on Makhan Singh’s own personal and unique records. Prof. Rattansi highlighted the strength of the trade union movement in Kenya as a force that was instrumental in Kenya’s achievement of independence. He went on to explain how the changes in legislation brought about by the government of independent Kenya weakened trade unions as a social force. Makhan Singh himself stands out as a giant who almost single-handedly built a powerful trade union movement which transcended racial, religious and other divisions and built up a nationwide trade union movement which influenced working class organisations in Tanganyika and Uganda.

Singh’s personal history is a reflection of despair and tribulation, a common fate of labour leaders and activists throughout the continent. Singh spent five years in colonial prisons in India (1940-1945)
and, soon thereafter, was jailed in Kenya for trumped-up charges of treason and incitement, but in reality for his staunch anti-colonial stance. The colonial authorities saw him as a dangerous socialist with infectious ideas – a suspicion that was somewhat nursed by Singh’s ‘lesser’ comrades after independence! Sadly, after independence, Makhan Singh was to be sidelined by the Kenyatta government because of his legendary hard-core communism, anti-imperialism, anti-materialism and modesty which Kenyatta and his fellow anti-colonialists-turned-bourgeoisie could not tolerate. On his death, his son said, ‘my father died of frustration and despair [that independence turned out to be such a sham]’ (cited in Rattansi, 2007).

A lively discussion followed the presentations. Key issues included the need to refocus attention not only on class analysis of the struggles of African people but a need to develop a new understanding of class relations, class struggles and the anti-imperialist struggles in Africa today. Implicit in these discussions was the need to collect and document its histories of trade union and working class struggles. Disseminating information about the achievements of great African leaders such as Makhan Singh was also considered a possible role of the research community. The need for continuing such debates was the main message emerging from the discussion. This was also the conclusion of an earlier DASS debate and discussion session which had asked for a conference on African progressive themes. A need for international solidarity was underlined by a presentation by Naila Durrani on the ‘Save Afzal Guru Campaign’ on behalf of the South Asia Solidarity Group.

Conclusion

While globalisation, neo-liberalism and ICT have adverse effects on marginalised classes in Africa and the global South, they have fortuitously given rise to the much-needed space for engaging issues of democracy, inclusivity and popular struggles. Apparently, this is a case of ‘actually existing civil society’ re-inventing novel spaces and popular forums for engaging poverty, exclusion, human rights violation, abuse of power, environmental pollution etc. (see Obadare, 2006:93-111, written in the context of Nigeria). The development has to be seen in terms of the difficulties and challenges posed by neo-imperialism parading as a benign force for good, while in reality it is the very source of inequality, poverty and, above all, intellectual and policy autarchy of immense proportions.

The DASS programme is a brave and crucial initiative in a tyrannical world. Nevertheless, its achievements remain modest in terms of providing a much-needed space for debating matters of exploitation and inequality yet still faces many challenges. The first constraint is limited funding given the reality of shortages at universities; a second limitation is a dwindling interest in the discussion of ‘class’ in the UK which has faced increasing marketisation of services in the economic sphere. At the political level, the space for open debate and discussion has been reduced following the invasion of Iraq. Successive legislation has reduced civic liberties. But these economic and political factors have, at the same time, increased people’s thirst for greater awareness and debate on issues that they may not have been interested in, in the past. If there is a positive aspect of the war on Iraq, it is that it has politicised many people in Britain and the US. Progressive people have continued to have their say on political, social and ethical issues. They are taking advantage of the new possibilities opened up by technological developments. They are making increasing use of the internet, emails, chatrooms, listservers, blogs, Youtube etc. to create new communities of resistance and change.
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Endnotes

1. Chris Coates, a Librarian at the University spoke on Sources in the TUC Library Collections at London Metropolitan University for the study of the African Labour Movement; Usman Tar a former Associate Fellow at the Africa Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Bradford spoke on Organised Labour and Democratic Struggles in Nigeria, while Piyo Rattansi, an emeritus Professor of the Philosophy of Science at the University College London spoke on Makhan Singh and (his contributions) the Trade Union Movement in Kenya. Sound recordings of these presentations and some previous DASS Debates & Lectures are available on request. For more information contact E.Sowter@londonmet.ac.uk or s.durrani@londonmet.ac.uk.

2. A review by Professor Peter Lloyd (University of Sussex) notes that the book ‘deserves to be read not only by Africanists but all those interested in labour movements elsewhere in the world; for the questions posed are equally relevant and may budge scholars from established and sterile paths’ (Times Higher Educational Supplement, 1 April 1977) available http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/staff/emeritus/cohenr/research/cv/; accessed 20 June.


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Debates: Pro-poor Budgeting & South Africa’s ‘Developmental State’ 505

Pro-poor Budgeting & South Africa’s ‘Developmental State’: the 2007-08 National Budget

Peter T. Jacobs

South African policy makers nowadays phrase their policies in the ‘developmental state’ discourse, thus following President Thabo Mbeki who is the leading advocate of this notion. Allies of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) in the Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) specifically support the pro-poor thrust of this discourse. Official statements and documents explaining the importance of the ‘developmental state’ to combat South Africa’s high levels of poverty and unemployment extensively cite the East Asian success stories. However, a closer examination of this embrace of the ‘developmental state’ reveals an uncritical adoption and ambivalent understanding of a concept that is ostensibly pro-poor. To understand this ‘new’ discourse and what it means in concrete anti-poverty actions on the part of the state, we critically appraise the pro-poor elements articulated in the 2007-08 national budget.

In the brief historical period since the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa’s overarching socio-economic development policy has traversed full circle. At least until 1996, the democratically elected government openly adhered to a state-led development path as outlined in its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). This orientation was effectively displaced by the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macro-economic policy, signaling that the post-apartheid state had now opted for the globally hegemonic market-led approach. Against this broad historical backdrop, the recent turn to the ‘developmental state’ is upheld as a break from the past.

Each ‘new’ economic development policy dictates the type of strategies to be employed to ‘create a better life for all’, to echo a slogan popularised by the ANC. This implies that the public budget, a crucial redistributive instrument to achieve this outcome, is shaped by the type of macro-level economic policy guiding the state. In this context, what evidence can be gleaned from the 2007-08 national budget reflecting the ‘developmental state’ discourse prominent in policymaking and ruling party circles? This brief essay addresses this question. Before critically reviewing pertinent elements of the 2007-08 national budget reflecting the ‘developmental state’ discourse prominent in policymaking and ruling party circles, we offer a snapshot of the broad trajectory of post-apartheid economic development policies. This contextual discussion is essential to understand the reasons for our observation that the post-apartheid finance minister continues to fall short of pro-poor budgeting.


Post-apartheid Economic Development Policy & Public Budgets

Apartheid institutionalised racial discrimination and spatial segregation against blacks. Under this political regime, blacks were denied political rights despite being the majority of the country’s population. Laws forced black people to live in underdeveloped rural and urban locations. They thus became the victims of unemployment, landlessness and woefully low living standards in Africa’s wealthiest country. The extension of political rights to the black majority in 1994 inaugurated an end to legal apartheid. This new political dispensation, in turn, opened prospects to uproot ‘economic apartheid’ and raise the living standards of the black majority. In its election manifesto, the RDP, the ANC underscored the needs of the black majority that the post-apartheid state ought to address within the context of macroeconomic instability and underdevelopment. The RDP spelled out multiple redistributive targets and strategies, ranging from land reform to better provision of healthcare and education, to be met if the economy is to grow. Within this ‘growth through redistribution’ framework the state favoured a Keynesian-style expansionary fiscal stance, emphasising redistributive state spending. However, as numerous critics later pointed out, the RDP was seriously under-funded, became the job of some marginal ‘ministry’ and lacked an explicit growth strategy. When the RDP office was eventually closed down, the black majority continued to live in abject misery, without land or secure jobs.

In 1996 the GEAR effectively replaced the RDP. In this new framework the emphasis switched to the need to ensure growth which should, at least in theory, enable post-apartheid South Africa to achieve its redistribution targets. To place the economy on a robust long run growth path, markets had to be liberalised including greater labour market flexibility by ‘getting prices right’. The GEAR also prescribed a smaller role for the state in the economy to be achieved through the privatisation of state owned assets and other contractionary fiscal policies. Despite sparking tensions between the ANC and its allies in COSATU and the South African Communist Party, this neo-liberal macroeconomic policy continued to guide the post-apartheid state. While the GEAR helped to control the budget deficit or inflation targets, its accelerated privatisation drive did not materialise in significant foreign direct investment. There is no credible evidence to show if the fragile growth and ‘macro stability’ of recent years resulted from GEAR or fortuitous exogenous factors (state of the global economy, for example). What is clear is that since 1994, job creation and access to essential social services for the vast majority of blacks in rural and urban areas has not improved.

In 2004 the country celebrated its first decade after apartheid. National elections were held at that time in which the ruling party convincingly triumphed over its rivals, capturing two-thirds of all votes. While the country has been transformed into a stable democracy in the first decade after apartheid, it was also acknowledged that extraordinary efforts were required on the part of the state to raise living standards among the rural and urban poor. Government had, in the mean time, endorsed the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations and made the next ten years the ‘decade of delivery’. In addition to a renewed commitment to delivery targets for education, healthcare, housing, jobs, land and so forth, government evidently started turning towards a more a state-led development model.

When the ANC held its mid-term policy conference in 2005, the party circulated a discussion document titled ‘Development and Underdevelopment’ (ANC, 2005). This insightful statement on re-
thinking of economic development policy underway within the ruling party, purportedly drafted by the deputy finance minister, forcefully made the case for a ‘developmental state’. Robust ‘developmental states’, the paper argued, were key facilitators in East Asia’s surge to the global industrial and technological frontier. The idea that resonated with the party faithful was that ‘late developers’ such as South Africa need to replicate what appeared to be a successful industrial development model. President Thabo Mbeki in his 2006 State of the Nation address underscored this notion of a developmental state. In this speech he also launched the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA), ostensibly codifying the developmental role of the state in job creation and attacking poverty.1 Nevertheless, a virtual silence prevailed within the tripartite alliance on many contextual specificities and critical analyses of that ‘developmental state’ model which the 2005 discussion paper simply ignored. What leftists in the alliance attacked quite fiercely in the ‘Development and Underdevelopment’ paper was its proposal for a dual labour market, effectively allowing companies enormous flexibility to hire and fire younger workers. These debates suggest that South Africa’s embrace of the ‘developmental state’ discourse has not been free of contradictions and contestation. A clear conceptualisation of the developmental state is lacking, specifically the mechanisms through which public budgets can assist to bridge underdevelopment and improve living standards.

Traditionally, the state in a developing country was considered developmental if its intervention in the economy was directed at ‘industrial and technological catching-up’. A developmental state invests public resources and offers incentives to indigenous business classes to build industrial and technological niche sectors. The reasons for this industrial bias stem from the microeconomics of industrial production and intensified competition inherent in globalisation. At a microeconomic level these are dynamic sectors characterised by economies of scale in production and large positive spillovers to other sectors in the economy. The surge in economic growth and higher incomes generated as the economy is catching up to some global technological frontier, in turn, will create jobs and improve living standards. Thus this model is little different from the trickle down development promised in mainstream economic theory.

In addition to this industrial bias, a patriotic and corruption-free public bureaucracy is required to craft enabling industrial, fiscal and other economic policies. State bureaucrats will use industrial policy and the public budget to enhance the competitive edge of the domestic private sector, such as in South Korea and Taiwan for instance. Developmental states grow even more indispensable as poorer economies are more integrated into global trade, capital flows and migration. Globalisation implies more intense competition and compels every firm to engage in ongoing industrial and technological innovation. But this, in turn, requires heavy state investment in ‘knowledge-based assets and technological capabilities’ to complement learning-by-doing interventions by the private business sector. To catch-up and stay competitive in this global economic milieu, poorer countries need stronger developmental states. This popular model of the developmental state only outlines two mechanisms of development: the state and a high-tech-industrial sector. It basically amounts to an ‘alliance between selected business elites and state technocrats’ to erect a dynamic industrial sector.

Strong developmental states, according to this political economy model of catching-up to the world technological frontier, facilitated the remarkable structural change in South Korea and Taiwan. This
institution enabled these countries, developmental state theorists assert, to: invest in high-tech education and skills; subsidise R&I spending and all layers of science and technology; craft an industrial structure based on national conglomerates; and speed-up recovery form macroeconomic instability (1997-1999 financial crisis) among other things. Social indicators of development (poverty, inequality, etc), on the other hand, rarely feature in this narrow obsession with technological transformation. Both South Korea and Taiwan, furthermore, developed under the iron-heel of brutal dictatorships propped-up with American assistance for several decades due to geo-strategic shifts in the post World War Two era. In the context of the Cold War, it was imperative to build a cordon of states to contain and roll back the influence of ‘communism’ resonating across the region due to the 1949 Chinese revolution and the Vietnam War. But today, China’s stellar growth, coupled with its formidable weight in key spheres of globalisation, has finally eclipsed the once admirable developmental state model. Although an appraisal of China’s development trajectory goes beyond this brief essay, empirical studies suggest that its high growth is coming at the expense of social development and the environment. To understand why even the ‘old developmental state’ model failed to address the social and ecological dimensions of development, it is necessary to probe deeper than the sectoral and state-level analysis.

Developmental state theorists ignore questions about the systemic base on which countries need to industrialise. Yet the systemic mechanisms, market exchange and private accumulation, in the final analysis set the limits on whatever development may occur. This third mechanism, the nature of the economic system, is the main engine of economic development. Developmental state theorists implicitly accept that because markets and private accumulation drive industrial dynamism, governments must adopt and implement policies that best serve capitalism. However, recent evidence shows that deepening market exchange and private accumulation, whether regulated or unregulated, actually exacerbate inequality, poverty and unemployment. This type of economic system undermines sustainable development and is responsible for a growing share of ecological destruction. Furthermore, any rigorous scientific explanation of why East Asian developmental states succumbed to devastating crises in 1997-99 will investigate the role of these systemic forces. Explicitly accounting for this third mechanism of developmental states, its hidden Achilles heel, has major implications for fiscal policy, specifically pro-poor budgeting. The developmental state uses its budget to redistribute public resources to ‘patriotic investors’. Direct pro-poor budgeting gets subjected to budgeting to develop capitalism. This model of the developmental state underpins South Africa’s 2007-08 budget despite contrary claims from leading government officials.

The First Budget Surplus

On 21 February 2007 the minister of finance presented his plans to raise and spend public income in the year ahead. This budget speech came two weeks after President Mbeki’s 2007 State of the Nation address from which the finance minister took his lead in terms of tone and broad political thrust. Both men celebrated recent improvements in economic growth and boldly proclaimed that the country is winning the war on poverty and unemployment. Where delivery was still short of targets, capacity constraints need to be overcome through volunteerism, privatisation and so forth – all to build a nation based on ‘social solidarity’. Media highlights of the 2007-08 budget were the first time budget surplus, more corporate tax breaks, infrastructural and social spending and a poverty line. How poor people stand to
benefit from these budget priorities is unclear.

The minister gave generous handouts to both rich and poor individuals, carefully balancing the competing priorities of the state and our nation. At the same time, he has delivered the country’s first budget surplus – a rare feat. Compared to last year’s (2006-07) budget, when he targeted a deficit of 3.1% of GDP but actually capped the deficit at 0.5%, this year marks a remarkable achievement. This milestone in Trevor Manuel’s career earned him worldwide praise and makes him a topnotch finance minister in the world today. It is a significant achievement given that Mr Manuel’s counterparts in wealthier countries just pile up huge budget deficits instead of hitting their ‘balanced budget’ targets.

It therefore came as no surprise that the projected surplus of government income over its expenses in the 2007-08 budget attracted such widespread attention. In the year ahead, the national government’s income will be in the order of R545bn² (28.1% of GDP) mainly derived from different taxes. National state spending over this period will be around R534bn (27.5% of GDP) with the bulk of this money going to social services (health, education, welfare grants, infrastructure, etc). Thus the budget surplus of roughly 0.6% of gross domestic product which the nation’s treasurer plans to fairly split between the haves (more tax cuts) and have-nots (more social spending). In this way, the finance minister said, he was helping to construct a society based on ‘social solidarity’ where the rich and poor ought to live in perfect harmony.

**Economic Growth, Public Revenue & Budget Surplus**

The three main reasons cited for the country’s budget surplus were economic growth, a more efficient tax collection system and agency, and reduced expenditure. But the economic logic that links each determinant and the budget surplus is complex and often contradictory. It is far from straightforward. Take the hypothesis that the budget surplus is basically the product of the country’s robust economic health. South Africa’s economic growth has accelerated over the last three years largely because mining exports are benefiting from China’s rapid industrialisation. Another driver of recent growth has been an expansion in luxury consumption among South Africa’s old and nouveau riche. The bottom line message is that this fast pace of economic growth is set to continue and thus allow government to gain more income through taxes. Of course, this is only part of the story, as the minister and others have correctly recognised.

Evidently the tax collection agency, SARS, played a critical role in helping to achieve the 2007-08 budget surplus. Indeed, this country’s tax collector is known for its tough stance on tax evasion and is lauded for its efficacy in collecting taxes from corporate and individual taxpayers. Confidence in the efficiency of the country’s tax collection system and agency is high. Without a well-functioning SARS, government will not be able to capture the potential tax revenues anticipated from the 6% economic growth target. This is at least the textbook story, but may not hold true in practice.

On the contrary, an examination of concrete facts shows a very complex picture. For example, economic growth was about 4.5% in 2005-06 when SARS collected a tax surplus of R41.5 billion. While the economy grew closer to 5% for 2006-07, surplus tax was in the order of R29 billion – lower by R12bn! In other words, economic growth and efficiency in tax revenue collection are far from being automatic causes of budget surpluses. It is common practice for the treasury to tinker with tax rates and state spending priorities to reach clearly defined budget targets. In the final analysis the minister...
will push and pull these fiscal levers in line with the country’s overarching economic orientation.

**Expenditure Cutbacks & Budget Surplus**

A way to slash a budget deficit or generate a budget surplus is through sharp cuts in state spending. And state spending has been falling, Minister Manuel lamented, because the different tiers of government, especially at provincial and municipal levels, do not have the capacity to spend their budgets. Total provincial expenditure had topped R161 bn in 2005-06 and it is expected to steadily climb to R222bn in 2008-09. More importantly, although over 75% of this spending is ostensibly covering social services (health, education, etc), this is inadequate to tackle the country’s service delivery crisis. Take the derisory increments in health spending for instance. While this has been growing at a rate of 5% per year, the money falls short of what is required to counter the collapse in life-expectancy and block the spread of chronic diseases among the poor. More generally, state provision of essential social services, including water and housing, has diminished or completely collapsed in some areas. As an alternative, the privatisation of service delivery has, in turn, imposed a cost-recovery model that has limited access to the few that can afford to pay escalating service charges. In this framework the vast majority of poor people must go without these services once they have used up the tiny state-subsidised quotas.

How has government reacted to its critics who illustrated that the reasons for the countrywide service delivery crises go beyond ‘bureaucratic capacity constraints’? In contrast to Mr Manuel, social movements and some allies of the ruling ANC insisted that the lack of service delivery is a consequence of the state’s conservative macroeconomic policies. This has created a standoff between the state and civil society over profound questions of the overall economic philosophy informing state policies. For several years the Peoples Budget Campaign, a coalition in which COSATU and NGOs are key actors, has been lobbying the state to expand social spending and service delivery. To date, however, government has rejected virtually all this coalition’s proposals. But cutbacks in social services have also ignited a fresh wave of urban and rural revolts spearheaded by social movements with bases among the unemployed and landless without organisational links to the ruling party alliance. This resistance movement to raise the living standards of all South Africans has been labeled ultra-leftists aiming to sabotage the ‘peaceful transition to democracy’. Government has persecuted and imprisoned these anti-poverty activists. 3

Provinces and municipalities have been receiving more money to build stadiums and other infrastructure to host the 2010 soccer world cup. But government’s 2010 infrastructure spending spree will further squeeze the cash-strapped local governments and not tackle the country’s energy and other crises. In the country’s 15 richest and biggest cities, our chief world cup venues, 16% of residents do not have access to safe, clean, affordable and reliable energy according to conservative estimates. With the hasty introduction of regional electricity distributors (REDs), the state is powering ahead with privatising energy. These cities are battling to raise enough money to construct stadiums for the 2010 world cup. This will force municipalities to cover more of their capital expenditure through debt, already overshooting 53% in the 2005-06 fiscal year.

This was precisely what the finance minister instructed provinces to do when the National Treasury released its review of the financial well-being of the provinces in late 2006. At that time
Minister Manuel advised: ‘If municipalities are to reinforce their developmental role, the proportion of their capital budgets funded from their own revenue sources needs to increase in the period ahead’. He was urging provincial fiscal authorities to cover their expenditure through more borrowing (debt) and the stock market – outsourcing and privatisation! In the finance minister’s view, municipalities must first serve the interests and dictates of wealthy investors before delivering on their ‘developmental goals’, resurrecting the trite trickle-down economic logic. In any case, the frontline beneficiaries of taxpayer’s money poured into infrastructure for 2010 will undoubtedly be big construction firms and finance capitalists.

Investor-friendly Welfare Reforms

Viewed in this larger context, Minister Manuel clearly has been budgeting to please the wealthy investor classes. In post-apartheid South Africa, taxes on corporate profits have steeply dropped – from 49% to 29% – to lure investment into the country. And the 2007-08 budget gave companies more lucrative tax breaks – enriching the bourgeoisie at the expense of working people. This investor-friendly budget is even more glaring when looking at the repayment of the apartheid public debt. Mr Manuel prides himself for honouring and speedily repaying the debt of the apartheid regime, lowering it from over 50% in the 1990s to a staggering 26% of GDP in 2006. Scrapping this enormous resource transfer to finance capitalists is not on Minister Manuel’s agenda, implying that working people will continue to pay for the crimes of that hated pre-1994 system.

Those with solid faith in capitalism, someone said a long time ago, know how to display the cosmetic attractions of this system to conceal its heinous crimes. These free-market fundamentalists are the best apologists for this system and have mastered the art of mystifying reality. True to this ideology, minister Manuel has presented his investor-friendly 2007-08 budget as if it genuinely intends to better the lives of working people. While promoting an economy based on individual ‘savings and self-reliance’ (capitalist individualism), he also pays lip-service to ‘social solidarity’. For example, Mr Manuel champions an ‘earnings-related social security scheme’ yet rejects even the diluted Basic Income Grant (BIG) proposals of the Peoples Budget Campaign. The so-called ‘wage subsidy for low income earners’ is really aimed at making every job cheaper for companies and may translate into a sliding wages as the cost of living skyrockets. More pro-capitalist welfare reforms are in the pipeline. In fact, national treasury is searching for ways to privatise the state pension system and reduce social welfare rolls.

In his latest budget speech Minister Manuel also kick-started a public debate on a national poverty line which is desperately needed to effectively combat poverty. The Peoples Budget Campaign has welcomed this initiative which should have been at the top of government’s priorities in 1994. But measuring poverty is far from a cold counting exercise. To what extent will the poor actively partake to shape the meaning of poverty? Will a genuine effort be made to attack and uproot the systemic causes of this scourge? If those doing the counting ignore the multiple faces of deprivation, many poor people may be excluded from official numbers and consequently an underestimation of the depth of poverty. This one-sided view or ideological bias in number-crunching is a well-known trick in calculating unemployment figures. In South Africa, for instance, politicians claim that unemployment has rapidly fallen to about 25% from around 40% in the 1990s. But what largely accounts for this astounding drop in unemployment is the inclusion of ‘guess-timates’ on job creation in the expanding...
‘informal economy’. And an expanding informal or survivalist sector is hardly a sign of a healthy economy. Hopefully the team of experts picked to help the minister to define a national poverty line will expose the fact that capitalism bears ultimate responsibility for underdevelopment and sliding living standards of the rural and urban poor.

Conclusion

This essay has argued that South African policy makers have uncritically and opportunistically adopted the developmental state discourse. While developmental state theorists are exclusively concerned with how the state can facilitate industrial and technological catch-up, they ignore the systemic base of this process. Moreover, they treat the social and ecological dimensions of development in terms of simplistic and flawed ‘trickle down economics’. The ‘concealed third dimension’ of the developmental state, the nature of the economic system, needs to be explicitly accounted for to make sense of the paradox of East Asian developmental states. South Korea and Taiwan, exemplary cases, have achieved miraculous growth rates under the auspices of states that were undemocratic and at the expense of the poor and the environment. In the light of these experiences, fundamental questions must be posed about how developmental states are conceptualised in South Africa’s policies and translated into concrete pro-poor actions on the part of the state. As the chief redistributive instrument, the national budget has been a revealing case study to test the pro-poor claims of South Africa’s developmental state advocates.

The surplus in the 2007-08 national budget and sharply lower deficit in the previous year are far from ideologically neutral number-crunching activities. Minister Manuel’s bookkeeping is in line with the post-apartheid state’s overarching political and socio-economic orientation. This obsession with balanced budgets and surpluses is a core element in the package of neo-liberal or Washington Consensus economic prescriptions. It derives from the deeply entrenched Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic policy adopted in 1996 which is premised on shrinking the size and economic role of the state. The framework that President Mbeki unveiled in his 2006 state of the nation speech, the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA), reinforces the GEAR perspective. ASGISA basically perpetuates the neo-liberal myth that the war on poverty and unemployment can be won through the expansion of markets and private accumulation of wealth.

Chasing and beating these neo-liberal fiscal targets will not be costless. But who must ultimately bear the burden of ultra conservative public budgets? As noted above, in the real world the linear correlation between economic growth and tax revenues breaks down. What is most likely to happen in practice when a government budgets to win the confidence of wealthy investors is for tax revenues to rise at a falling rate. To balance the budget or generate surpluses in this context, state expenditure must slow down at a faster pace. This means the working poor must endure extra belt-tightening.

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Endnotes

1. President Mbeki stated: ‘The government will make the necessary interventions to address the issues raised … bearing in mind the critical role that government must play as one of our country’s most important developmental agencies’ (Pres. T Mbeki, State of the Nation, 3 February 2006). State intervention, according to the President, will include among other things (such as an explicit industrial policy) a R370 bn
investment package over 3 years in urban and rural infrastructural programmes.

2. The nominal exchange rate of the US$ to the South Africa Rand has been fluctuating between US$1:R6.50-R7.50 in the last year.

3. Ngwane (2003) and Pithouse (2006) movingly told the stories of this fascinating grassroots resistance in different parts of South Africa and how the state has treated activists from these movements.


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With us or against us?
South Africa’s Position in the ‘War against Terror’

Jane Duncan

In March 2007, the Secretary of the Media Review Network, Firoz Osman, asked whether South Africa was joining the ‘war against terror’ on behalf of ‘Uncle Sam’.

The question was posed after a series of incidents where South African terror suspects were ‘fingered’ by the United States (US) administration, and three individuals disappeared, raising fears that the South African authorities had co-operated with US intelligence to have them ‘rendered’ without due process.

These suspicions were heightened in March 2007, when the Director General of Intelligence, Barry Gilder, stated at a press conference that South Africa was a training ground for Muslim terrorists. Gilder also cited numerous incidents where South African passports were found in the possession of Al-Qaeda suspects. He stated that while South Africa is not directly threatened with terrorist activity, it may well be a safe
haven where international terrorists could lay low. As a result, the South African authorities were tracking the movements of suspects from Pakistan, Somalia, Bangladesh and Jordan.³

Gilder was widely criticised for these comments, for fuelling Islamophobia, and for equating the 'problem' of terrorism with Muslims. He was accused of ignoring threats posed by other armed political organisations, such as the white right-wing Boeremag ('Boer force'). These criticisms, which led to Osman's question, are not without foundation. When his utterances are read together with growing evidence of US renditions on South African soil, and when the process that led up to the development of South Africa's anti-terrorism laws is taken into account, the relevance of Osman's question becomes all too apparent.

Certainly, South Africa would protest that it has made clear its unwillingness to be Uncle Sam's Uncle Tom in Africa. The South African government has condemned the September 11 attacks and other indiscriminate attacks on civilians. However, according to Intelligence Minister Ronnie Kasrils, such attacks should be distinguished sharply from the armed struggles of anti-colonial and national liberation movements, whose activities are morally and legally just:⁴ a distinction that the US does not make.

According to Kasrils, there is a major qualitative difference between terrorist violence and revolutionary violence. Defining the former as 'indiscriminate, violent attacks on the civilian population',⁵ he maintained that such attacks were hardly ever carried out by armed liberation movements, and ran counter to their ethos. Referring to groups who engage in terrorism, rather problematically, as 'Jihadi movements', he further argued that

*whatever the claims of injustice the leaders, foot soldiers and sympathizers of the amorphous Jihadi movement of today might refer to, we do not see their cause fitting into the liberation paradigm I have referred to ... [For such reasons] I would argue that the governments of the subregion, against the backdrop of our liberation struggles and sense of humanity and justice, have found ourselves duty-bound to condemn the atrocities that have paraded under the banner of the Jihadists.*⁶

He further argues for the need for international co-operation to beef up capacity required to deal with the terrorist threat posed by groups such as Al-Qaeda. He also argued that the Palestinian struggle for self-determination is a just war, and should not be conflated with the terrorism of Al-Qaeda.

Observers of the post-apartheid South African politics may argue that it is rational for South Africa to adopt such a position; after all, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) was itself proscribed as a terrorist organisation after having taken up the armed struggle against the apartheid regime. Given its own history, how could it not be sensitive to the moral and political differences between reactionary and revolutionary violence? The ANC-led government would claim that it has attempted to chart a 'third way' in the war against terror, which involves addressing the problem of right-wing violence against civilians, while rejecting the US’s approach towards prosecuting the ‘war against terror’.

South Africa has recognised (albeit tacitly) that the US’s objectives in its anti-terrorism drive are imperialist in nature. In fact, since September 11, the war has mutated beyond focusing on those immediately responsible for these attacks, to include a range of individuals and organisations opposed to US foreign policy. The US has turned the events of September 11 to its advantage to renew its economy through military expansion
into oil rich countries. In the process, it has waged oil wars in countries like Iraq in an attempt to achieve its foreign policy objective of gaining control of strategic oil supplies. Those who oppose the application of this foreign policy objective in the Middle East – where the US pumps billions of dollars into the Israeli military as a buffer – are targeted.

Blacklists

The fact that there is not an internationally agreed-on definition of terrorism allows the ‘war against terror’ to target a wide range of people opposed to the US administration. The author of Dining with Terrorists, Phil Rees, has stated that,

The failure to define ‘terrorist’ means that the ‘war on terror’ can be used as a cloak to legitimize American military power because it portrays the challenge as a loosely defined threat that will never disappear. By being able to explain exactly who is a terrorist, the ‘war on terror’ can mutate into a war against any ideology that challenges America and her allies.7

Which organisations have been targeted in particular? The American and European Union (EU) blacklists have undergone roughly three phases of development in identifying the axis of evil. Initially they listed Al-Qaeda and related organisations and individuals, proceeding to list revolutionary national liberation organisations opposed to American imperialism and the occupation of Palestinian land, such as the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), the ETA in the Basque territories, the Lebanon-based Hizbollah, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The third phase involves the anti-globalisation and emerging social movements, with the FBI having called for action against left-wing groups ‘who profess a revolutionary socialist doctrine and view themselves as protectors of the people against the dehumanising effects of capitalism and imperialism’.9

However, US foreign policy is shifting attention away from the Middle East to Africa, which is an indication of how the US’s foreign policy towards the continent has changed. In 1995, the Department of Defence stated that ‘ultimately we see very little traditional strategic interest in Africa’.10 Since then, five factors have shaped increased US interest in Africa: the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, oil, global trade, armed conflict and the rise of ‘terrorist’ activity. Economic relations between the US and Africa have trebled in fifteen years, leading to the development of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), focused on optimising extraction of the continent’s energy sources.11 In fact, it has been estimated that by 2015, approximately one quarter of the US’s oil supplies will be provided by West Africa alone.12

However, the US’s accumulation drive in Africa is meeting with resistance, as it has done in other parts of the world. The mounting struggles in the Niger Delta against oil extraction, coupled with the growing threats to US interests in the East and Horn of Africa, have led the US to increase its military presence in Africa. The US had already set up what it calls ‘lily pads’ on various parts of the continent that allows it to prosecute the ‘war against terror’ from strategic locations. However, the US now intends to consolidate its presence on the continent through forming a new unified national security command, Africa Command (Africom), and it further requires a location for its headquarters in Africa. Prexy Nesbitt has commented that:

And when Africans resist as they surely will [against the plunder of Africa’s oil], the backup plan is to declare Africans who want to control their own resources ‘terrorists’, and through Africom, deploy US military might to lock down Africans and African resources.13

Owing to its highly developed military, telecommunications and intelligence in-
Infrastructure, US eyes have turned expectantly to South Africa, in spite of the fact that several other countries have expressed interest in bidding for the hosting of Africa Command’s headquarters. However, to its credit, the South African government has indicated officially that it will not entertain the possibility of a US military presence on its soil, in spite of the fact that the US considers the government to be a ‘strategic partner’.14

These developments indicate that the ‘war against terror’ is coming closer to home. Does South Africa’s official position match up to its unofficial position, and how will it react when tested? The first indication that South Africa may not be as independently-minded as it would like to claim, came when the government attempted to introduce anti-terrorism legislation. South Africa tried for three years to develop anti-terrorism legislation that it could pass without mass opposition, and in the process developed three differences Bills. The first draft was developed in 2000, based on a 1,000 page Law Commission report which considered options for the South African Bill. After an outcry about the repressive nature of the Bill, including from Amnesty International, the government went back to the drawing board and developed another Bill.

The second version was released for public comment in 2002. It was modeled extensively on the Canadian Anti-terrorism Act of 2001, which was widely opposed in Canada for its draconian provisions and its vague and overbroad definition of ‘terrorist act’. This definition criminalised as a terrorist act virtually anything done for political, religious or ideological reasons as long as such activity results in death or serious bodily harm or disruption of what the state would consider an essential service.

The Canadian Liberal Democratic government attempted at the time to quell discontent with the Bill by promising the public that the Act would not be used to repress dissent. In September 2002, members of a special anti-terrorism police unit raided the homes of prominent first nations activists for supposedly stockpiling weapons, and then proceeded to question them about their political activities. In 2003, the government changed its mind and added Hizbollah to its list of suspects banned under the law, after months of insisting that it was a legitimate national liberation organisation; the about-turn took place after pressure, especially from Zionist groups. Students from suspect countries like Syria and Iraq have been banned from taking university chemistry courses as they may use this knowledge to manufacture bombs.15

Civil Liberties Under Threat

But the South African Bill’s definition of terrorist act was even worse than the Canadian one. For example, the Canadian lawmakers agreed to amend the definition of ‘terrorist act’ in the Canadian Bill to exclude forms of dissent that may be illegal, but that do not involve acts of serious violence against civilians, such as wildcat strikes or sit-ins. This amendment was necessary to ensure that people engaged in acts of civil disobedience were not tried as terrorists (possibly the most serious offence on the statute books, attracting extremely harsh sentences). However, the South African definition retained the reference to illegal activities amounting to terrorist acts. What this meant was that the government could use their discretion to define unlawful dissent as terrorist actions, such as the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee’s ‘illegal’ reconnection of water and electricity in poor households, and illegal gatherings. In fact, the South African law went even further than the Canadian law and outlawed simple membership of a terrorist organisation. Many other aspects of the Bill were far more repressive than the Canadian version, raising questions about what the
South African government’s real motives were.

Also, the Bill omitted to mention a clause contained in the old Organisation of African Unity’s (OAU) Algiers Convention of 1999, which states that the struggle waged by peoples in accordance with the principles of international law for their liberation or self-determination, including the armed struggle against colonialism, occupation, aggression, and domination by foreign forces shall not be considered as terrorist acts.

The South African Bill also introduced the element of motive into the definition of the crime, in the process moving criminal law away from the principle that wrongful acts should be punished, rather than motive. As was argued at the time, adding political and religious factors to the element of motive is particularly dangerous, as this could well lead to the criminalisation of organisations and ideologies that oppose the government of the day. It was also argued that the sorts of criminal acts covered by the Bill were already criminalised in existing legislation, and that the Bill was unnecessary.16

As Benita Whitcher has argued:

[Unlike being a murderer], being a ‘terrorist’ is often a function of being on the wrong side of power rather than possessing any inherent and universally disagreeable qualities or having committed a readily identifiable act … It should be borne in mind that terrorism is an offence in which those who legislate have very immediate, often personal, and certainly vested political and ideological interests.17

Whitcher further noted that the political expressions of many mass organizations in marginalised communities use rhetoric that may be considered militant, even seditious. The Bill was drafted in a manner that could criminalise such rhetoric, and direct action (even if ‘illegal’), as terrorist.18 The highly restrictive nature of the Bill prompted mass opposition in South Africa. The Congress of South African Trade Unions threatened a strike if the Bill was not withdrawn for extensive rewriting, as it argued that members would be directly affected; the Bill was withdrawn, and rewritten.19 Many problematic clauses still remain, but the definition of terrorist act was narrowed, and the clause from the OAU convention added.

The government also introduced highly invasive monitoring and interception draft legislation. Once again, after public protests, a less restrictive Regulation of Interception of Communications Act was promulgated. Nevertheless, when compared to similar laws in other jurisdictions, this law remains problematic. While interception orders must be granted by a judge, the grounds on which orders can be issued are overbroad. There is no requirement in the Act for information about interception orders to be published and presented in Parliament, as is the case in some other countries: this provides at least some checks and balances on the potential for abuse of ‘snoop laws’.

Even more recently, evidence has surfaced of South Africa having co-operated with the FBI in ‘rendering’ terror suspects without the necessary extradition processes. Apart from the procedural problems with this, America is notorious for ‘rendering’ and detaining innocent people, which makes South African adherence to procedure all the more necessary. In 1999, the government was admonished by the Constitutional Court, for effecting what it termed a ‘disguised extradition’ of Khalifan Khamis Mohamed, a suspect in the embassy bombings in Tanzania. The court found that his removal by FBI agents was in violation of international law and the Constitution.
In spite of this pronouncement from the Constitutional Court, other suspicious ‘disappearances’ have taken place. For example, Khalid Rashid was arrested in South Africa as an illegal alien in 2005, and after a secret detention lasting eighteen months, he turned up for trial in Pakistan. This incident led Rashid’s family and lawyer to accuse the South African government of having facilitated his removal under the Central Intelligence Agency’s ‘extraordinary renditions programme’. The South African Department of Home Affairs argued that they did not know that he was being sought for questioning about alleged acts of terror. When the matter was taken to court, the court found that while the Department had acted suspiciously in the deporting of Rashid – especially given that he was dispatched on a chartered jet from a military airbase in Pretoria – there was insufficient information to conclude that the government knew about the allegations against him.

Pakistani national Saud Memon was released after four months of detention (two of which were in Guantanamo Bay), and then died. He was wanted in connection with the murder of Wall Street Journal journalist Daniel Pearl in May 2002, who was beheaded by Al-Qaeda operative Khalid Sheik Mohammed. This has led to speculation that

the South African government gave United States intelligence agencies carte blanche to pursue their ‘war against terror’ on South African soil.

Memon testified in his trial in Pakistan that the FBI had arrested him in South Africa in March 2003, in spite of the fact that the Department of Home Affairs could not produce a record of his deportation, and the Department of Justice could not produce an extradition request.

Then in June 2007, it was reported that a Johannesburg man studying in Syria, Abdul Hamid Moosa, was secretly abducted by US soldiers, and moved to a US base in Ethiopia, where he is allegedly being held without trial. To their credit, the South African Department of Foreign Affairs intervened to secure Moosa’s release, who recounted shocking stories of human rights abuses at the US base.

But more serious tests of South Africa’s mettle are unfolding, and it remains to be seen how it will react. In January 2007, the United States government announced that it intended to place two South Africans on its list of terrorism suspects, which at that stage listed approximately 325,000 people. This list requires all United Nations (UN) agencies to freeze financial transactions of those listed. Junaid Ismail Dockrat, a dentist from Mayfair, and his cousin, Pretoria cleric Farhad Ahmed Dockrat, were named as having suspected links to Al-Qaeda – a charge that the Dockrats have denied. The US government also requested the United Nations to list the Dockrats as terror suspects as well.

The existence of such extensive lists has raised concerns about the human rights implications for those listed, as there is no transparency in how the lists are put together, leading to possibilities that innocent people may be listed, and have no recourse to ensure the removal of their names. A case in point involves prominent South African academic Adam Habib – who is Muslim – and who was deported from the US for unspecified reasons, and the visas of his wife and two sons were revoked. The South African government has stated that it recognises the problem, and has taken up the case of the Dockrats. How the government will react when pressed on this matter remains to be seen.

In conclusion, in spite of protestations to the contrary, there are indications that South Africa’s position is becoming an increasingly prone one. South Africa’s
position in the US-dominated global military-security complex is, admittedly, invidious. Its liberation struggle credentials lean it towards being quietly critical of the US-led ‘war against terror’, and even propels it to take the occasional but rare openly hostile position (such as on the invasion of Iraq). Yet as what Roger Southall has called an ‘emerging middle power’,24 it occupies a structural position in the imperialist chain that makes it extremely susceptible to US pressure. Its vulnerabilities should be of concern to Africa as a whole, especially given the fact that countries like Ethiopia and Kenya have already fallen under the US’s spell, and are prosecuting the ‘war against terror’ to different extents on the US’s behalf (and to their own benefit).

South Africa’s ambivalence about which side it is on in the ‘war against terror’ is unsurprising: it is a logical consequence of its shift toward neo-liberal policies in the late 1990s. The country’s attempts to globalise the economy – ostensibly to achieve internal developmental objectives – requires a climate of ‘stability’ to protect the accumulation of wealth by foreign and local investors. Wide-ranging anti-terrorism measures have proved to be very handy in doing just that in other countries.

A continental anti-imperialist solution is needed to this growing problem. The World Social Forum has important work to do in resisting the re-colonisation of Africa’s resources under the guise of the ‘war against terror’; however, it would need to revise its exclusion of armed resistance movements. Significantly, the ‘war against terror’ issues received some prominence at this year’s WSF, with luminaries like Danny Glover and Archbishop Desmond Tutu warning against the repressive manner in which the war is being prosecuted. They argued that such measures are fuelling anti-American sentiment. They also related how other governments are following suit, using anti-terrorism measures to clamp down on civil society, and urged organisations to reclaim these spaces.

The WSF could also help to link the struggles against repressive anti-terrorism measures together and experiences could be compared and contrasted. Solidarity must be extended to social movements in Kenya, where mass opposition has stopped the anti-terror law in its tracks. Kenyans have rich experiences in relation to struggles against terrorism measures, as they have experienced both sides of the terrorism equation. The labeling of the Mau Mau national liberation struggle as terrorist in colonial times led to the torture and murder of many Kenyans who launched a reparations case in Britain last year to secure compensation. Following the removal of the repressive President Daniel Arap Moi from office in 2003, Kenyan landless women spearheaded a Mau Mau resurgence for collective land entitlements, and against corporate control of the country’s most fertile land.

More recently, and in spite of the bombing of the US Embassy in 1998 in which many innocent Kenyans died, mass Kenyan protests stopped the passage of an anti-terrorism Bill. In mid-2003, the Daily Nation reported on rising mass protests at what is seen as Washington’s bullying tactics against Kenya. Their citizens know that the US and Kenyan governments would use the Bill mainly to quell discontent against neo-liberal policies in Kenya. They also know that protection of civilians against right-wing terrorist attacks is merely a subsidiary objective of the Bill. Kenyan opposition has again resurfaced against the Bill, as the US attempts to ensure the Bill is promulgated given rising opposition to US foreign policy in East Africa.

The South African and Kenyan experiences suggest that struggles against anti-terrorism measures can achieve results. Yet these results will be short lived if the grip of US foreign policy on strategic
African governments are not loosened. This is why South Africa’s position on the ‘war against terror’ matters: it stands to affect the sub-region, and even the continent, very directly in the long run. Attempts by South African government officials to stand up to US pressure must be supported (such as the unilateral listing of terror suspects). But there are indications that these attempts are patchy and inconsistent, and mask a deeper alignment with US foreign policy than it may care to admit. If this is a fair reading of the situation, then the left in Africa should be afraid, very afraid.

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Endnotes

1. See Osman, Firoze, ‘Is South Africa Joining the War on Terrorism?’, downloaded on 1 June 2007 from http://www.mediareviewnet.com/war_detail.asp?key=2143&itemNumber=0. 1


5. Ibid., p. 3.

6. Ibid., p.4.

7. See Osman, p. 2.


11. Ibid. p.10.


13. Ibid. p.5.


15. See Duncan, note 8 above.


18. Ibid.


The following briefing was originally published in *Le Monde Diplomatique* in 2005. Now, two years later, its relevance is all too apparent.

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**Kikuyus Muscle in on Security & Politics: Kenya’s Righteous Youth Militia**

*Jean-Christophe Servant*

Nairobi’s 143 shantytowns are lawless zones patrolled by armed vigilante gangs of destitute youths. The largest and most remarkable of these militia is called Mungiki. It began as a spiritual movement but now mixes hustling and extortion with politics.

John Maina Njenga, head of the Mungiki militia, says: ‘The government is our number one advertising agency. The more they repress us, the more popular we get. Out of 4,000 prisoners here, more than 1,000 are Mungiki supporters.’ ‘Here’ is the high security Kamiti prison just outside the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. The state has charged Njenga, 36, and 32 of his lieutenants with murder, and they are awaiting trial: ‘Twelve of us to a cell built for three, and with no mattresses.’ Not that Njenga is particularly worried about the verdict. ‘I am not guilty,’ he says, ‘we have been smeared by the media – it’s just another manoeuvre against our movement.’

According to Kenyan newspapers, Mungiki is a private army, responsible for a high proportion of the many incidents of violence each day in Nairobi, a city whose population has reached an estimated 3 million in just over 100 years, and with one of the worst crime rates in sub-Saharan Africa. Mungiki is regularly implicated in attacks on police officers, hustling on public transport, murders, drug dealing and protection rackets. It is one of the most powerful of the informal regulators of Nairobi’s 143 outlying shantytowns; some 60% of its citizens are crowded into these lawless places at 4,000 a hectare. Mungiki provides a private security service, dispensing the justice of the streets where police services are in tatters. It is the black market equivalent of the legal private security firms that look after the posh areas (Nairobi, with its United Nations organisations, has more than 20,000 expatriates).

‘Total War’

The Kenyan government has declared ‘total war’ on Mungiki. The Nairobi-based African Church Information Service calls its members ‘predators’ whose ‘thirst for blood is matched only by that of vampires’. Foreign journalists in Nairobi are alarmed by Mungiki’s violent afro-centric fundamentalism: it favours female circumcision and is committed to fighting ‘the more degenerate aspects of western culture’. But Njenga’s 22-year-old girlfriend, Irene, is an uncircumcised, trouser-wearing, soul music fan. She drives us to Kamiti prison to meet him. ‘The Mungiki aren’t barbarians,’ she says as we crawl through the city-centre traffic, ‘they’re the young.’

Irene is not alone in her assessment: opinions on the movement vary enormously. Wangari Maathai, assistant min-
ister for environment, natural resources and wildlife, who last year [2004] became the first African woman to be awarded the Nobel peace prize, calls Mungiki members ‘the disinherit ed, the ones who have been refused everything. The schools have rejected them for want of space and they haven’t found work. As far as they can see, they’re excluded from everything simply for being ethnic Kikuyus’.4 The United States mentioned the movement in its 2003 annual report on international religious freedom, noting that the Kenyan government ‘frequently harassed and periodically arrested and detained’ Mungiki members.

The chameleon character of the organisation partly explains why you get such surprisingly different assessments of it, depending on whom you ask. Mungiki is involved in some way in all of Kenya’s problems: religious and ethnic frictions, political struggles, property rights and security, which is Kenya’s biggest headache. ‘It really is unique among the new vigilante groups in Nairobi,’ says David Anderson, lecturer in African studies at Oxford University. ‘No other organisation places so much emphasis on ethnicity and the tribal past. More importantly, no other organisation has the same capacity for mass violence’.5 But similar militias are springing up all over disinherit ed urban Africa, each with its own rules and principles – from the notorious Oduduwa People’s Congress in Lagos, Nigeria, to South Africa’s Pagad (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs).

Mau Mau Descendants

*Mungiki* is a Kikuyu word, meaning multitude. The organisation emerged in the early 1990s as a traditionalist sect on the lush, mountainous slopes of the Rift Valley, the result of a split within another Kikuyu roots movement, the Tent of the Living God. As a more self-consciously African variant of the American Pentecostalism practised by growing numbers of Kenyans, the Tent both celebrates the courage of an older generation of Kikuyus in the Mau Mau wars of independence,6 and promotes Kikuyu beliefs about the origin of the universe.

Styling itself as ‘a prophet of doom’, the movement has provided young Kikuyus with ‘somewhere to migrate in their heads when they could no longer migrate in search of land to cultivate’, as Hervé Maupeu, head of the French Institute for African Research in Nairobi, puts it.7

Most of the young followers of the two movements are descendants of Mau Mau fighters killed by British colonial power. They take snuff ‘to stimulate the mind’ and wear dreadlocks ‘like so many wounds’, says Ngonya Wagakonya, spiritual leader of the Tent of the Living God, ‘so that we never forget how the Mau Mau were betrayed by one Kenyan government after another’. Wagakonya first encountered Mungiki in June 1992. ‘These youngsters weren’t interested in me as their spiritual leader. They wanted to be autonomous; their movement has turned political. But though we may have ideological differences, they are still my children.’

The years 1991-94 saw widespread ethnic violence in the Rift Valley province, the work of the government of Daniel arap Moi, who is a Kalenjin, with Kikuyus being the main victims. The violence widened Mungiki’s support base, as tens of thousands of refugees left the slopes of Mount Kenya and piled into the Nairobi slums.

Once established in the capital, Mungiki began to preach a mixture of ‘second coming’ theology and militant politics. In the poor areas of eastern Nairobi, where 60% of the population is aged between 15 and 29, the movement became the voice of a generation, tying its ethnic demands to social slogans and lining up beside other movements in the struggle for democracy against Moi’s
autocratic regime. ‘We saw Mungiki’s leaders as human rights campaigners,’ recalls Njuguma Mutahi of People Against Torture. ‘The authorities were clamping down on the movement because of its social demands: land redistribution, help for the unemployed, improved living conditions in the shantytowns.’

A Player in the Violence Market

But Mungiki had also become a dynamic player in the most important market in Nairobi’s lawless areas: violence. In the rent wars that pitted landlords against struggling tenants, Mungiki members could be hired to fight for either side. They also serve as forces of order in areas ignored by the police, and extort money from drivers and passengers of Nairobi’s commuter taxis (matatus) on the routes between the city centre and outlying slums such as Mathare or Dandaura.

By the 2002 presidential election, which brought defeat for Moi’s ruling Kenya African National Union (Kanu) party, Mungiki was no longer a small sect, but an underworld, with hundreds of thousands of members and a considerable amount of money. In the electoral battle between Uhuru Kenyatta, the Kanu candidate anointed by Moi as his chosen successor, and Mwai Kibaki for the opposition National Rainbow Coalition (Narc), Mungiki could not be ignored. Despite its ill-treatment under Moi, Mungiki supported Kenyatta.

Moi’s final 10 years in power saw a massive escalation in corruption. Enormous embezzlement among the political class was accompanied by assassinations of its ethnic Luo and Kikuyu opponents. Law and order degenerated into little more than the rule of the rich over the poor: the police and the legal profession were both notoriously corrupt. Most of Nairobi’s outlying areas fell into the hands of gangs of vigilantes. As the 2002 election approached, these were politically mobilised as Jezis, street armies that ethnic chiefs traditionally reactivate at election time. ‘Friends became enemies overnight,’ says a former member of the Baghdad Boys militia. Hundreds of poor, unemployed young people joined the politicians’ gangs just in the hopes of getting something to eat in the evening.

Light weapons poured into the ghettos where at least 7% of the population carried a gun, according to alarmed international observers. Mungiki’s activities provided further justification for their alarm. The sect now had clear political ambitions, aligning itself with the enemies of the Kanu party.

A show of strength on 3 March 2002 proved that it had joined the ranks of the political street gangs and was no longer different from the rest. In the Kariobangi North area Mungiki members went on a punitive expedition against a rival militia known as the Taliban; 21 people died, and with them the great hopes that many young people had pinned on the movement, the only urban youth group to be based on a genuine social and political agenda. A few days later the Moi government banned Mungiki along with 17 other sects, gangs and private armies, blaming them for the rampant insecurity.

But Nairobi did not burn, defying many a gloomy prognosis. In December 2002 the Narc won the election and Mwai Kibaki, a Kikuyu, became president, ending 24 years of Kanu party rule. Now, though, Kenya finds itself in a period of confusion where, as the Kenyan journalist David Kiare puts it, ‘no one dares make any kind of prognosis for the future’. Summing up the mood of dissatisfaction, popular slang has decided that Narc stands for ‘nothing as really changed’.

The largest two parties in the coalition, President Kibaki’s National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK) and the Liberal...
Democratic party (LDP) led by Raila Odinga, a Luo, are locked in battle over constitutional reform to limit the powers of the executive. Meanwhile the ‘Mount Kenya mafia’, a clique of ministers and other Kikuyu friends of President Kibaki, are seen as a serious threat to national unity and the establishment of genuine democracy.

The prices of essential goods have risen sharply and fares rocketed. This is a serious blow to the shantytowns, where 80% live on less than a US dollar a day. The Narc promised to set up a ‘truth and reconciliation commission’ to look into crimes and abuses committed since independence, but is now dragging its feet.

Njuguma Mutahi, a Kikuyu, is not surprised: ‘How could it be any other way? Many members of this government as well as previous governments are or were involved with the militias. They might be OK with reconciliation, but they are frightened of justice.’ He finds it hard to maintain an objective position on Mungiki. Though its members may have committed acts of violence, ‘they have never had a chance to explain themselves. We can argue with their methods, but the things they have fought for are still of great importance. And frustration is growing with each generation. Every day the young become more radical and more violent. The person who succeeds in putting forward a programme based on these issues will have not only Mungiki’s support, but that of all our country’s disenfranchised youth.’

In Mathare Valley, one of Nairobi’s largest and most notorious shantytowns, there has been a severe government clampdown on Mungiki activity. Hundreds of presumed members were arrested there in 2004, clogging up the detention centres. The police are even encouraged to shoot on sight. Yet on an ordinary day you cannot get into Mathare without Mungiki’s permission. This even goes for police officers, according to the five I met in one of the made-for-guerrillas alleyways.

‘We Are Reinventing Ourselves’

We were led around Mathare by a group of Mungiki members. Their leader claims to have 1,600 local affiliates. ‘Sometimes we lend a hand to landlords for a percentage of their rent; we also clean up the rubbish and then go round collecting cash: 15 shillings a week per member. We reinvest the money.’ He says his group is not violent, but ‘we defend ourselves. Why should we turn the other cheek?’ ‘If I didn’t have Mungiki, I’d be a street child,’ says a youngster. ‘I don’t believe in politics. We will never be manipulated again. We are reinventing ourselves.’

Ezekiel Waruinge was Mungiki’s national co-ordinator until recently, but then he experienced ‘divine revelation’ and joined the Neno Evangelical church, where he is now a prominent figure. He plans to pursue the same goals as he had with Mungiki with the youngsters who have followed him here, but through Christianity, not Kikuyu tradition. During the election period, Waruinge had ties with a number of high-ranking Kikuyu politicians, including the notorious current interior minister, Chris Munrungaru, who is suspected of affiliations with the Mount Kenya mafia. ‘I helped him get elected, and then he just did like they all do as soon as they are in office: he turned into a wild animal. He turned against us. But the Lord will be his judge.’

Many Mungiki members hold Waruinge responsible for compromising the movement through involvement with shady politicians, and call him a traitor. But though he is truly ‘born again’, he does not regret his association with Mungiki. He still prefers his old African name, Ndura, to Ezekiel and wants to fight against ‘the American evangelical churches’ demonisation of our tradition’.
‘Yes, we supported the Kanu candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta,’ he admits, ‘but the reason we supported him is that he is young.’ Kenyatta has since denied all association with Mungiki, but he is not fooling anyone. ‘Kikuyu history is a long series of betrayals,’ says Ndumgi Gotukhu of the Mulika association, which films and records the stories of people persecuted under previous Kenyan governments. ‘They fought for their lands and ended up with nothing. The politicians made similar promises to Mungiki, but the dream never materialised. But now the movement is reorganising, and the Mau Mau influence is even stronger in this third generation.’

Nairobi is the headquarters of the United Nations human settlements programme (UN-Habitat). It is also home to Kibera, sub-Saharan Africa’s largest slum, where almost 700,000 people live in corrugated iron shacks. On 4 October 2004, World Habitat Day, the Kibaki government and UN-Habitat launched the Kenya slum upgrading programme, a plan to rehouse the slum-dwellers in blocks of flats with water and sanitation. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, executive director of UN-Habitat, sees this project as a first step towards ‘improving poor Kenyans’ quality of life and employment prospects, as well as combating crime, especially among the young’.

But it needs to go further, says Juma Assiago of UN-Habitat’s safer cities programme: ‘We need to promote real social inclusion, rather than a violent scramble to the top. Young people in Nairobi have developed a whole parallel society, and they are governed by their own values. The vigilante groups are one expression of this. But rather than stigmatising our young people as criminals, why not move towards recognising some of the values championed by this counter-culture, and formalise its relations with institutions like the police?’ But would the state be prepared to recognise the legitimacy of a movement that is against the state? ‘Indeed. What we are talking about is the wholesale renewal of how this country is governed.’

The alarming Mungiki phenomenon is part of the erosion of political legitimacy and physical security in Nairobi, which continues to worsen as its population grows by 5% a year. Mungiki’s next moves will decide what becomes of the sociological time bombs of the shanty-towns. It will also determine the future of the Rift Valley, where ethnic resentment over land rights is threatening to boil over (see box opposite). Could Mungiki be the new Mau Mau? Wangari Maathai does not doubt it: ‘If the oppression continues, if we keep on killing our brothers, there will be civil war in this country.’

Jean-Christophe Servant, e-mail: latitude 4243@yahoo.fr. Translated from the French by Gulliver Cragg for Le Monde Diplomatique; see also by Jean-Christophe Servant: ‘Landless in the Rift Valley’, ‘Mau Mau’; www.mondediplo.com or www.monde-diplomatique.fr

Endnotes
1. ‘Crime in Nairobi, Results of a citywide victim survey’, UNDP/UN Habitat, September 2002 (www.unhabitat.org/safercities). Questioned in 2001, 28.5% of Nairobi’s inhabitants said they had been burgled in the previous two weeks, 98% believed the police to be corrupt, and 33% said that supplementary measures such as the organisation of vigilante groups were necessary to defend against crime.
4. With 22% of the population, the Kikuyus are the largest single ethnic group in Kenya, followed by the Luhyas (14%), the Luos (15%) and the Kalenjins (12%). Both Uhuru Kenyatta, the current leader of the opposition Kanu party, and President Mwai Kibaki are Kikuyus.

6. During the Mau Mau rebellion in the 1950s the Kikuyus fought against the British colonial regime: 13,000 were killed and more than 100,000 displaced.


8. An NGO, founded in 1996, that gathers victims’ accounts and other evidence concerning torture and political violence committed under previous Kenyan administrations.


11. According to Africa Confidential (London), the Mount Kenya mafia is a grouping of several former pro-democracy campaigners who ‘swiftly swapped the ideals of opposition for the spoils of power’.

Mungiki, ‘Neo-Mau Mau’ & the Prospects for Democracy in Kenya

Awinda Atieno

Political insecurity in Kenya has recently focused attention on the emergence of the Mungiki movement. Depicted in the Kenyan media as a thuggish, criminal organisation set on disrupting the already insecure climate in Nairobi and its outskirts, a spate of Mungiki-attributed activity (numerous beheadings of Mungiki opponents, racketeering, vigilantism, extortion of matatu (taxi) businesses, forcible circumcision of women) has for obvious reasons been condemned in the press as unnecessarily brutal and savage.

The media portrayal of Mungiki echoes the moral panic and folk-devilling of the Mau Mau land, freedom and independence movement by the British press in Kenya and Britain during the Emergency in the 1950s. This is not to say that Mungiki are not responsible for some of the tragic events that have occurred in recent months, but rather to point out that the picture is far more complex than that propagated by the media and Kenyan government. In particular it is notable that Mungiki view themselves as the successors of Mau Mau. A multitude of questions remain unanswered surrounding Mungiki and the implications of their involvement in the political and democratic landscape of Kenya leading up to the general election in Kenya provisionally scheduled for November/December 2007. An article by Jean-Christophe Servant (2005), reprinted in this issue of ROAPE, provides an excellent grounding in the roots and organisational structure of Mungiki. Here I reflect on a closer view, deriving from fieldwork carried out amongst youth activists in Nairobi from 2004 to the present (see also Katumanga, 2005).
A recent brutal crackdown by police on Mungiki in Nairobi has triggered an outcry from Kenya and beyond – from politicians, concerned citizens, NGOs and the international press. In a swoop aimed at recovering police guns said to have been stolen by Mungiki, extreme heavy-handed policing culminated in the killing of more than thirty innocent residents of the Mathare slum in Nairobi (Amnesty International Public Statement, June 2007). According to Amnesty this attack was precipitated by John Michuki, Minister of Internal Security in Kenya, allegedly declaring all Mungiki persona non grata. Michuki reportedly stated that:

We will straighten them and wipe them out. I cannot tell you today where those who have been arrested in connection with the recent killings are. What you will be hearing is that there will be burial tomorrow. If you use a gun to kill you are also required to be executed (Amnesty International, 2007).

It should be noted that Michuki was a member of the loyalist Home Guard during British colonial rule before, during and after the Mau Mau Emergency of 1952 (The Kenya Socialist, 2006; see Elkins, 2005 for a detailed account of the sequence of events during this period). There has been widespread speculation as to whether his recent condemnation of Mungiki is a legitimate attack on a rogue ‘terrorist’ organisation or whether he sees history repeating itself because of his past as a Home Guard fighting Mau Mau, with Mungiki as its current manifestation.

One interviewee living in a Nairobi slum settlement in the east of the city described the climate of fear and tension in his ‘estate’:

there is so much happening with all this political heat in the air. … Michuki has already started a war up here. There is loads bullshit (sic) going on in Kenya … the police have already started harassing

us youths here … we fear for our lives after Mathare (interview conducted 2007).

The June 2007 Amnesty Statement on the Mathare massacre and Michuki’s complicity in this matter concludes:

Amnesty International is further concerned that such remarks would appear to endorse the extrajudicial execution of criminal suspects, contrary to Kenya’s obligations under international law. Amnesty International calls on the Kenyan authorities to establish an inquiry into the police killings of 5 and 7 June, in compliance with international standards which require thorough, prompt and impartial investigation of all suspected cases of extrajudicial executions. The inquiry should be carried out by a body which is independent of those allegedly responsible and has the necessary powers and resources. Its findings should be made public. Anyone identified by the inquiry as having been responsible for extrajudicial executions should be brought to justice in a trial which complies with international fair trial standards. The families and dependents of those killed shall be entitled to fair and adequate compensation within a reasonable period of time.

Whether Amnesty International’s recommendations are taken on board by the Kenyan government remains to be seen. The Kibaki administration’s usual response to international criticism such as Amnesty’s is to set up an investigation (such as the Goldenburg Commission of Inquiry on corruption) and then let it taper slowly off without coming to any concrete conclusion or resolution. Cynics argue that this is a ploy to deflect attention from the government and ensure that donor funds keep on coming and the human rights and democracy boxes are ticked.

The Kibaki premiership’s response to examples of corrupt governance and
political scandal has been disappointing to those who expected a change. Amongst numerous examples are the Anglo Leasing affair (commonly referred to by Kenyans as ‘Anglo Fleecing’), Kamlesh Pattni’s very premature release from prison following the Goldenburg Inquiry, John Githongo’s dossier exposing gross state corruption and his subsequent self exile, Dr. Margaret Gachara’s dazzlingly gross embezzlement of National AIDS Control Council funds, an attack on the offices of the Standard newspaper, and numerous incidents of harassment and intimidation of activists who dare speak out or act against the political establishment, such as Ngugi wa Thiongo and his wife Njeeri, and the tragedy of David Munyakei’s last years.

How does all this affect the average Kenyan citizen? And how does it relate to Mungiki and the prospects for democracy in Kenya? The next section attempts to go some way in addressing these questions, using excerpts from hip-hop poetry that is recited there by youth as a form of entertainment, and quotes from interviews with residents of a slum settlement in the east of Nairobi.

Mungiki, ‘Neo-Mau Mau’ & Dispossessed Youth in Nairobi

In conducting research on gendered responses to youth unemployment in this shanty neighbourhood, I observed a thriving arts scene expressing high levels of awareness of the gap between rich and poor, as well as indescribable impoverishment. Residents of the estate and in particular those aged between thirteen and 35 had adopted a ‘neo-Mau Mau’ philosophy to describe, cope with and come up with solutions to their desperate situation as the lowest economic class in Nairobi. This came out strongest in Sheng hip-hop poetry. Sheng is a Swahili-English, hybrid and ever-evolving patois used by Nairobi youths. The following are a selection of quotes illustrative of prevalent views in the settlement. Whilst not necessarily representative of the general population, they do exemplify the kinds of politicised views which are vocalised by youth through hip-hop. They express the anger and alliances of support which such youth maintain. I have chosen to use the phrase ‘neo Mau-Mau’ to describe the adoption and adaptation of Mau Mau philosophy exemplified here. However these were not Mungiki members and they had created no formalised grouping or political organisation.

The young people in that part of the ‘estate’ had simply got together and done what young people do everywhere: danced, sang, talked, gossiped, smoked ‘weed’ and flirted. Out of this heady atmosphere in conditions of hardship has come a new permutation of Mau Mau ideology through poetry which has become hugely popular and fashionable.

Sadly, these young people are being punished (arrested and persecuted) for their use of Mau Mau vocabulary, because it is being mistaken for direct association with Mungiki. There are some Mungiki elements in the ‘estate’, though nowhere near the levels reported by the press. I observed only one incident that could definitely be identified as Mungiki: a young man came to visit his cousin and people whispered that there was a Mungiki in their midst. The fear from the older people in the estate was that the government-sponsored persecution of the ‘neo-Mau Mau’ youngsters, coupled with an extremely high lack of employment opportunities, would lead to a fertile breeding ground for converts to the extremism of Mungiki.

The musicians were female and male residents of Dandora who had set up a youth collective that used music, theatre, arts, dance, football and gymnastics as a way of filling up the time left vacant by a widespread lack of employment in the
formal sector and resulting scarcity of socio-economic resources.

On using hip-hop poetry and the arts as a form of didactic resistance and coping:

_Nawanasema hizi mapa poetry readings hazifaidi mutu?_ (And they are saying that these poetry readings don’t do anything for anyone?)

This refers to the government turning down an application for funding from the youth collective for a ‘poetry day’ event in their ‘estate’.

_Tunafunza bila panga_ (We teach people without machetes).

This comment came from a young man who believed that the poetry sessions taught the youths about important issues that were not covered on the government school curriculum; for example, decisions about sexuality, anti-tribalism and gaps in Kenyan history that are glossed over in the curriculum like the Mau Mau and the oppression of the Kikuyu in Nairobi.

On the situation of the oppressed poor:

_Hivi imepeta rangi ya ngozi, na kabila unajua ni mbili tu: maskini na mdosi_ (It has happened that things have gone beyond the colour of one’s skin, you know now there are only two kinds of people: the poor and those who can employ the poor).

... _kaploti hana, serekali wanataka kuwafukuza Nairobi_ (... the ones that don’t have houses or a plot of land, the government wants to kick them out of Nairobi).

The youths saw themselves as persecuted by police shoot-to-kill policing methods and viewed this as a government ploy to run them out of Nairobi because they are poor, landless ‘trouble-makers’.

_Ni machozi yako ni ya nani vunja moyo, umeona sasa dunia imekutupa. Usikate tamaa ... angalia saa, weve ni shujaa_ (Those tears of yours whom are they for? They break the heart, you are seeing that the world has thrown you away. Please don’t give up hope, look at these times, you are the real hero).

The youths didn’t believe that Kenyatta, Moi and Kibaki were the heroes of Kenya. They see themselves as the true heroes.

_Civil society imepoteza social justice._ (Civil society has lost any elements of social justice).

_Economy ikona leakage ... ecology ina decline ... na ugonjwa ya syphilis ..._ (There is a leakage in the economy ... the environment is in decline ... and the illnesses of syphilis [appear]...).

The youths saw Kenya as having too many problems that the government seemed unwilling to deal with properly on the ‘estate’ and beyond (e.g. lack of employment, government brutality, AIDS etc).

... _ka Kenya ni Matrix na mimi ndio Neo_ (It’s as if Kenya is the Matrix and I am Neo).

The youth identified with the fictional heroic (world-saving) character Neo in the film ‘The Matrix’ which they had watched in a ‘video café’ in the ‘estate’. Neo’s struggle in the movie has become part of the language of these young Kenyans. They often say this when something goes awry in the ‘estate’ particularly if it seems like the government has let them down again.

On Mau Mau and the Kibaki, Moi and Kenyatta regimes:
The ‘spectators’ are Kenyatta, his political elite and the British who benefited from Kenya economically and are viewed as still benefiting.

Dedan Kimathi is viewed as the true liberator of Kenya by the youths. He was a well-known Mau Mau freedom fighter who was executed by the British during the Emergency. He is rumoured to have been executed with Kenyatta’s approval (see Elkins, 2005 for background to this).

Locating Mungiki and ‘neo-Mau Mau’ in the global context:

Paul Rogers (2007, personal discussion) commented on the Mungiki phenomenon, asserting that these kinds of groups are increasingly becoming a feature of the globalised market which fosters ‘growth without emancipation’. He believes that the contemporary era is characterised by a widening gulf between the richest and the poorest, with a huge gap where a middle class (classes) tended to emerge in less aggressively globalised decades. Moreover, according to Rogers, the majority on the margins are more likely to have some education, with at least four years of primary school education on average in countries in the South, thus changing the aspirations and educational sophistication of the lowest economic classes worldwide. In his book Losing Control: Global Security in the Twenty-first Century, he writes: ‘... the combination of a widening rich-poor gap with an increasingly knowledgeable poor, is leading to a revolution of unfulfilled expectations’. He gives the Sendero Luminoso of Peru and Hamas as examples of this.

Applying Rogers’s thesis to Mungiki in Kenya we could note that the economy is thriving but there is no trickle-down effect. The mass of Kenyans have been let down by every regime since independence, though educational opportunities have also increased with each passing decade. In a situation of ‘unfulfilled expectations’, Mungiki represents itself as the revolutionary element. The prospects of democracy for Kenya remain to be seen. Unless Mungiki are brought to the negotiating table to at least explain their objectives, things look set to get worse. As one alarmed interviewee from a Mungiki-populated area told me:

…wars with guns here since the days of the Moi regime).
Nairobi may fall. We hear Mugiki are storing bundikis [guns] bought from the Somalis. We hear they want to kill the rich in Lavington, Karen and Westlands [affluent Nairobi suburbs]. The young men in Mungiki are angry (2007).

For the sake of Kenya, let us hope Mugiki is just a passing symptom of election fever and not a warning shot of anything more brutal to come.

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Bibliography


Profiles of Courage: Ramogi Achieng’ Oneko

Peter Anyang’ Nyong’o

When he passed away on 9 June 2007 at his lakeside home in Kunya village in Rarieda in Nyamira Province, Kenyans mourned him as the last of the Kapenguria Six. The little town of Kapenguria gained notoriety in Kenya’s struggle for independence when it became the scene for the trial of Jommo Kenyatta, Achieng’ Oneko, Paul Ngei, Kungu Karumba, Bildad Kaggia and Fred Kubai (the Kapenguria Six).

In what was essentially a kangaroo court, the six were found guilty of having been involved in organising the Mau Mau rebellion against the colonial order and were put into detention following their arrest on 20 October 1952. This date, celebrated since independence as Kenyatta Day, should appropriately be celebrated as the National Heroes Day, or, more specifically, as the day of the Kapenguria Six. Jommo Kenyatta never accepted, either at the trial or later on in life, that he was involved in the Mau Mau. What he conceded to and had no apology for was that he had always championed the freedom of the African people from colonial oppression, and in this he had freely associated with other Kapenguria colleagues in organising the first nationalist political party in Kenya, the Kenya African Union (KAU). Kenyatta’s association with Oneko can therefore be rightly traced to their work in KAU in which Oneko featured as a prolific ideologue, political organiser and superb tactician.

Born in 1920 to peasant farmers and later christened as Richard, Oneko attended Maseno missionary school and was taught by the legendary Carey Francis and the fiery Kenyan nationalist, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. He was a good athlete who always excelled in the short distance races. He was eloquent in speech.
and attracted friends and admirers with ease. His elegant gait and love for smart dressing earned him the nickname Nyakech which means ‘anteelope’, an animal the Luo people admire for its gracefulness and charm.

My father, the late Canon Hezbon Shimei Nyong’o, was only two years older than him when they attended Maseno school together and lived in the same dormitory. This generation of Luo intelligentsia, led by Jaramogi and Oneko, founded the Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation (LUTATCO) as a cooperative and business entity to pool resources together for business ventures and trading. They built office blocks in Kisumu, established a supermarket in Maseno (Maseno Stores), ran posh mills in various market places in Nyanza, built houses and real estates under the direction of Mzee Ong’er and published newspapers which Oneko edited – Ramogi and Nyanza Times. It was around this time that Oneko dropped his name Richard and took Ramogi; the initial ‘R’ remained the same.

A few months before he was arrested with Kenyatta for involvement in KAU activities – and hence Mau Mau – Oneko introduced Kenyatta to Jaramogi while the latter was on a visit to Kisumu. Once the two were detained, Odinga took it upon himself to continue the struggle for Kenya’s freedom and to demand for their release.

The first election of African members to the Legislative Council in 1957 was therefore held with the Kapenguria Six still under detention although the Mau Mau as a rebellion had virtually been defeated. Jaramogi, however, rallied African nationalists, and African Members of the Legislative Council – organised as the African Elected Members Organization (AEMO) – to champion the release of the detainees as a priority in the agenda for independence. In this, Jaramogi was ably supported by Thomas Joseph Mboya and C.M.G. Argwings-Kodhek, who had also acted as the lawyer of many of the Mau Mau detainees and their families. When Oneko was finally released together with Kenyatta in 1961, he was already more than a household name in the Kenyan political landscape. He immediately assumed his responsibilities as Kenyatta’s private secretary planning the logistics of the nationalist campaigns and running in the inside lane when Kenyatta took over the leadership of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) that year. In the so-called Kenyatta Election of 1963, Oneko captured the Nakuru Town seat on a KANU ticket, trouncing his nearest rival by thousands of votes. When Kenya gained independence on 12 December 1963, Achieng’ Oneko was in Kenyatta’s first cabinet of some powerful eighteen ministers. He was minister for Information, Broadcasting, Wild life and Tourism. Oneko performed his duties with alacrity and commitment to national goals. He initiated, nurtured and established the Kenya News Agency (KNA) which has remained the back bone for news gathering in government to date. Many of the people trained through the KNA went ahead to join the private sector media houses and to build them to what they are today.

Post-independence politics led to differences between Oneko and Kenyatta that somehow became irreconcilable. Oneko strongly believed in championing the interests of the poor, particularly with regard to access to land. Like his political comrades Jaramogi Oginga and Bildad Kaggia, he was an uncompromising Fabian Socialist who could not put his total faith in the market as the ‘deliverer of development to the common man’. At that point in time African socialism as was expounded by Nyerere in ‘Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism’ was in vogue. Oginga Odinga and Achieng’ Oneko were perhaps the strongest Nyerereist on the north-western side of the Kilimanjaro.
Kenyatta’s Vice President Odinga had too strong of a popular base to be ignored by KANU. Combined with Mboya’s support in the trade union movement and the growing middle class, Kenyatta and his ethnic associates found themselves out of depth in controlling KANU. The first scheme in 1965-66 was to marginalise Odinga with Mboya’s help. This succeeded at the famous Limuru Conference in 1966 which saw Odinga, Oneko and other left-wingers move out of KANU to form the Kenya People’s Union (KPU) whose manifesto, ‘The Wananchi Declaration’ was written as an alternative to Mboya’s ‘African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya.’

Achieng’ Oneko’s resignation speech from Kenyatta’s government remains to this day a solid example of words of integrity, well thought out and succinctly summarising the crisis of moral authority that African nationalists faced at that point in time with regard to the aspirations of the masses. Oneko stated that he was painfully leaving a government he had helped to put together, but one he had to leave because of its departure from the principles that were supposed to be its foundation. He could no longer justify to himself why he flew a flag as a minister, symbolising the independence of Kenyan Africans, while he himself was still literally in chains.

The years in the KPU were both exciting as well as frustrating. Exciting in the sense that the majority of the people supported the ideas expressed by the KPU leadership. Frustrating because the Kenyatta government made it difficult for the KPU to operate as the authoritarian state grew vicious by the day. I joined the KPU Youth League while in high school in 1966.

Poised to win the Local Government elections in 1968, Tom Mboya manipulated the process thereby disqualifying all KPU candidates except Mrs Grace Onyango in Kisumu. Soon after that the political entourage behind Kenyatta began plotting to get rid of Mboya. Achieng’ Oneko became the intermediary between Tom Mboya and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. Given the plot against Mboya it became necessary for the two to come together. Both Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Milton Obote of Uganda felt this rapprochement was vital, and several messages were exchanged through intermediaries to speed up this process soon after the sudden death of Kenya’s Foreign Affairs Minister in early 1969. I was at that point in time a student at Makerere University in Kampala, and a student leader on the campus. I was also active in KPU politics and got to know the goings on in the party.

When the news of Mboya’s assassination on that fateful Saturday morning of 5 July 1969, it is said that he almost fainted. The history of Kenya was never to be the same again; generations of Kenyans have been adversely affected by that event. It is quite possible that Kenya would have followed in the footsteps of Singapore had that bullet not been fired at one o’clock on Government Road that day. By the end of that year, Kenyatta had proscribed the Kenya People’s Union, detained all its leaders and turned Kenya into a one-party state. The British Government, styling itself as the flag bearers of democracy; the US government, never reluctant to proclaim its support for freedom everywhere did not say anything against Kenyatta. Oneko ended up spending another six years in detention under a government he had fought to establish by spending eight years in detention under the colonialists.

Ramogi Achieng’ Oneko was released from detention in 1976 when I was about to finish my graduate school work at the University of Chicago. When I came back to Nairobi in 1977 to teach at the University of Nairobi, I visited him at his modest house in Woodley Estate and we had some porridge together. He was as lively and as cheerful as ever. He had no
trace of bitterness in him. He laughed mirthfully; we immediately started plotting on how we could still play an active role in Kenyan politics.

Some after that we put together a group of academics with his son Ongong’a to discuss this matter further at the Woodley residence one Saturday afternoon. The question was: in the likely event that Kenyatta passes away, what would be the best alliance the pro-Odinga forces should make so as to be in government under KANU? We came out with several scenarios but agreed that all had to be kept secret else the secret police would make mince meat of us before we put anything in practice. Unfortunately one big mouth left the place to boast immediately in a public bar how Oneko had been consulting him on some political project. We buried the scheme before it was even born!

With Kenyatta’s death in August 1978 and the ensuing politics under Moi and Njonjo, Oneko became very cautious. Some time in 1980 Hezekiah Ougo resigned his Bondo seat so that Jaramogi would take it over. This was with the understanding that Jaramogi would team up with Moi so as to help give some political counter weight to the Kikuyu bourgeoisie. We were at that point in time also raising funds for the building of the Ramogi Institute for Advanced Technology (RIAT). Oneko was the chairman of the Nairobi committee.

I noticed one Friday morning that the Weekly Review had carried a rather unflattering article about Odinga, and warned Oneko that we should shield Odinga from journalists that weekend. Odinga was due to be travelling to Mombasa that evening and I pleaded with Oneko to accompany him so that Oneko would ensure that his public utterances and interactions did not fall into the trap I saw being laid by the Weekly Review. Oneko declined arguing that Moi’s system was more preoccupied with the ‘Muthemba Trial’ than what was going on in our camp. Muthemba, a close associate of Charles Njonjo, had then been accused of plotting to overthrow Moi’s government.

Odinga’s journey to the Coast proved fatal. In a public address he accused Kenyatta of having been a land grabber and promised the Coast people that he would join Moi’s government to help the president fight this vice. The next day the forces in this government, including Moi himself, denounced Jaramogi. The Bondo seat disappeared from both Ougo and Odinga; the land grabbers had joined ranks; forgot about Nuthemba and once more threw Oneko and Odinga into the political limbo. When I met Oneko in the wake of these events, all he could tell me was A Luta Continua!

In 1989 we started plotting seriously to restore democracy to Kenya. Following the collapse of the Berlin Wall we felt the global scene was changing fast and very soon we would have more friends to support our stand within and outside Kenya. Bishop Henry Okullu and I started working within the Church. We communicated with Jaramogi as well. Very soon we brought in Oneko, then Luke Obok and Munyua Waiyaki. Okullu introduced me to Paul Mwite, and I introduced Mwite to my friend Joe Ager. We decided to form a team to start working on an opposition political party which we eventually called The National Democratic Party (NDP), the forerunner of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy.

I noticed during our struggle to organise the NDP that Oneko was no longer as fiery as he used to be. He was becoming more cautious, more circumspect in doing things. This was quite understandable. For a man who had spent 14 years in detention a time comes when you want to say that life needs to be lived a bit at a time, and that those who come after us must also continue with the struggle: A Luta Continua. With the passing on of
Oneko (Nyakech, Mbalawandu) a generation of profiles in courage in Kenyan politics is gone. The only unfortunate thing is that Oneko did not live long enough to witness the final transition to democracy in Kenya. This, I dare say, is a legacy we have to pass on to Oneko’s family as a cherished memory of one who fought wisely and enduringly that we may be free from colonial oppression as well as post-colonial authoritarianism.

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DARFUR: STOP! Confrontational Rhetoric

Julie Fint

The one bright light in the dismal international response to the slaughter and starvation in Sudan’s Darfur region has been a humanitarian effort that has kept more than two million displaced people alive. In the fifth year of the war, mortality levels among Darfurians reached by relief are marginally better than they were before the war – and lower, remarkably, than in the suburbs of the capital, Khartoum. In South Sudan, where a peace agreement signed in January 2005 officially ended a 21-year civil war, children have worse life chances: higher death rates and lower school enrolment.

This is a formidable achievement, better than achieved in any other comparable war zone in Africa. Credit is due to the likes of Oxfam, Mercy Corps and Medecins Sans Frontieres, and their 13,000-strong army of relief workers – 90% of them Sudanese.

All this would be lost if US Democratic presidential candidates got their wish and a no-fly zone were militarily enforced over Darfur in an attempt to pressure the Sudan government into allowing the immediate deployment of a joint United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force. ‘If they fly into it, we will shoot down their planes,’ Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton said recently. ‘It is the only way to get their attention.’

That it most certainly would. But what then?

Aid agencies operational in Darfur are quietly but unanimously appalled by the prospect of a no-fly zone. They believe Khartoum would respond by grounding humanitarian aircraft and, in a worst-case scenario, by forcing all aid agencies to leave, with no possibility of return. They warn, too, that, there is a high probability that humanitarian assets would be hit if government assets at airports were hit, since the two share the same locations and warehousing sites. Without humanitarian air access, Darfurians would soon suffer massive health and food crises. The quickest and safest evacuation routes for humanitarians would be cut. In the event of heightened military activity on the ground, Darfurians would either be trapped or caught in the crossfire. The people of Kosovo and Bosnia had easier access to host countries. Darfur is vast and dry. Its people would not be able to flee to safety easily.

We do not support the military enforcement of a no-fly zone over Darfur,’ a relief planner told ROAPE. ‘We are skeptical of its effectiveness to stop the main source of insecurity for civilians: attacks on the ground by proxy militias, between rival groups and between parties to the conflict. We also do not support non-consensual military intervention. We believe both
Today, as Khartoum’s proxy Janjaweed militias turn against each other, rebel movements fragment and banditry spirals out of control, millions of Darfurians who depend on humanitarian assistance can be reached only by air. UN and AU traffic accounts for nine of every ten planes flying in Darfur, and some agencies deliver as much as 90% of their supplies using aircraft. The collapse of the humanitarian apparatus would be a death sentence for Darfurians – especially those who are receiving food, clean water and shelter in the camps for the displaced in government-controlled areas.

A major concern is that aircraft belonging to the Sudan government would be difficult to distinguish from humanitarian aircraft, making it hazardous to fly. The United Nations and African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) have both publicly reported that the Sudanese Air Force has intentionally made its aircraft look like humanitarian and AU aircraft in order to hinder monitoring of the ceasefire. Humanitarian workers are concerned that deceptions like this could escalate if a no-fly zone were military imposed, perhaps with disguised military planes taking off at the same time as humanitarian flights.

In April 2003, addressing an open-air rally in el Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state, President Omar Bashir promised to ‘unleash’ the army to crush the rebellion launched a few months earlier by Darfur’s two newly-emerged rebel movements - the Sudan Liberation Army and its proxy Janjaweed militias that the regime unleashed. It was the air force. Ground attacks that killed hundreds of people were coordinated with Antonov bombers and helicopter gunships that flew before, during and after the offensives – often, it seemed, to ensure that there were no survivors.

My first concern is how to implement the no-fly zone without hindering humanitarian air flights, says a relief official with long experience of Sudan. ‘The Humanitarian Air Service of the World Food Programme alone operates 16 aircraft doing 30 rotations per day between Khartoum and Darfur and within Darfur. Their stories were remarkably consistent. They said, for example, that government planes had bombed Masalit villages heavily and systematically between August 2003 and February 2004, when I began my research. Typically, the village of Tunfunka in West Darfur was bombarded by two
Antonovs on 7 February 2004, killing eight people. A 28-year-old villager who witnessed the bombardment said the Antonovs returned the following day, but did not bomb. He surmised this was because the village had been completely destroyed; there was nothing left to burn.

On 27 August 2004, at least 26 civilians died in the town of Habila when Antonovs launched the fiercest bombardment of the war thus far. Jamal Abdul Hamman Arbab, a graduate of Khartoum University who was visiting relatives in Habila at the time, saw his brother, sister and two nephews killed. Five others were wounded, including his mother and another two brothers.

\[\text{Antonovs bombed Habila six times that day,} \ \text{he told me.} \ \text{There are many questions about this bombing: there were police in Habila, and army. But Habila was full of people displaced by attacks on villages all around. We think the bombing was because of the displaced.}\]

The air campaign of 2003-4 was qualitatively different from aerial bombardment in other, earlier Sudanese theatres. Antonov cargo planes were no longer blindly scattering barrels of explosives. The army had acquired ground-attack helicopters and tactical support aircraft that delivered their deadly loads with a new precision – most lethally, according to eyewitnesses, when targeting columns of displaced people.

When it was finally, belatedly taken to task, the Sudan government simply denied it was using planes. In Darfur, this claim was treated with the contempt it deserved.

\[\text{‘We have cows;’ one old man told me.} \ \text{‘Only the government has planes!’}\]

A no-fly zone as a solution to Darfur’s increasingly complex crisis is an easy sound bite for presidential hopefuls eager to harness the massive grassroots support enjoyed by the Save Darfur Coalition, the high-profile, high-decibel advocacy movement which has campaigned vigorously for this. But those who are demanding a no-fly zone are reading from an outdated script. The numbers of civilians killed by air attacks this year is in the dozens. It’s a shocking crime for a government to bomb its own people. But it’s simply wrong to say, as Senator Hillary Clinton did during a speech in Washington at the end of June, that US action should be ‘focused on the air support the Sudanese provide to the Janjaweed as they rape and pillage their way through villages.’ Aerial bombardment, Clinton claimed, ‘comes before, during and after.’

In 2003-2004, it did. In 2007, it does not. The worst violence in Darfur this year has not been caused by aerial bombardment, or by Janjaweed attacks against villages, as it was at the height of the conflict in 2003-4. Darfur in 2007 is not Rwanda. There is a multiplicity of conflicts in Darfur today – government vs. rebel, rebel vs. rebel, former rebel vs. rebel, Arab vs. Arab, Janjaweed vs. Arab, Central Reserve Police vs. Popular Defense Forces, armed bandits vs. anyone with anything to loot ... The most lethal battles this year have been caused by fights over land between Arab militias initially armed by Khartoum but now fighting each other. A distant second is attacks on rebel-controlled villages by former rebels now aligned with the Sudan government. Not once has there been bombing ‘before, during and after’ attacks. Today, stopping military flights wouldn’t make much of a difference to the Darfurian people.

On 13 July, the US envoy to Sudan, Andrew Natsios, seemed to imply that it would, thereby giving fuel to the interventionist lobby in the US – a lobby that some see as an obstacle to peace because of the influence it exerts over the US Congress. This influence, one of America’s most eminent Sudan scholars says, ‘intimidates the State Department and
hinders any rational approach to Sudan.’

After a brief visit to Darfur in July, Natsios told a news conference in Khartoum:

After a halt in the bombing between the beginning of February and the end of April in 2007, the Sudanese government has resumed bombing in Darfur ... We urge the Sudanese government to end all bombing in Darfur immediately.

Natsios’s words were problematic for several reasons. Firstly, he got his facts wrong. There was indeed a brief upsurge in aerial bombardment in the first half of 2007, but it was heaviest in April, when, according to him, it had not yet recommenced. Secondly, and most importantly, he gave no context or detail and did not even attempt to suggest the human cost of the bombardment. I know of three confirmed deaths – two in the village of Amarai in north Darfur, and one in a smaller village a few miles south. There will be more, but it is unlikely that there were many more. Rebel commanders have thuraya satellite telephones and are not backwards in coming forwards with headline news for the world’s media.

The background to the renewed bombardment is this: addressing visitors to the Holocaust Museum in Washington on Remembrance Day, in mid-April, President Bush launched a broadside against the rebels who refused to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement in May 2006. ‘They’re roaming the Darfur countryside pillaging and stealing at will,’ he said. ‘They have killed civilians, they’ve plundered vehicles and plundered supplies from international aid workers, they’ve added to the lawlessness. The government in Khartoum has been unable to control the problem.’ He might as well have said ‘unfortunately’.

A few days after Bush spoke, Khartoum took its helicopter gunships out of wraps and attacked the area of north Darfur where scores of non-signatory commanders from the Sudan Liberation Army were meeting to try to unify their ranks and their negotiating position. First Antonov bombers struck north of Amarai, the village in which the commanders were gathering. There were no casualties. Then they struck south, killing a young woman. Four days after Bush’s grotesquely exaggerated accusation, they hit the conference site itself - unleashing two Antonovs and two helicopter gunships in the most brazen and egregious violation of the ceasefire in many months. They did not hit the commanders, who were hidden from sight in Amarai’s wooded valley. They hit Amarai village and its small market. One SLA leader claimed the bombardment killed 26 civilians. Privately, another said the true toll was two. A third said it was three.

‘I do not think we have to convince the world there are abuses in Darfur,’ he said. ‘We have to keep ourselves honest, or we will lose our credibility.’

Nastios’ words deepened concern that Bush might incline more towards the interventionist urgings of many in the Save Darfur Coalition. Relief agencies operational in Darfur scrambled to see if there was anything they had missed, a degree of aerial bombardment that might change their calculations. There was not.

‘Yes, the air strikes need to stop,’ said one relief official in Darfur, ‘but this is no more than one of many protection issues – and it’s not the biggest problem. It’s still completely true to say that the biggest threat to civilians is from ground attacks rather than air.’

Enforcing a no-fly zone would in any case be a phenomenal challenge: Darfur is bigger than Iraq and nearly 50 times larger than Kosovo, with the nearest airfields in Chad themselves a vast distance away from any NATO bases. Many
military planners doubt its practicality. Humanitarians are concerned that a military approach to a no-fly zone would require bases in Chad. They believe this could exacerbate tensions between Sudan and Chad and undermine security and the peace processes in and between both Sudan and Chad.

The humanitarians’ opposition to a no-fly zone has not diminished the enthusiasm for it of presidential hopefuls. In a YouTube debate among them on 23 July, Sen. Clinton proposed that the US military take over the humanitarian airlift to Darfur in the event of a no-fly zone leading to the grounding of humanitarian flights. She did not explain how the US military would deliver aid to those whose lives depend on it even if, as seems unlikely, US troops got as far as el Fasher without adding fuel to the existing fire.

‘In theory perhaps 2500 US troops could secure the airfields and the supply routes to the camps for the displaced,’ said Alex de Waal, programme director at the Social Science Research Council and a director of Justice Africa. ‘But we can be sure that the Sudan government would strenuously object and we would be locked into another cycle of escalating threats and counter-threats. For what? To stop the air force – a minor player in Darfur’s crisis today – from flying. I cannot think of a serious humanitarian or human rights organization that advocates anything approaching this. It’s very strange that politicians should be advocating a no-fly zone when most activist groups have abandoned the idea.’

De Waal warned that Darfur was becoming a blank screen onto which US politicians projected their moral credentials.

‘A simplified genocide narrative is getting in the way of seeing Darfur with any clarity,’ he said. ‘The presidential hopefuls are floating military proposals that might have made sense at the height of the Bosnian war or the Rwanda genocide, but which bear little relation to the realities of Darfur today. In his testimony to the House of Representatives in April, John Prendergast of ENOUGH spoke of the dangers of a no-fly zone, remarking that taking this action resulted in a humanitarian crisis, that crisis would be on ‘our watch’ and therefore the US should be ready to deploy ground forces to sustain the humanitarian effort. It is a short step from this position to advocating an invasion for humanitarian purposes.’

Khartoum is already claiming that international aid organizations are agents of hostile Western governments whose ultimate goal is regime change. Threats of coercive military action are giving oxygen to regime hardliners. A military strike would most likely hand President Omar al Bashir the same kind of propaganda victory he scored when American cruise missiles knocked out a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum in 1998.

Sound bites are no substitute for solutions. To address the problem of air strikes, those who work in Darfur – and who understand how the Sudan government works – want strengthened monitoring of hostile flights as envisaged under UN Security Council resolution 1591. This would require permanent AMIS access at airfields, where government officials routinely make access difficult, with no curfew limitations. To be really effective, it would require new resources for the already overstretched AU forces.

Those concerned about Darfur – primarily the United States, Britain and, since the election of President Nicolas Sarkozy, France – must stop indulging in confrontational rhetoric, empty threats and megaphone diplomacy. Instead, they must support efforts to mend rebel divisions, engage constructively with Khartoum, and encourage new peace talks that are not tied to artificial deadlines. They must push for strengthened monitoring and
public reporting of hostile flights, and develop an international consensus for effective actions to change the situation where it would really make a difference – on the ground. AMIS needs to be strengthened immediately, with a new mandate that authorizes its troops to protect the camps for the displaced.

As with medicine, the humanitarian’s first obligation is to do no harm. All talk of coercive military action must end – it’s recklessly dangerous and doesn’t address real solutions. The road to hell is still paved with good intentions.

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Editor’s Note: In the cacophony buzz that surrounds these issues the frustration is acute amongst those who care passionately about the Sudanese people. We ask ourselves, ‘have they taken leave of their senses’? The ‘they’ being those who profit from this despicable tragedy. Many thanks to Julie for continuing to speak out where few do (and a plug for her book!)

Nigeria: Contested Elections & an Unstable Democracy

Usman A. Tar & Alfred B. Zack-Williams

On 14 and 21 April 2007, Nigerians went to the polls to elect a President, 36 State Governors, 109 Senators (Upper House of Parliament), and 360 members of the House of Representatives (Lower House). The elections were supposed to showcase Nigeria’s capacity to conduct – for the first time in the country’s 47 years of independence – a peaceful transition from one ‘democratic’ regime to another (HRW, 2007c). Two previous elections of this nature (1983 and 2003) proved disappointing, as they became a mere charade for reproducing regimes in powers. Indeed, 2007 turned out to be a case of déjà vu, as President Olusegun Obasanjo who had been rebuffed by the legislators in his quest for an unprecedented and unconstitutional third term, succeeded in thwarting the political ambitions of his rivals by imposing his chosen successor – Musa Yar’Adua – the younger brother of his erstwhile military comrade, General Shehu Yar’Adua.

Like all previous post-Independence elections, the 2007 elections were full of controversies and were widely condemned as fraudulent, violent and stage-managed by the outgoing president Olusegun Obasanjo and his ruling Peoples Democratic Party. The nature of the conduct of the elections has generated widespread anger and fury amongst Nigerians, as well as local and foreign observers. In spite of this, both the outgoing President and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) defiantly declared that the elections though far from perfect, yet, the faults do not warrant cancellation. Indeed, Obasanjo warned that the elections should not be judged against the stand-
ards of mature democracies of Europe and America. Hence, on 29 May President-Elect, Musa Yar’Adua of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) was sworn in amidst much international and local displeasure.

In this briefing, we shall examine the elections as an indicator of the country’s crisis of democracy. In the following section, we briefly examine why democratic consolidation and, therefore, peaceful elections have defied Nigeria. Thereafter, we assess the conduct and outcome of the elections, public reactions, and implications for Nigeria’s fledgling democracy.

Background: Nigeria’s Crises of Governance & Democracy

The Nigerian ‘state’ (particularly access to state resources and power) has been a subject of fierce contestation between different factions of the ruling class and components of the federation (federal ‘centre’ versus federating ‘states’). Given the contentious nature of Nigerian federalism, democracy and nation building have proved elusive. In the aftermath of independence, the Nigerian ruling class failed to deliver a functioning and viable democracy resulting in periodic military intervention (1966-1979) as well as a bloody civil war (1967-1970) in which over one million lives were lost and vital social and physical infrastructures destroyed. Between 1979 and 1983, Nigeria witnessed a second democratic experiment led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, a politician who had served as junior minister in the first Republic. The new democratic government reinvented the ills of the first republic. In particular, the ruling class resorted to ‘prebendal politics’ (Joseph, 1983) by transforming the state into an instrument of personal enrichment through a client-patron relationship between the political class and those loyal to it.

On 31 December 1983, the military overthrew the Shagari administration on the grounds of the rapidly deteriorating economic situation and the turmoil that followed the rigged 1983 national elections by the ruling National Party of Nigeria. The military remained in power, largely through deceit, repression and manipulation, for a protracted period (1983-1999), in what has been described as a period of ‘permanent transition’ (Beckett & Young, 1997). In spite of achieving democracy, Nigerians have not witnessed the so-called ‘democratic dividends’: the transition to civilian rule

Between 1960-1966, Nigeria’s first experiment in Westminster-style ‘liberal democracy’ failed as politicians abused state power for personal aggrandisement and perpetuating power through appeal to ethnic and regional cleavages. This paved the way for a prolonged military intervention (1966-1979) and a bloody civil war (1967-1970) in which over one million lives were lost and vital social and physical infrastructures destroyed. Between 1979 and 1983, Nigeria witnessed a second democratic experiment led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, a politician who had served as junior minister in the first Republic. The new democratic government reinvented the ills of the first republic. In particular, the ruling class resorted to ‘prebendal politics’ (Joseph, 1983) by transforming the state into an instrument of personal enrichment through a client-patron relationship between the political class and those loyal to it.

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A number of pervasive indicators are evident in Nigerian politics, with adverse implications for the conduct of ‘elections’ and democratic consolidation. First is the politicisation of sectarian differences, particularly by politicians who use it as a means to achieving and perpetuating power. A second feature is the militarisation of the state and political culture, resulting largely from prolonged military rule and its attendant institutionalisation of violence. It is worth noting that a significant proportion of the Nigeria ruling class, including some ‘civilian democrats’ and political appointees are ex-military men with an infectious penchant for ‘barrack culture’. A third pervasive feature which complements the above is the privatisation of violence, particularly the establishment of private and party militias by politicians as a means of protecting their loot from state plundering by demonstrating the power of the gun and intimidating rival politicians and members of the public. The privatisation of violence produces a multiplier effect of violence: as various militias seek to intensify their defences, the state in turn resorts to massive firepower to rein in militants. A fourth feature is the personalisation of state apparatus by those in power – often for personal gain and enforcing legitimacy. Key examples include a) alleged conversion of the Nigerian anti-corruption commission by the outgoing president, as a designer agency for discrediting and marginalising real and potential enemies through trumped-up charges of ‘corruption’ which, in fact, is a nationwide disease; b) the use of state security services to silence political foes and c) the use of electoral institutions in preventing select politicians from contesting for power.

The 2007 General Elections: Dramas & Controversies

A number of agencies had pointed to potential fault lines in the electoral process that would negate any attempt at free and fair elections. For instance, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), a Pan-African NGO based in London, Accra and Lagos, had warned that:

*the 2007 polls [...] contain huge potential to go badly off-track; to become not a milestone in democratic consolidation, but instead one marked by malpractice, injustice, criminality, violence, human rights abuses and increased instability. Already, at least 18 months before polling, there is a clear trend towards negative developments oriented towards the 2007 elections (CDD, 2007:1, our emphasis).*

Others expressed similar concerns (see e.g. IRI, 2007; Ibrahim, 2007). Yet, as the election approached, neither the state nor the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) took steps to address these issues. The elections consisted of two rounds of voting: the Gubernatorial Round held on 14 April and the Presidential Round held on 24 April. In the first round, the PDP emerged victorious in 29 of the 33 States declared. The President expressed delight with the result, pointing out that it had gone ‘fairly well’ while INEC said Nigerians should be proud of their achievement (*The Economist*, 2007). However, 18 opposition parties, including the Action Congress (AC) of outgoing Vice President Atiku Abubakar and the leader of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPN), former Military dictator-turned-politician, General Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd.), de-
manded ‘tough’ measures to ensure a level playing field or the cancellation of the elections and the dissolution of INEC. However, calls for the cancellation of the elections petered off as election date approached.

Outside party bickering, election monitors were somewhat unanimous about the flaws of the election. Human Rights Watch (HRW) described the vote-rigging as ‘shameless’ while the European Union observers claimed that in half a dozen states there was no real election. Reporting on the conduct of elections in the country’s largest oil producing region, the Niger Delta, HRW monitors alleged that:

Open rigging of an electoral process that deprived voters of the opportunity to cast their ballots in many areas. Voting failed to take place in many areas where INEC later reported voter turnout in excess of 90% (HRW, 2007a).

Furthermore, in several areas of Rivers State, local observers and foreign journalists watched ballot boxes being stuffed with ballots marked in favour of the ruling PDP in full view of the public:

The extremely high voter turnout as reported by INEC was not borne out by the situation witnessed on the ground, indicating that the elections in those two states were systematically rigged in favour of the PDP (Ibid.).

The controversy over the Gubernatorial Round did not augur well for the impending Presidential Round, in particular, fears about President Obasanjo and his ruling party’s mendacious determination to manipulate the election, noted by Polgreen (2007:3):

Partial results from Nigeria’s highly contested state elections appear to hand most victories to governing Peoples Democratic Party, prompting violent protests to break out in several of the country’s 36 states; allegations of vote rigging, ballot stealing and intimidation in several states raised fears that presidential voting, to be held later this week, could fail; Peoples Democratic Party has struggled to retain its dominance as infighting rages over who will replace Olusegun Obasanjo; there are two dozen candidates.

On the eve of the Presidential election, the BBC reported that Nigeria remained ‘tense’, citing politically-motivated violence carried out by, and between, rival party militias; a heavy presence of the military deployed on the streets of major cities to maintain ‘law and order’, noting that at least 26 people had died in election-related violence. INEC offices were burnt to the ground in several places by protesters angry at its conspiracy in electoral fraud. The result of the Presidential Round announced by INEC inevitably showed a resounding victory for the candidate of the ruling PDP (see Table 1 over). To some commentators, the outcome of the Presidential Election was not fortuitous – it was the product of meticulously planned political manoeuvres by the ruling party; it was not just brazenly rigged, but the widespread violence resulted in at least 300 election-related deaths (Albin-Lackey & Rawlence, 2007). According to domestic and international election observers, the same trends were in evidence throughout much of the Federation. The Group called for a re-run of the presidential polls while European Union observers documented massive irregularities and said that the process ‘cannot be considered to have been credible’. Teams from the US National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute both said that the process ‘failed the Nigerian people’. All appeals for cancellation fell on deaf ears, as outgoing President Obasanjo claimed the election does not warrant cancellation.
Public Reactions on the Conduct & Outcome of the Elections

The brazen conduct of the elections surprised and infuriated a lot of people and organisations. Others though, were simply happy that at least ‘Nigerians have made a choice’ and their democracy was still alive. Reactions to the election ranged from outright rejection to passionate acceptance. The following statements, gathered from the media and internet chat rooms, capture the mood of a number of commentators: ‘A first degree murder of Africa’s largest democracy; ‘why Nigeria may go nowhere’; ‘2007 Elections: Nigerians are no fools’; ‘Iwu’s 419 elections’; ‘Yar’Adua and the question of legitimacy’. A key concern was that the elections were merely held as a symbolic gesture to endorse the preferred candidate of President Obasanjo, and the winner, Umaru Musa Yar’Adua of the ruling PDP, contrary to the will of Nigerians, as Chinuwuba (2007) observed:

It is heartbreaking as enthusiastic Nigerians who were eager to effect a change of government watched helplessly as PDP in connivance with INEC subverted the transition process. Before the sham called an election, I had posited that the election was predetermined, and that any result that goes against the expectation of the PDP stands unacceptable. This has eventually played out, and explains the malpractices/fraud/violence that trailed the entire exercise.

Both Obasanjo and INEC’s Chair, Maurice Iwu argued that half a loaf of democracy is better than none. In response to concerns raised by the domestic and foreign press, the President noted that without doubt the elections were imperfect; however that does not warrant cancellation. Almost repeating his master’s words Iwu observed:

The 2007 election is far from perfect. The Commission concedes that. But we are proud of the polls. We are also proud of the fact that this election has been free and fair … Nigerians must not lose sight of the numerous difficulties and hindrances in the political environment and the very tense and hostile atmosphere in which the Commission had to operate … Many people believed that it was impossible to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Umaru Yar’Adua</td>
<td>Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muhammadu Buhari</td>
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<td>Action Congress (AC)</td>
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<td>African Political System (APS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Okereke</td>
<td>African Liberation Party (ALP)</td>
<td>22,677</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Ambrose Owuru</td>
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<td>Mojisola Obasanjo</td>
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<td>Habu Fari</td>
<td>National Democratic Party</td>
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<td>Orji Uzor Kalu</td>
<td>Progressive Peoples Alliance</td>
<td>608,803</td>
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</table>

1. The result did not show the total votes scored in each state or the percentage of scores by candidates.
Outside Nigeria, the country’s African ‘peers’ have been seemingly complicit and complementary. For instance, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa was the first to congratulate Yar’Adua on his victory; President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia also sent warm congratulations to Yar’Adua on ‘his landslide victory’. However, within Nigeria opposition parties vehemently condemned ‘the electoral fraud’. Tom Ikimi of the AC and Lanre Amusu of ANPP made the following statements:

> In most of the states, only the Resident Electoral Commissioners and the PDP Agents signed the results. We have been here since yesterday (Sunday) to observe this collation and we only collated eleven states and the INEC Chairman just rushed down to declare the results and declare Umaru Yar’Adua as the winner (Ikimi, in Ojeifo, 2007).

Others noted:

> results … were collated and signed by the Resident Electoral Commissioners in the States and the PDP Agents. Our agents did not sign these results (Amusu, in Ojeifo, 2007).

Other opposition parties including the Democratic Peoples Alliance (DPA), the African Democratic Congress (ADC), the Action Congress (AC), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), National Advance Party (NAP) and the National Democratic Party (NDP), also called for the cancellation of elections and the establishment of an Interim National Government to set the stage for fresh ‘credible’ elections. They cautioned against the dangers of military intervention. Prominent personalities too joined the call for fresh elections, including Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka who urged Western powers to impose travelling embargos on the international movement of INEC’s chair, Maurice Iwu for his ‘complicity in the fraudulent elections’ (BBC News, 27 April 2007).

There were also widespread concerns expressed by the international community. The US expressed deep concern regarding violence and voting irregularities during both state and presidential elections. Furthermore, former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who visited Nigeria as the head of an international observer mission, expressed her concerns at Nigeria’s inability to conduct genuine elections:

> Regrettably, 2007 represents a step backward in the conduct of elections in Nigeria. In many places, in a number of ways, the electoral process failed the Nigerian people (Sunday Morning Herald, 2007).

These ‘condemnations’ not withstanding, the US and the UK Governments gave a thumbs up to Obasanjo’s machinations resulting in a winner of his choice, one who would not come back to haunt him by demanding accountability of his stewardship to the Nigerian people. For the US, it provides the transition to a safe pair of hands, of one of the most important sources of oil for American consumers in the troubled campaign on the war against terrorism, thus reducing the Super-Power’s dependence on oil of the troubled Persian Gulf.

**Implications of the Elections**

Given the manner in which the elections were conducted and the outcome, the political class must brace itself for challenges for state hegemony. Within Nigeria there now exists a crisis of legitimacy, in particular, the credibility of the state and its ruling classes to command the loyalty of aggrieved Nigerians. In a recent report, the International Crises Group (ICG) argues that the failure of the April elections has major implications for Nigeria’s governance,
internal security and stability (cited in allAfrica.com, 2007). The report notes that although a new government has taken power in Abuja, it has yet to earn a place in the hearts of Nigerians. It quotes several leading figures, both in government and civil society, who are worried about the likely legitimacy crises that might accompany the flawed elections. For instance, the outgoing Senate President P. Nnamani laments that: ‘people will hate the new administration and they will have a crisis of legitimacy.’ Similarly, the President of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Abdul-waheed Omar, stated at a Labour Day rally in Abuja that: ‘Any government based on the outcome of the elections will be politically and morally disabled’. As we write, The Labour Congress has embarked on a national strike, which began on 20 June with regards to fuel price hikes imposed by the new government.

It is evident that the legitimacy of the political class and the state are apparently at a very low ebb. Since 1999, there has been mounting apathy and discontent over the shameless conduct of the political class and its inability to deliver the so-called ‘democracy dividend’ to Nigeria’s teeming population of 140 million. This concern has intensified in the aftermath of the April 2007 elections. A case in point is the Niger Delta, a region plagued by violent contestations over minority and environmental rights (see Idemudia & Ite, 2006:391-406; see also Ifeka, 2006). Many observers are sceptical about the legitimate capacity of Yar’Adua’s newly inaugurated government to win the hearts and minds of people of this restive region. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), one of the region’s main militant groups, has warned that unless genuine steps are taken to address the problem through dialogue, violence will continue. The region’s familiar security threats, such as hostage taking and abduction of expatriate oil workers, have worsened: ‘the militants have been increasing their violent attacks in the oil-rich Delta. Dozens of foreign workers have been kidnapped this year’ (VOA, 2007).

The foregoing situation is likely to deteriorate, as noted by Joseph Croft of the Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN):

*I think you are likely to see an increase in activity by armed groups and interest in people using violence to air their grievances and challenge the state, because the state does not have any legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of the people in the Niger Delta at the moment and that’s a very worrying situation* (cited in VOA, 2007).

In other parts of the country, civil society has stepped-up efforts to question the legitimacy of the new government. For instance, The Coalition of Civil and Human Rights Groups has committed itself to use all legitimate means to give the Yar’Adua presidency a good run for its illegitimate claims on power. Similarly, the Campaign for Democracy (CD), which spearheaded the campaigns that ended military dictatorship in the late 1990s, has sworn to continue its challenge to the new administration.

The conduct and outcome of the elections is already impacting on Nigeria’s reputation within the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and its peer-review mechanism for democracy and development. Nigeria’s longstanding failure in organising credible elections could be contrasted with the relatively stable democratic polities such as Botswana, Comoros, Seychelles and South Africa, who continue to develop. An important question is whether or not Nigeria could continue to lay claim to continental leadership as the Economist has questioned:

*If Africa’s vaunted renaissance is to mean anything, Nigeria – it is widely agreed – must point the way. It is Africa’s most*
populous country (with 140m people), its biggest oil producer (with 3% of the world’s exports), and fancies itself as the continent’s diplomatic leader, alongside South Africa. Its relatively smooth transition from military to civilian rule in 1999 had raised hopes that Nigeria might be leaving the cruelty and mismanagement of the two previous decades behind it – and put the country squarely back as a respected giant of the continent (The Economist, 19 April 2007).³

Sadly, given the experience of the 2007 elections, Nigeria’s political class has failed in its travail of the democratic tightrope.

Conclusion

The conduct of the elections has brought to the fore the question of whether free and fair elections can be successfully conducted by the Nigerian political class. The elections have shown that ‘instead of guaranteeing citizens’ basic rights to vote freely, the government and its electoral officials have actively colluded in fraud and violence that marred the whole exercise as officials closed their eyes to human rights abuses committed by supporters of the ruling party and others (HRW, 2007b).

The conduct of the elections is symptomatic of a deeply rooted malaise within the political economy of Nigeria, a polity that depends on prebendalism and patrimonialism. Thus it seems that Nigeria’s inability to live up to local and international expectations, as manifested by its appalling failure in building a stable democracy has justified the country’s description as ‘a regressive state’ (Tar, 2007).⁴

Endnotes

1. The result did not show the total votes scored in each state or the percentage of scores by candidates.
4. This is defined as ‘a fragile state that is drifting backwards, in developmental terms, when its contemporaries are moving forward, irrespective of the speed and level of progress’. A key feature of a regressive state is ‘a selfish political and bureaucratic class, intent on enriching itself at the expense of a deprived mass of society’.

Bibliography


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**Nigeria: Demographic Facts & Figures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population in 1991</th>
<th>88.9 million</th>
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<tr>
<td>Projected Population (2003)</td>
<td>126,252,844</td>
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<td>Projected male population (2003)</td>
<td>63,241,808</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project female population (2003)</td>
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<td>Population Growth rate</td>
<td>2.9% p.a.</td>
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<td>Life Expectancy at birth</td>
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Commentators and observers of Nigeria’s 2007 elections have aired diverse opinions, even though, with the exception of the state, there is a relative consensus that the events were violent, fraudulent, and far from being ‘free and fair’. In this briefing, I examine the substance of such commentaries, and explain motives behind them. I also try to capture the degree of credibility in claims advanced by observers.

**Verdict 1: The Elections were a Success Given the Underlying Circumstances – Obasanjo & International Peers.**

The earliest position, in support of upholding the elections in spite of staggering deficiencies, was advanced by the outgoing president and the INEC. Fielding questions to the media after the election, President Obasanjo noted that without doubt the elections were characterised by violence and fraud; however, he noted, given the difficulties and limitations encountered in the course of the elections, there is not compelling moral ground to cancel the elections or conduct another round. He also stated that the elections should not be judged by western standards.

Outside Nigeria, the country’s African ‘peers’ have been seemingly complicit. For instance, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa was the first to congratulate Yar’ Adua on his victory. Others, including President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, congratulated Yar’ Adua on ‘his landslide victory’. Surprisingly, some Western governments and institutions, too, have been tempted to remain hesitant (a clear sign of acceptance), while also showing some degree of displeasure with both the election and the subsequent swearing-in of President-elect Umaru Yar’ Adua. Such reticence is perhaps influenced by ‘the default position that a civilian president with no mandate is better than the alternatives: chaos or military rule’ (Albin-Lackey and Rawlence, 2007. It is argued, however, that ‘if Nigeria’s recent democratic failure passes without consequences from the international community, then the very idea of democracy in Africa is at serious risk’ (Ibid.).

Clearly Obasanjo’s desperate attempt to save the election is informed by the need to maintain the status quo. He has been indicted for manipulating the entire process and brokering the victory of the president-elect. On the other hand, it is no surprise that Nigeria’s African peers and international creditors remained apparently supportive of the country’s ruling class, as its struggles to reproduce dominant power. Their aim is to ensure stability in Africa’s most populous nation, rather than sanction principled observance of democratic ethos. It is thus reasonable to argue that both the ruling class and its international allies are complicit in the game of reproducing hegemonic stability in Nigeria.

**Verdict 2: ‘The Elections were Fraudulent and Deserve Outright Rejection’ – Local and Foreign Monitors.**

Foreign and local observers condemned the elections in strong terms (see Table 1 over). However, there are moral issues about how far and wide monitors have witnessed the elections to lay claim on the authenticity and legitimacy of their verdicts. Consider the following:

**Summary of Local Observer’s Verdict**

Because of the sheer number of monitors they trained and deployed (50,000), as well their sustained presence and participation in Nigeria, the verdict of local
### Table 1: Foreign & Local Monitors & their Verdicts

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Observer Group</th>
<th>No. of Monitors</th>
<th>Summary of Verdict</th>
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<td>European Union</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>At least 200 were killed, including voters, police and candidates in both the state and national elections: 'EU observers witnessed examples of ballot box stuffing, alteration of official result forms, stealing of sensitive polling materials, vote buying and underage voting'.</td>
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<td>International Republican Institute, USA</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>'Underage voting, voter registration list errors, stuffed ballot boxes, group voting, party observers and police instructing individuals on who to vote for, lack of privacy for voting, lack of results sheets and other materials, falsified results sheets, and early closings'.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Observer Group, London, UK</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>'We got reports that in several places the delay was there. The polls were supposed to open at 10 a.m. but we got reports in certain places they opened at one, at three and some at five or later ... What we have received is not widespread. Stuffing [of ballot boxes] was reported in one area, pre-marked papers in one area. So we cannot take that as general, but it is a shortcoming. I'm waiting until I have all the facts before I make an assessment.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Action Forum</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>'An appraisal of the electoral process reveals an INEC that is not only partisan in siding with the ruling PDP but is generally unprepared for the elections ... 'Worst of all is the presidential poll ... marred by voters’ apathy as a result of INEC failings to hold as scheduled the Presidential and National Assembly elections in some parts of the country. States such Anambra, Imo and Plateau dispatched election materials at about 6 p.m. when voting ought to have been concluded an hour earlier.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Democratic Institute, USA</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>'Regrettably, the 2007 polls represent a step backward in the conduct of elections in Nigeria. At the same time, there are positive trends in the country’s democratisation process that give rise to hope ... ‘The serious flaws witnessed during this electoral process threaten to further erode citizen confidence in the country’s democratic institutions.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Election Observer Group, Nigeria</td>
<td>50,000*</td>
<td>‘Our monitors throughout the country ... documented numerous lapses, irregularities and electoral malpractices that characterised the election in many states ... We therefore reject it and call for its cancellation’ (emphasis added).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BBC, 'What Nigerian Elections Observers Say', available: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6582979.htm, accessed 11 July 2007; *Note the disparity in the number of monitors deployed by Local Elections Observer Group as compared to others.*
observers – the Local Election Observation Group (hereinafter ‘the Group’ or LEOG) – deserves a more detailed assessment here. The Group consisted of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Labour Election Monitoring Team (LEMT), Citizens Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR), the Electoral Reform Network (ERN), Muslim League for Accountability (MULAC), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), and Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE-Nigeria). Most constituent members of the Group participated in the 1999 and 2003 Elections.

The Group report (LEOG, 2007) highlights a number of reasons why the elections failed. This includes the fact that preparations for the elections were chaotic and unpredictable and noting that in many states, especially in the Southeast (e.g. Abia Anambra and Imo) and Northeast (e.g. Adamawa), elections did not take place due to the non-delivery of election materials and this created a major challenge for the security agencies. In others, Senatorial and House of Assembly Elections were either not held or held in selected polling stations and constituencies due to confusion in names and photographs of candidates as well as logos of political parties. In places where elections were held, voting did not commence until late in the afternoon due to late arrival of election materials. Voters waited in the scorching sun and those that could not wait went home angry and disappointed at a system and process that denied them their sovereign right to elect leaders of their choice. Some that waited could not cast their votes, as INEC did not avail Presiding Officers of rechargeable lanterns even though it claimed to have them in store. In some places, voting did not take place at all due to the non-delivery of election materials and this created challenges for the security agencies. The Group lamented that INEC offered ‘no satisfactory explanation’ for this state of affairs.

Furthermore, local observers pointed to INEC’s appalling performance in the management of the elections, raising doubts about its independence, impartiality and competence as an election referee. The Group claims that:

The logistics arrangement made for the elections can only be described as shoddy. A few days to the elections, the INEC leadership was still moving around Resident Electoral Commissioners in some states. Some of the RECs were redeployed less than 48 hours to the elections. No satisfactory explanation has been offered by INEC for these redeployments. It is difficult to understand the rationale for these redeployments and how the RECs could be expected to familiarize themselves with their new states and deliver.

INEC failed in many places to make arrangements to transport election officials and materials to polling stations. In some places, even where materials arrived at distribution points more than three hours late, elections officials still had to carry their materials and trek with them for kilometres to their polling stations, causing more delays and exposing them to security risks (LEOG, 2007:3-4).

There were a number of compounding factors behind INEC’s poor management of the elections. The first was INEC’s secretive decision to procure and stock election materials in South Africa, a decision taken without broad consultation with political parties and civil society. Concerns were also expressed that outsourcing and stocking of election materials carried the risk of logistic failure, fraud and ballot stuffing. Secondly, the last minute inclusion by the Court of Appeal of the once disqualified former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, forced INEC to reprint the ballot papers for the elections, thus increasing the chances of fraud and other malpractice.

The Group claims that in the period preceding the elections, INEC’s Chair-
man, Maurice Iwu, was more concerned with ‘making political statements and fighting political battles’, rather than ‘ensuring that arrangements were put in place to guarantee a smooth electoral process.’ The Group also noted that in spite of government and INEC’s constant assurance in the period leading up to the election, to guarantee the personal safety of citizens, there were rampant breaches before, during and after the polls. For instance, the then Inspector-General of the Police informed the nation that state-of-the-art policing equipment had been procured to ensure safety and security during the elections. Disappointedly, the Group reports that ‘the electoral process, from voter registration, party primaries and political campaign to polling has been characterised by widespread violence and general insecurity’ (LEOG, 2007:4).

Monitors drew attention to the harassment to which many members and workers for the opposition parties suffered, as well as the government’s mismanagement of the electoral process. They also pointed to the flouting of electoral laws by law enforcement agencies, who constituted themselves into complainants, accusers, investigators, prosecutors and judges:

\[\text{working in collaboration with the INEC and the Federal Ministry of Justice, they indicted and excluded opposition politicians from the electoral process at will. On several occasions, candidates belonging to the opposition parties in several states across the country were arrested and taken to Abuja, which impacted negatively on their preparations for the elections and frightened their supporters (LEOG, 2007).}\]

Below we note some of the lapses in the organisation of the elections, which in turn point to the complicity of the state in electoral malpractices:

- In virtually all states, elections did not start on time with the exception of Abuja, the Federal Capital. States such as Imo, Abia, Anambra, and Enugu, started so late that many people were unable to cast their votes;
- In most states of the federation including Katsina, Kaduna, Enugu, Benue, Niger, Nasarawa, and Adamawa, there was widespread hoarding and a shortage of voting materials;
- In many constituencies, polling centres were closed, particularly in the North East and South East;
- In states such as Kaduna, Niger, Lagos, Adamawa, Gombe, Bauchi, Abia, Katsina, Imo, Anambra and Enugu, House of Representatives and Senatorial elections were not conducted at all and in those that were, logos of some parties were omitted from the ballot papers;
- There was lack of security of the ballot. In states such as Kaduna and Niger, adequate security of the ballot was not provided as election officials had to trek with their election materials for several kilometres to their polling stations without proper security;
- Voter turn out was so low in many states that they could be described as a ‘voter boycott because the outcome did not reflect the will of the people as expressed through their ballots;
- Lack of secrecy in balloting across the 36 states and Abuja;
- INEC officials who presided over the elections in many states were not properly trained and some were children;
- Police officials were also not properly trained and had no communi-
cation capabilities, which made them helpless;

- Disorganised voter registration which made it difficult for voters to identify their names;

- Presidential ballot papers did not have serial numbers which made it difficult for voters and observers to know how many were actually printed.

- Complete lack of transparency in the conduct of the elections (LEOG, 2007:5)

Observing the Observers: Issues Regarding Local & Foreign Monitors

There are issues regarding the modus operandi and relative influence of local and foreign (particularly European and American) observers. Obviously, the ‘politics’ of monitoring was in display: foreign observers were more privileged and had more clout than their local counterparts. First, compared to local monitors, foreign observers were present only in a few cities, while local monitors were deployed throughout the country; they required huge resources and manpower, but had to make do with little. Yet, foreign monitors enjoyed far greater funding and led posh life styles which stood in the way of accessible, modest and trustworthy monitoring. They were based in the most luxurious hotels in Abuja and other centres of power such as the Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Agura, Rockview, and the Nico Noga Hilton. These hotels symbolise the wealth and grandeur that local monitors can only dream of; worse, they are worlds apart from the gloomy settings of the voting public (such as households, village squares and voting stations; the majority of Nigerians live on less than a dollar a day!). Foreign monitors ‘imported’ their food and drinking water, drove the most expensive jeeps, carried the most expensive computers and mobile telephones during the elections. They observed less gothic scenes in Nigeria’s centres of power (Abuja, Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt), rather than remote locales where electoral fraud and violence were more rampant, albeit under-reported. In many villages, violence was more catastrophic as uneducated local people were wrongly informed to vote on the basis of religion, ethnicity and regionalism, and to use machetes, knives and traditional dane guns to attack political enemies and guard electoral malpractice in their communities – all for few Naira notes given to them by politicians.

Second, foreign observers deployed far fewer individual monitors than their local counterparts (see Table above). Worse, their observations were the ‘tip of the iceberg’; for instance, in Nigeria, ‘alteration’ (a method in which election results were altered with a stroke of pen) took place in the middle of the night, when foreign observers retired to their posh hotels or private houses (in this scenario, it would take a fearless endeavour to detect high level fraud). LEOG reports have vividly documented scenes of sophisticated electoral fraud, usually unreported by their foreign counterparts. The point is, local monitors have revealed more than their foreign counterparts in detecting and reporting sophisticated electoral crimes. It is worthy of note, however, that in this area, the capacity of local monitors too have remained limited.

Third, foreign observers received a wider audience and publicity than their local colleagues. The reports of foreign monitors were timely and effectively carried, some live, in the international media houses such as BBC, CNN and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Individual monitors and heads of mission were regularly invited to give media interviews. In addition, foreign monitors had access to the most advanced technology and internet facility. Their
websites contained easily accessible materials and privileged information, some of which were commissioned work produced by local civil society on their behalf. For instance, the European Union, Election Observer Mission in Nigeria, has a dedicated website administered in Brussels (http://www.eueom-ng.org/). Surfing through the content of the site, including the imposing profiles of individual EU-EOM monitors for Elections 2007, as well as detailed reports of all stages of the 2007 elections, one wonders how the site was developed and its contents uploaded: were they drawn from material gathered during few days visit to Nigeria? Were they written in liaison with local election monitors and civil society? Were they written by some invisible observers?

On the other hand, local observers were, and have always been, left to their own devices in observing elections and reporting them. Though some, such as the Group, have limited access to ‘overseas’ media and internet, overall local monitors were constrained from communicating their concerns to the wider world. Within Nigeria, too, their voice was seemingly scuttled by the one-party state and state-controlled media houses. Nevertheless, Nigeria’s private media have given some attention to local observers and some too, have developed in-house newsletters in which reports and press releases are regularly published and disseminated.

Finally, it is worthy of note that financial support for local monitors, including the Group, came mainly from foreign donors – particularly the EU, the DFID Governance Fund, Office of Transition Initiatives of the USIS, German Embassy, International Federation of Electoral Systems, International Republican Institute, National Endowment for Democracy etc. Yet some issues arise from this trend. First, foreign funding comes with a huge moral, economic and political burden. Local monitors have to channel a significant proportion of their energy chasing and justifying funds and pleasing donors. Second, because of foreign funding, local monitors and civil society risked suspicion and red tape from state actors and ‘gatekeepers’ – particularly in the provision of access and safety to monitors. Too often, they were branded as a sell-out or ‘saboteurs living on the handouts of foreigners and helping them to achieve their sinister motives of destabilising Nigeria’.

The truth is, local monitors are neither saboteurs nor sell-outs: they are a middle class elements struggling to both execute a national duty (election monitoring) and make ends meet in a competitive world.

**Conclusion**

The Nigerian 2007 general election demonstrates two nuanced arguments, each framed by, and based on, contrasting positioning of actors in state (including its international peers) and civil society (local and foreign observers). On the one hand, despite the failure of the elections, the political class and state institutions unrepentantly defended the election claiming that half a loaf of bread is better than none. Their aim, of course, was to sustain the status quo – PDP-dominated political victory. Here, democratic morality and political correctness are irrelevant: they could be sacrificed to save hegemony. On the other hand, local and foreign election monitors who observed the election first hand and witnessed a colossal amount of fraud and violence, vehemently rejected it – defying their previous leniency, for instance, in 1999 when they conceded that in spite of irregularities, there is a scope to learn lessons after two decades of military dictatorship.

In 2007, observer groups were unanimously united and furious with the failure, indeed unwillingness, of the political class to conduct free and fair
Nevertheless, beyond the vinyl of unity between foreign and local monitors, there are issues about striking disparities between the two in terms of their access to funding, methodology and information dissemination. Obviously, while local monitors, deploying 50,000 observers, were largely left to their own devices, their foreign counterparts – some of whom actually employed a dozen monitors – had a field day driving luxurious jeeps, carrying exotic technological gadgets and concentrating in cities (as opposed to remote parts of the country where irregularities were far worse). At issue is the inequality between a much resourced and publicised foreign monitor on the one hand, and an under-resourced and less publicised local monitor, on the other.

Usman Tar, e-mail: usmantar1@gmail.com.

Bibliography


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The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF): The Dilemma of its Struggle in Ethiopia

Abdi M. Abdullahi

The international media has paid very little attention to the Somali region of Ethiopia, also known as the ‘Ogaden’, mainly as a result of the region’s remoteness and peripheral status. Nevertheless, the recent Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) attack on a Chinese oilfield in Obolo village in the Dhagabour zone, and the current Ethiopian and American coalition under the global war on terror in the Horn of Africa, sheds light upon the continuing conflict in the region.

The general attitude among Ethiopian highlanders towards the Somalis in the region is ambivalent as there have always been disputes between Ethiopia and Somalia. Consequently, the Somali region has been chronically affected by violent conflict since its incorporation into the Ethiopian state in 1888. There have been several periods of local and regional conflict, including full-scale war between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1977/78 over the Ogaden. Despite the victory of Ethiopia over Somalia, the government continued to sponsor the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), the leading liberation movement at the time of the Ethiopia–Somalia war. Nonetheless, WSLF was affected by the withdrawal of Somalia government support when both military governments in Somalia and Ethiopia signed a peace agreement at the time of the Ethiopia–Somalia war. Nonetheless, WSLF was affected by the withdrawal of Somalia government support when both military governments in Somalia and Ethiopia signed a peace agreement to end the hostilities in Djibouti in 1988.1

However, the relationship between the EPRDF government in Addis Ababa and ONLF was unstable due to ONLF’s assertive ‘secessionist’ policy opposed by the regime. As decentralisation based on ethnic federalism was introduced in Ethiopia, almost each Somali clan in the region rushed to set up a political party.4 Among them were the Democratic Unity Party, the Ethiopian Somali Democratic Movement, and the Democratic Action. However, ONLF considered this to be undermining their role in the region, and opted out of participation in the constitutional process in 1994. They demanded full self-determination for Somalis in the region, arguing that the Ogaden region was colonised by the successive Ethiopian regimes, and therefore required special attention from the government.5

As a result, ONLF influenced the regional councils under the leadership of late Hassan Jire Qalinle, and unanimously voted for the self-determination of the people in the region in 1994. The EPRDF government actively tried to neutralise ONLF by engaging the traditional elders and other non-Ogaadeen Somali clans to form their own political party.
Deri Dawa, in Huurso in 1994. This led to the formation of the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL).

Meanwhile, ONLF was divided into two major groups. The first was hardliner wing led by Sheik Ibrahim Abdalla, who resided in the Gulf States. The government banned this group, who later went on to fight with the EPRDF regime. The second wing was an ‘accommodationist’ led by Bashir Abdi Hassan, who participated in the new ethnic federalism processes in Ethiopia. The EPRDF backed the latter group, who later merged with ESDL under the leadership of the late Dr Abdulmajid Hussein and formed the current ruling party of the Somali regional government – the Somali People’s Democratic Party (SPDP).

Rebellion

The outlawed wing regrouped and appointed Admiral Mohamed Omar Osman, a retired Somalia marine, as their Chairman in 1998. Their stated aim is to liberate the Ogaden people from Ethiopia by creating an independent state called ‘Ogaadeenia’. Initially, ONLF attempted to mobilise the members of the Ogaden clan against what they consider to be the historical colonisation and marginalisation of the Ogaden by the Ethiopian state. Nevertheless, while the organisation claimed to represent the entire Somali people in the region, other non-Ogaden clans, including the Jidwaq, Iise, Garre and ‘minority’ clans and groups, withheld their support since they perceived ONLF as an exclusively Ogaden political body. For them, supporting ONLF’s struggle meant empowering Ogaden domination in the region. Consequently, some allied with the government, while others took a ‘wait and see’ approach. This is linked to various factors, one of which is the controversial name ‘Ogaden’, which these clans consider to be the name of a clan rather than land or territory. However, ONLF defied either changing or dropping the name by insisting that ‘Ogaden’ signifies a territory.
and land, and hence it is the internation-
ally recognised name of the region.

Because of this rift, OLNF forces are
predominantly fighting in areas that are
inhabited by the Ogaadeen clan, such as
Dhagahbour, Fiqq, Godey, Qorahay and
Wardheer zones. Their strategy is based
on carrying out hit-and-run attacks
against the government army, which
controls the main towns in these areas,
while the OLF is in charge of the
‘bush’. Both the government and ONLF
claim victory over the fighting in the
region, but no independent body verified
these claims. An ONLF member that I
interviewed recently stated:

EPRDF failed to defeat us and we also
failed to remove them from our territory,
and therefore we are drawn.

In conventional warfare the OLF insurg-
ents are no match for the might of the
Ethiopian army. However, the ongoing
conflict does have a significant impact
upon the region, especially the civilian
population. In the words of an old
Somali saying, ‘When the elephants fight
the grass gets trampled.’

It is reported that both the government
army and OLF insurgents commit hu-
man rights abuses against civilians.
There have long been periodic reports of
the government army arresting and as-
sassinating individuals accused of be-
ing OLF supporters, as well as other
instances of extra-judicial killings.

Equally, the OLF carries out the assas-
sination and kidnapping of citizens who
oppose their policies. A good example is
the recent assassination of Suldan
Ibrahim Ali Saafi – traditional chief of
Ibrahim, a sub-clan of Makaaheel of
Ogaadeen – and six of his fellow men in
the Aado village of the Wardher district
in early 2006. During this attack, ONLF
also injured and kidnapped dozens of
civilians.

On the other hand, the current EPRDF
government is yet to win the hearts and
minds of the people in region. This
failure is linked to various reasons. First,
the people in the region have not experi-
enced the benefits of the Ethiopian state
since the region beyond the urban cen-
tres of Jigjiga has been a highly milita-
rised zone. For instance, basic public
services such as infrastructure, educa-
tion, water and health are limited, if not
almost entirely absent, in most of the
region. As a ‘pastoralist livelihoods study
on the Somali region’ carried out by
Stephen Devereux in 2006 indicated, the
government of Ethiopia does not even
know how many primary and secondary
schools are in the region. It is believed
that this absence of state benefits and
services in the region alienates the local
people, and leaves no option but to
support the insurgents, perpetuating the
violent conflict. Also, regional admin-
istration has been highly affected by seri-
ous political instability and weak
administration, despite decentralisation
based on ethnic federalism. For instance,
almost every two or three years for the
past decade, the ruling party has re-
placed the regional president with a new
one with the blessing of the central
government.

**Internal Crises**

There has been growing leadership divi-
sion between ONLF’s Chairman
Mohamed Omar Osman, Vice Chairman
Abdukadir Hassan Hirmoge (Adani),
General Secretary Mohamed Ismail, and
fifteen members led by Dr Mohamed
Sirad Dolaal, Head of the Planning and
Research Department of ONLF. The
Chairman dismissed 11 ONLF central
committee members in 2006, and the
dismissed group argues that the deci-
sion is unconstitutional and that the
Chairman does not have any legitimacy
to take such action since his term of
chairmanship had expired and he failed
to seek approval from the general assem-
ably of the organisation. According to Dr Dolaal:

*A declaration has been issued by fifteen members. In that statement, it has been declared that the chairman and his two deputies were suspended from the organisation for violating the constitution respectively. Instead, the declaration appointed to supreme council until the general congress to take over the leadership of the organisation.*

As part of the above leadership struggle, this political rift is also due to the Chairman being accused of having a secret deal with the president of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Somalia (Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed) to mediate the Ethiopian government and ONLF in early 2006.12

Although some low-profile attempts were made by some central committee members of ONLF to bring the two groups closer, it is still doubtful whether such a move will resolve the current political tensions in the organisation. Some central committee members who called themselves ‘neutral’ organised a conference in Copenhagen in December 2006 in order to resolve the deepening political crisis. After drawn-out dialogue, both groups agreed to select an *ad hoc* committee that would investigate whether the dismissal of the committee members was legal, as well as how and when the general assembly of the organisation would take place. While they endorsed the selected technical committee, Chairman Osman intervened in the committee by replacing three members of the committee. The opponent of the Chairman considers this move as a way to extend his powers to influence the committee. Although the final decision of the committee is expected to come out this month, it seems unlikely that they will be able to resolve these internal political crises.

The recent surrender of high-ranking officials to the Ethiopian government, including Suldan Adan Yusuf Tani and Sulub Ali Abas, along with their militias, deepens the crisis in the ONLF leadership political rift. Recent reports from the region indicate that further ONLF militias have handed themselves over to the government.13 These ‘defections’ have damaged the overall unity of the ONLF struggle. In particular, Suldan Taani’s defection was a serious blow, as a former ONLF representative in Eritrea who held various significant positions in the organisation. He is seen by the EPRDF government as a valuable asset to crack down on insurgent movements in the region. Suldan Taani has already set up his own militia to wage war against ONLF in Wardher zone. There have been serious clashes between the federal troops, the local militia (Tadaqi) and ONLF insurgents in Dartoole, Farhareeri and Biladaye in the Danoot district in early May 2007.14

Because of this political rift, the leadership of the organisation is divided. For example, key diaspora grassroots activities, some insurgent members in the region, and the main communication facilities of ONLF, including radio freedom (Xoriyo) in Germany, are under the leadership of Dr Dolaal and his team, while the rest are still in the hands of Chairman Osman.15

Despite this growing division – and perhaps because of it – the ONLF signed an agreement with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Coalition of Union of Democracy (CUD) on 21 May 2006, wherein they formed a New Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD).16 The stated aim of this AFD alliance is to work through a democratic approach and conduct a peaceful struggle against the EPRDF government. This alliance calls into question the political programme of the ONLF, since some of its AFD allies such as the CUD would question the ONLF’s secessionist aspirations. Moreover, critics argue that the process of the AFD alliance agreement was a bit trans-
parent, with only few individuals taking the decision to endorse the AFD agreement without consultation and discussion with key ONLF members.

**External Factors**

Initially, the ONLF has been getting support from its members and grassroots activities in order to maintain its struggle against the Ethiopian government. However, as available reports indicate, this has changed since the onset of the border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998-2000. Because of this, the Eritrean government offered support by supplying arms to army opposition in Ethiopia, including the OLF and ONLF, via the warlord Hussein Aided during 1999/2000.17 And, more recently, the ONLF received military support from Eritrea through the Union of Islamic Courts in Southern Somalia.

Nevertheless, recent Ethiopian intervention in Somalia has also had a negative impact upon the ONLF army’s struggle. Obviously, the collapse of the Union of Islamic Courts (UICs) was seen by the government to be a severe blow to the ONLF movement in the region, though ONLF officials deny the existence of any relationship with the UIC. It is widely reported, however, that there were alleged ONLF members detained by the Kenyan government on the border between Somalia and Kenya. They were later handed over to the Ethiopian government via the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Somalia. Among them are Bashir Makhtal, a Canadian National, Abdullahi Osman, Ali Safi Jama, and Hussein Awnur Garaase.18

On the other hand, it is reported that the Eritrean government revitalised the opposition forces to a form a coalition against the EPRDF regime and the TFG in Somalia, including ONLF, OLF, UIC members and some of the TFG members, such as Hussein Aidid and Sharif Hassan – the former TFG house speaker.19 They appointed Sheik Sharif Ahmed as the leader of the new coalition. Nonetheless, the ONLF officials in Asmara were reluctant to endorse this move by arguing that their case was independent of any state, and thereby they cannot be part of a Somalia coalition.

**Oil Factor**

Prior to the recent Chinese-managed mineral explorations in the region, there had been a number of unsuccessful oil exploration attempts carried out by American oil companies such as Sinclair, Tenneco and Sicor since 1948, especially in the Jeexdin locality of the Shilabo district. In 1974, a Russian gas company called Calub took over oil exploration in the region and symbolically changed the name Jeexdin to Calub. Other Malaysian and Indian oil companies also attempted to conduct oil explorations in the region with the backing of the central government in 2004.20 Nonetheless, most of these attempts were unsuccessful because of the insecurity and the violent conflict. Equally, the absence of effective and coherent policy for the central government to carry out holistic and practical operations to utilise natural resources – including the Jeexdin/Calub gas field – contributed to the limited development of this project. For instance, the establishment of the refinery factory in Awash for Jeexdin/Calub gas, 700km away from the project site, not only alienates the local people from benefiting from what they consider to be their own resource, but at such a distance it is also impractical.

China’s Zhongyan Petroleum Exploration Company began oil exploration operations at a new site – Obolo village of Dagahbour district – in early 2006 with 200 Chinese and local staff. The ONLF considered this intervention as an intrusion, and in 2006 warned foreign oil exploration firms not to intervene in the Somali region. However, the government dismissed this as a baseless claim.21
The recent ONLF attack on the Chinese oilfield in Obolo calls into question the government’s claims to pacify the region. On 26 April 2007 the ONLF mounted an attack on the Chinese oil exploration site, killing 65 Ethiopians (32 of whom were of Somali ethnic origin) and 9 Chinese; 7 others were kidnapped but later freed.22 Although the ONLF officially accepted responsibility, the government severely criticised this action as a terrorist attack. However, the motive behind this attack was not merely rebellion against unauthorised Chinese intervention, as claimed by ONLF, but also to assassinate a local contractor, Ibrahim Xaad, who was opposed to ONLF activities in the Dagahbour zone.

Due to this incident and the responses of the government to it, clashes between the government army and ONLF insurgents in Qalafo, Danoot and Dagahbour have increased. Journalists are banned from reporting the incidents, and therefore it is difficult to verify who has the upper hand in this violent conflict. Even those who attempt to visit the region are either arrested by the government army or deported. One example is the government’s arrest of three American ‘New York Times’ journalists who were in Dagahbour to report the violent conflict in the region, later freed by the government.23 Moreover, on 29 May 2007, simultaneous blasts occurred in Jigjiga and Dagahbour, and killed 11 people and wounded the Somali regional president. It is unclear who was behind them. The government blamed the strike on the ONLF, though ONLF has denied any involvement in those blasts.24

**Peaceful Settlement**

With regard to the prospect for peace settlement between the government and ONLF, experience in the Somali region indicates that neither the EPRDF government nor ONLF is committed to resolving their differences at the table. Both use zero-sum approaches. The government does not consider the ONLF insurgents as a serious threat, while the ONLF maintains its separatist ideology. However, behind the curtain, the government pushes low-profile diplomatic attempts. More recently, some traditional elders from the Somali region attempted to mediate between the government and ONLF in order to resume negotiations. Some of the elders even visited Europe and North America to meet with ONLF officials, but this attempt failed after ONLF officials refused to come to the negotiating table without the presence of an international neutral mediator, an idea that has been resisted by the Ethiopian government for the last decade. The prospect for peace does not only depend upon a comprehensive agreement over the region but also the wider stability in the Horn of Africa.

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**Endnotes**

4. See Markakis, John.


10. To add insult to injury, the chairman of the organisation officially accepted the killing of the Suldan in December 2006, alleging the Suldan was a collaborator of their enemy, the Ethiopian regime. However, it is reported that the Suldan was a peaceful person who was dedicated to maintaining peace and stability among the Somali clans in the region. Interview with Mohamed Osman, BBC Somali Service, December 2006; http://www.radioxoriyo.com, accessed on 12 April 2007.


12. Ibid.


22. Ibid.


**Africa: Green Revolution or Rainbow Evolution?**

Carol B. Thompson

Kofi Annan has just agreed to head the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. The goals of these foundations are ambitious. ‘Our initial estimate is that over ten years, the program for Africa’s seed systems (PASS) should produce 400 improved crop varieties resulting in a 50 percent increase in the land area planted with improved varieties across 20 African countries,’ reads the initiative’s press release. ‘We have also initially estimated that this level of performance will contribute to eliminating hunger for 30-40 million people and sustainably move 15-20 million people out of poverty.’

But can Africa afford this proposed ‘green revolution’ in terms of human health and environmental sustainability? The foundation goals require resources that the continent does not have while derogating the incredible wealth it does possess. Although scientists, agriculturalists and African governments all agree that the continent has not remotely reached its agricultural potential, their
advocated policies for food sovereignty drastically diverge from the high-tech, high-cost approach promoted by Gates and Rockefeller.

In 2002, while UN secretary general, Kofi Annan asked, ‘How can a green revolution be achieved in Africa?’ After more than a year of study, the appointed expert panel of scientists (from Brazil, China, Mexico, South Africa and elsewhere) replied that a green revolution would not provide food security because of the diverse types of farming systems across the continent. There is ‘no single magic technological bullet … for radically improving African agriculture,’ the expert panel reported in its strategic recommendations. ‘African agriculture is more likely to experience numerous “rainbow evolutions” that differ in nature and extent among the many systems, rather than one Green Revolution as in Asia.’ Now Annan has agreed to head the kind of project his advisors told him would not work.

Behind the Green Revolution

The green revolution of the 1970s promoted increased yields based on a model of industrial agriculture defined as a monoculture of one or two crops, which requires massive amounts of both fertiliser and pesticide as well as the purchase of seed. Although this approach to food production might feed more people in the short term, it also quickly destroys the earth through extensive soil degradation and water pollution from pesticides and fertilisers. It ruined small-scale farmers in Asia and Latin America who could not afford to purchase the fertilisers, pesticides, and water necessary for the hybrid seed or apply these inputs in the exact proportions and at the exact times. To pay their debts, the farmers had to sell their land.

Increasing yields to provide food for the hungry remains the central justification for a green revolution. But as the expert panel above analysed in great detail, increased yields of one or two strains of one or two crops (‘monoculture within monoculture’, as stated by a Tanzanian botanist) will not solve Africa’s food problems. Africa’s diverse ecological systems, and even more diverse farming systems, require multiple initiatives, from intercropping on to permaculture, from respecting and using traditional ecological knowledge to training and equipping more African geneticists. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization, for example, now promotes farmers’ breeding seeds (in situ) as a better conservation measure than collecting seed for refrigeration in a few large seed banks (ex situ). The very best food seed breeders in Africa, the ‘keepers of seed’, are women who often farm less than one hectare of land.

The key to ending hunger is sustaining Africa’s food biodiversity, not reducing it to industrial monoculture. Currently, food for African consumption comes from about 2,000 different plants, while the US food base derives mainly from 12 plants. Any further narrowing of the food base makes us all vulnerable because it increases crop susceptibility to pathogens, reduces the variety of nutrients needed for human health, and minimises the parent genetic material available for future breeding.

Seeds are a key element in the equation. One figure not often quoted among the depressing statistics from the continent is that African farmers still retain control over this major farming input: of the seed used for food crops, 80% is saved seed. Farmers do not have to buy seed every season, with cash they do not have. They possess a greater wealth – their indigenous seeds, freely shared and developed over centuries. The proposed green revolution would shift the food base away from this treasure of seed. Instead, African farmers would have to purchase seed each season, thus putting cash into the hands of the corporations providing
the seed. Is there a way of developing new varieties without further enriching Monsanto or DuPont by removing genetic wealth from African farmers?

Corporate development of new seed varieties, as promoted by the foundations, raises other questions. Will the new varieties be patented or protected by farmers’ rights? Who will own and control the seed? One major reason for the decline of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is the global South’s resistance to patenting life forms. In 1999, the African Union, representing all African governments, asked that its unanimous resolution rejecting any patenting on life be put on the agenda at the Seattle WTO meeting. The United States refused the request.

Another source of African wealth derives from indigenous ecological knowledge, reflecting centuries of adaptation to the different ecological zones, which values interspersing different plants to enrich the soil and deter pests from food crops. Shade trees, often cut down to open the land for monoculture farming, are not necessarily in the way of a ploughing tractor. African farmers have the knowledge to use these trees as wind breaks, medicine, habitats for biodiverse insect communities, and food for all.

This wealth of knowledge raises another question: whether the African continent needs newly manufactured varieties of food crops, or is the problem the lack of scientific recognition and market valuing of what African farmers have cultivated for centuries? Does the colour green in this Green Revolution favour crops known and owned by the global North?

Sorghum is one example of a crop lost to markets in the global North but not to Africa. On the continent, it is planted in more hectares than all other food crops combined. As nutritious as maize for carbohydrates, vitamin B6, and food energy, sorghum is more nutritious in protein, ash, pantothenic acid, calcium, copper, iron, phosphorus, isoleucine, and leucine. One of the most versatile foods in the world, sorghum can be boiled like rice, cracked like oats for porridge, baked like wheat into flat-breads, popped like popcorn for snacks, or brewed for nutritious beer.

Although indigenous knowledge designed these diverse and rich uses of sorghum, most contemporary scientists have ignored its genetic wealth. ‘Sorghum is a relatively undeveloped crop with a truly remarkable array of grain types, plant types, and adaptability,’ concludes the National Research Council in the United States. ‘Most of its genetic wealth is so far untapped and even unsorted. Indeed, sorghum probably has more undeveloped genetic potential than any other major food crop in the world.’

Engaging African scientists to discover the potential genetic wealth of sorghum would assist African food security. In a first glimpse of foundation expenditures, however, we see funds directed to the Wambugu Consortium (founded by Pioneer Hi-Breed, part of DuPont) for experiments in genetically modified sorghum. By adding a gene, rather than mining the genetic wealth already there, the consortium can patent and sell the ‘new’ variety at a premium price for DuPont.

**Toward Sustainability**

Given the well-documented destruction of the previous green revolution, what if we decided that Africa’s lack of use of fertiliser is a sign of sustainable development not of backwardness? Africa’s use of chemical fertilisers is extremely low: nine kilograms per hectare in sub-Saharan Africa, compared to 135 kilograms per hectare in East and Southeast Asia, 100 kilograms in South Asia, and an average of 206 kilograms in industrialised countries. Originating from excess
nitrogen production left over after World War Two, the massive use of chemical fertilisers defined industrial agriculture in the 20th century. Surely for the 21st century, yields can be increased without such a high cost of African environmental degradation.

The African continent also uses different terminology from that of the green revolution. Instead of food security, African voices articulate the goal of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty expresses resistance to the notion that food security can be provided by reliance on global markets, where price and supply vagaries can be as capricious as African weather. Experiencing political manipulation of global markets by the more powerful, African governments seek to control decisions about food sources, considering such choices as vital to national sovereignty.

African governments work to defend local, small-scale farmers from highly subsidised farmers in the United States or Europe. In most of Africa – with South Africa a notable exception - the majority of the population still lives in rural areas and still derives their incomes from farming. Dislocation of farmers to consolidate land for high-tech, green revolution farming is as serious a threat as chemical pollution of the environment.

Should the green wealth of ecological and farming knowledge among local small-scale farmers be destroyed for the cash wealth of much fewer large-scale farmers buying all their inputs from foreign corporations?

Each African government will answer the above questions about a green revolution differently. The diversity of policies matches the diversity of the continent. Yet they all reject patenting of life forms and strive to attain food sovereignty. High-tech answers to Africa’s food crises are no answers at all if they pollute the environment with fertilisers and pesticides, destroy small-scale farming, and transform the genetic wealth of the continent into cash profits for a few corporations.

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Somalia: Amidst the Rubble, a Vibrant Telecommunications Infrastructure

Bob Feldman

Thirteen attempts to form a central government in Mogadishu since 1991 have been thwarted by the parochial interests of feuding warlords. Finally, in 2004, through a reconciliation project, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was created, though it remains weak and unable to exert control in most of the country.¹

Complicating matters for the new government was the takeover of Mogadishu, the nation’s de facto capital, in mid-2006 by the Islamic Courts Union, essentially a fundamentalist group attempting to establish sharia, Islamic law, in the country. Much of the land’s infrastructure lies in ruins, serving as sources of scrap metal to be bartered for basic necessities. The people are impoverished, the economy shattered. And, amidst the rubble and the juxtaposition of modern...
antenna it has one of the most vibrant and least expensive telecommunications sectors in the world.

The description of Somalia in this briefing does not include Somaliland, a breakaway republic in the northwest which did maintain a government, and which wants to be recognised as an independent country. This will be discussed in further detail when comparing telecommunications in Somalia to those present in Somaliland. The word Somalia will also not be used to include Puntland, an area in the northeastern region of the country, which has declared itself to be an autonomous state of Somalia.

**VSAT: First to Fill the Gap**

Somalia had only 8,500 fixed lines in 1990 to serve a countrywide population of nearly 10 million. Even worse for the rural population, most of these lines were in the capital, Mogadishu. With the overthrow of the Siad Barre regime the following year the country devolved into anarchy. Much of the infrastructure, including the Public Switch Transmission Network, was destroyed. A large portion of Somalia was literally cut off from the outside world, the people unable to communicate with their friends and relatives in the United States, Kenya, and other countries with large Somali expatriate communities.

Eventually satellite communication devices with very small aperture terminals (VSAT) were installed by private operators to meet the demand. These devices often have antennas less than two meters in diameter, though some are considerably larger. They are a mature technology introduced in the 1980s, and now comprise hundreds of thousands of units installed worldwide. A typical VSAT star network configuration includes several components. Each user has a box that interfaces between their computer and an outdoor antenna. The antenna serves as a transceiver, capable of sending signals to a satellite as well as receiving them. When the first user sends a message to the second, the information goes from user one’s terminal antenna to the satellite and then down to an Earth station hub. There it is sorted and sent back to the satellite where it will be relayed to the terminal antenna of the second user. Companies such as AT&T and Tella were contracted by private operators to provide the transit facilities (earth station hubs) for incoming and outgoing messages.

There are several possible reasons VSAT’s were the first units to be utilised to provide telecommunications capabilities in war torn Somalia. These include:

- They are relatively inexpensive, with some units available for approximately $3,500.00; Units that can handle larger bandwidths, and thus exchange more data, are more expensive;
- They do not require a significant amount of additional infrastructure;
- Their power requirements can be met by small generators;
- They are readily available on the open market;
- They are fairly durable, an important quality in a high heat, high humidity environment such as Somalia. Failure to properly seal the cables, leading to loss of the signal when it rains, appears to be the main preventable problem afflicting them;
- They are capable of handling data, voice over internet protocol or VOIP (allows for voice conversations if additional components are installed), and video;
VSAT is particularly well suited for cybercafes, an increasingly popular telecom venue, where a small number of computers, and perhaps some voice lines, are required; Cybercafes have the user come to the private operator’s site, as opposed to trying to provide the infrastructure necessary to bring telecommunications capabilities to the user’s home;

They are expandable to meet increasing needs. Additional remote terminals can be added on an essentially plug and play basis; These can readily be interconnected with existing PBX, LAN servers, and WAN telecommunications infrastructure;

It offers the private operator near total independence from other companies. Thus, companies, at least initially, are free to develop without being dependent on the good will, or lack thereof, of other telecom operators;

VSAT lends itself to being shared. Thus, the VSAT of one operator can interact with the VSAT of another;

They are relatively small, making them easily transportable to sites where larger items, due to the lack of roads, could not be brought;

They are relatively simple to set-up and operate. No extensive engineering knowledge, nearly impossible to find since the outbreak of hostilities, is required. Those that use geosynchronous satellites require an initial precise aiming of the antenna. Once the antenna is aimed, it generally does not require further adjustment.

The installation of additional telecommunications infrastructure followed the success of the early VSAT entrepreneurs.

Today, including Somaliland and Puntland, there are nine telecom companies, over 105,000 fixed lines and nearly 39,000 mobile lines. Telephone coverage now extends to 87% of the country.

**Cooperation Without Regulation**

The lack of regulation following the collapse of the central government meant anyone with a VSAT system could enter the telecommunications market. There were no filings, public hearings, zoning notices, or other governmental impediments. Those who could fill the infrastructure vacuum were allowed to do so. However, without a government to provide regulations, users of one company’s phones often could not connect with users of a different company’s phones. For growth to be sustained cooperation would have to occur.

The United Nations Development Program, which was encouraging private enterprise in the region, recognised the chaotic situation. In cooperation with the International Telecommunications Union, it invited the heads of some of the private companies to a series of meetings in Dubai. There, in November 1998, the companies formed the Somali Telecom Association. Being based in Dubai helps mitigate fears of favouritism to any region or operators. Also, since most of the Somali telecom companies already had their offices in Dubai, it made for a convenient location conducive to interaction among them.

The Association is financed by its members and associates, with a mandate to develop the telecommunications industry in Somalia. It has provided training both overseas and in-house, to engineers and managers. Additionally, the association represents Somalia at international telecommunications conferences.

According to Abdilghani Jama, Secretary of the Association, the lack of connectivity among the various companies was
due to a lack of trust. In a pilot project, the Association brought the local operators together with international experts on the economic benefits and costs of having interconnectivity. This led to the companies purchasing new equipment and actually forming a jointly owned entity. Now the residents of Mogadishu who have phone service can talk with each other, no longer hindered by a lack of connectivity among different operators.

Comparison to Somaliland

Somalia was formed in 1960 by the union of the northern Somaliland Protectorate, formerly ruled by Britain, and the southern portion, known as Italian Somalia, named for its ties to its colonial ruler. As the southern section delved into anarchy in 1991, following the overthrow of the repressive Siad Barre dictatorship, the northern section declared the union over, claiming itself to be a sovereign entity and adopting the name of Republic of Somaliland. Unlike the southern part of the country, the north retained a government. Its requests to be recognized as a separate sovereign country, however, have so far fallen on deaf ears. Not a single foreign country recognizes it as such.

Somaliland, like its southern counterpart, has also enjoyed a rapid development in the telecommunications sector. In 1993 the country had a single phone company that only provided fixed phone lines. A decade later there were four private telecommunication companies offering fixed, mobile, and internet services. However, those four companies in Somaliland, unlike the ones in Somalia, were unable or unwilling to invest the time, effort, and money to provide interconnectivity among themselves.

While Somalia, a country with no central government, driven by the profit motives of its telecom operators developed interconnectivity, Somaliland, with a central government, did not. It is difficult to say whether the Somaliland government was the reason for this lack of cooperation, or if there were other factors. Still, it is an interesting demonstration that the presence of a government does not necessarily lead to optimal economic benefits for its citizens. Furthermore, in an unregulated society, such as exists in Somalia, a form of self-government, essentially self-regulation, for an individual sector can arise to provide optimal benefits.

Telecom Not a Terrorist Target

First and foremost are the overwhelming wishes of the everyday people to be able to communicate via telecommunications with one another. As Abdi Karim Mohamed Eid, manager of Telesom, a private telecommunications company in Somaliland said, but with relevance to the rest of Somalia, ‘In traditional African societies, it’s sometimes difficult for government officials to embrace technology, but here, it is the people who decide.’ A particularly strong incentive in this is the dependency of many Somalis on remittances from their relatives and friends abroad. Much of this money is transferred via hawala, an informal honour-based system. As an example, a person could approach a hawala broker in Minneapolis to transfer funds to someone in Mogadishu. The first broker would then contact a second broker in Somalia to deliver funds to the intended recipient. The first broker promises to settle the debt at a later time. Since there is no legal enforceability of claims, the system can function where there is no government. Maintaining a telecommunications infrastructure facilitates the transfer of such funds.

Certainly a significant share of these monies also makes their way to the hands of warlords, militias and terrorists, helping to finance activities such as the tremendous amount of arms trafficking in the country. An added benefit for such groups is that in some instances
hawala does not use any promissory instruments, making it difficult for outside intelligence and police agencies to trace money transfers.

Thus, a large reason the telecom sector is not just left alone but actually encouraged by ‘terrorist’ organisations is that it can serve as a major source of their funds, especially through money transfers. On 7 November 2001 the United States government designated al Barakaat, a bank based in Dubai that was also financially involved in the telecommunications sector of Somalia, as a ‘terrorist’ entity. At one point, al Barakaat was the major money transfer organisation in Somalia. Paul O’Neill, then Secretary of the Treasury, described the company and its branches as such:

The al Barakaat companies are the money movers, the quartermasters of terror. At core, it is a hawala conglomerate operating in 40 countries around the world with business ventures in telecommunications, construction, and currency exchange. They are a principal source of funding, intelligence, and money transfers for bin Laden.

Since that statement some new developments have occurred, including the removal from the ‘terrorist’ list of three individuals who had been accused of channeling funds through al Barakaat to al-Qaeda. This and other information (some of it questionable), has called into question the exact degree the telecom sector facilitates funding of ‘terrorist’ groups. However, while the specific amount may be contested, it does appear that a portion of the money remitted to Somalia finds its way to terrorist groups.

There are additional reasons for terrorists to be supportive of the telecommunications infrastructure, particularly the high tech one that has grown in Somalia. Unlike the older fixed line telephones which were relatively easy to tap, disrupt, and trace, the newer technologies offer the potential for more anonymity. The mobile phone is rented, sometimes to several different users for short periods, in a cash only transaction, making it difficult to determine which wireless unit to place under surveillance. This multi-user arrangement also makes it difficult to know who made a particular call of interest.

With no police or legal system, the use of the telecom system to coordinate ‘terrorist’ activities can occur without fear of arrest in Somalia. Additionally, the provision of internet access by at least three of the telecom companies can allow Somalia-based terrorists to communicate via the web to collaborators in other countries. This means of sending messages, sometimes subtly hidden in websites, has proven difficult at times to uncover.

The use of telecommunications by ‘terrorists’, militias and warlords is so prevalent in Somalia that these individuals can possibly be considered the de facto governing body of that sector. Without at least their tacit approval, the hardware associated with sending and receiving messages would quickly be confiscated. Thus, while the warlords and terrorists may not form an official sanctioning body, their unwritten requirements, such as making the internet available for fund transfers, must be met. It’s quite possible that interconnectivity among the different systems is yet another directive dictated by warlords and terrorists. Since such rules imposed upon the telecom sector are not readily apparent to the outside observer, the appearance of a free market that is totally absent any regulation is probably an illusion since some regulation exists in the form of pressure from these organisations; it’s just not formally structured in a codified series of laws, and appears not to cover such areas as pricing and entry into the market.
No Government, No Taxes, No-Man’s Land

Because there is no strong central government, Somali telecoms do not have to pay taxes. This, along with intense competition among the providers, has resulted in some of the cheapest call rates in the world. Another result of not having a strong central government is the ability of nearly any willing provider to establish a telecom company in the country. As Abdigani Jama, Secretary General of the Somali Telecom Association, says, ‘It’s a no-man’s land. Anyone can bring in equipment and no licenses are required.’

Despite such advantages, the telecom companies are generally anxious to see a central government once again in Somalia. There are several reasons for this. A central government could reestablish a formal banking system, allowing both companies and customers alike to borrow in order to finance their telecom needs. Also, regulations do not necessarily have to impede development, especially if a significant portion of their thrust is standardisation and compatibility. The private telecom operators themselves chose to self-regulate so they could have the benefit, and the increased revenue associated with it, of phones from one system being capable of interacting with the phones from another.

Finally, there is the uncertainty that accompanies a country without a government. Today the warlords opt for telecom, but who knows what seemingly capricious reason might cause one or all of them to change their mind. The possible reasons for intentional or unintentional disruption of telecommunications in Somalia are endless.

The Reestablishment of Government: Future Unknown

Clues as to the possible shape of the telecom sector in Somalia should a strong central government be established can be gleaned by examining other African countries. Additional information can be obtained from the overall telephony strategies for the continent, as provided by the Panos Report, ‘Completing the Revolution: the Challenge of Rural Telephony in Africa.’ Following are some possible changes that might be implemented:

1) An increased emphasis on providing telecom services to the remaining rural areas that do not presently have them. Because rural areas tend to have a low population density as well as a generally poorer population than the cities, the private telecom sector sees few economic incentives to service them. It would fall on the government to provide such incentives, perhaps through tax breaks (once the government starts taxing telecom) or direct subsidies. Though the establishment of telecom services in rural areas may offer significant benefits, such as increased development, it is not always an easy task to accomplish. Witness Senegal which signed a contract with France Telecom in 1997 to help provide rural telephony to 1,000 villages per year. Seven years later and they still had not connected even their one-year goal.

2) A greater emphasis on mobile phone growth compared to fixed-line telephony. Mobile phone subscription in Africa within the past five years has grown more than any other region in the world. Indeed, throughout most of Africa the installation of mobile phone infrastructure has taken a priority over the more expensive fixed-line infrastructure. As an example, in Uganda the number of mobile phone users multiplied 131 times in a span of six years, becoming seven times the users of fixed-lines. Similar growth will probably occur in Somalia. It is possible the government there will assist the expansion of mobile phone usage by providing incentives, such as property rights or reduced taxes, to in-
stall relay towers and other necessary infrastructure in geographic areas deemed less profitable by telecom operators.

3) Taxation of telecom. It would be difficult for the fledgling government not to look at one of the few successful enterprises in the country as a source of revenue. However, rate increases due to the imposition of taxes might eventually be offset by increased competition and savings through economies of scale. Also, as previously mentioned, the government could structure the taxation in such a way as to provide incentives for necessary infrastructure.

4) Continued growth. Establishment of a stable government will encourage new businesses, many of which will require phone and/or internet service. The government itself will also have needs in this area and, like many other countries, could become one of the major users of telecommunications.

5) Expansion and enhancement of VSAT. Satellite technology will surely continue to play a role, perhaps the dominant one, in meeting the continued growth of the telecom sector. Newer VSAT units will possibly provide larger bandwidths, especially if a power grid offering dedicated electrical service is created. The larger VSAT units require more electricity to operate.

6) Relocation of at least part of the Somali Telecom Association from Dubai to Somalia itself. However, it would be likely that the Association would retain a presence in the UAE. The fact that Dubai is a hub for both telecom and hawala is probably not a coincidence, with one business feeding the other.

7) A possible decrease and/or shift in the way warlords and terrorists use telecommunications. The new government will be under pressure on the domestic front to decrease the power and capabilities of the warlords and on the international front to do the same with terrorists. Both groups will probably find ways to adapt to technical or legal obstacles placed in their way. This could involve applying either a high tech or a low tech approach, with the use of more sophisticated equipment being an example of the former and the reliance on people as messengers an example of the latter.

It is uncertain at this time whether or not fiberoptic cable will play a role in the immediate future of telecom in Somalia even if a government is established. Fiberoptic offers two general advantages over VSAT: it readily carries a large bandwidth and it does not have the signal delay inherent in VSAT (this occurs from the signal having to travel from the ground station to the satellite and back). However, it can be expensive to lay cable, and few telecom providers are going to be willing to risk a large infrastructure investment in a country that has not shown stability for over a decade.

Conclusion

A large portion of Somalia was essentially a blank slate after 1991, but instead of a gradual evolution (or re-evolution) of telecommunications occurring, as had happened in the developed world, the country leapfrogged to wireless and other advanced technologies. Since successive generations of technology tend to be both more efficient and cost-effective than previous ones, it made perfect sense for the country to reestablish its telecommunications network with flexible and relatively inexpensive VSAT as opposed to fixed phone lines. Thus, what appears ironic at first, high tech satellite links arising in an impoverished country, is actually the most appropriate telecommunications development path the country could take.

As two simultaneous attempts are made, one by the Somalia Transitional Federal
Institutions and the other by the Islamic Courts Union, to once again to establish a central government in Somalia, it will be interesting to observe the impact of a new government, or governments, on telecommunications. Will they view it as one of the few viable sectors of the economy and excessively tax it, raising rates to the point demand is significantly dampened? Will they try to control it with well-intentioned regulations that have the unfortunate consequence of stifling the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit it has exhibited? Whatever the government does, they should not do it in haste. Instead, they should take the time to study the telecom sector as a unique entity that has filled an important niche, and then look for ways to replicate that success with other aspects of the country’s infrastructure.

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Endnotes

5. Personal communication with Phil Thomas from New Era Systems, a telecom provider offering satellite service to Africa. <http://www.satsig.net/new-era-africa.htm>
6. Personal communication with an employee from a company providing satellite services to Somalia.
7. ‘Why Use Satellite?’
8. Personal communication with an employee from a company providing satellite services to Somalia.

10. Finbarr O’Reilly, ‘Private Competition Drives Down Telephone and Internet Costs’.
13. ‘Al Barakaat Exchange LLC.’
17. Ibid.
19. ‘Completing the Revolution: the Challenge of Rural Telephony in Africa.’
Desperate Days in Zimbabwe

Ian Phimister & Brian Raftopoulos

Go hang (Robert Mugabe, March 2007)

No matter how tough it gets ... we have an agreement, even if we are murdered we have an agreement (to continue the struggle) (Morgan Tsvangirai, March 2007)

The current SADC mandated mediation on Zimbabwe, led by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, opens a narrow window of opportunity to avoid further deterioration in Zimbabwe’s political and economic fortunes. Brought about by a combination of growing regional embarrassment over Mugabe’s authoritarian violence and international pressure, the initiative is faced with enormous obstacles in the form of the persistent recalcitrance of decisive elements of the Mugabe regime. Nonetheless the mediation may present an opportunity to pry open new political spaces in the country. Recent events have provided further evidence of the ruling ZANU-PF’s reliance on violence as a form of rule. The public beating of opposition and civic leaders, rank and file Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) members and high profile lawyers signalled an escalation of repression against the political and civic opposition in the country. Faced with deepening economic crisis, a bitter battle over succession within the ruling party, the persistent presence of opposition forces and continued international pressure, ZANU-PF has responded with a characteristic mixture of ruthlessness and contempt.

Towards the end of February 2007, the occasion of President Robert Mugabe’s 83rd birthday was marked by a televised interview. Denying that the economy was in dire straits even if people were struggling to make ends meet, he took the opportunity to warn his would-be successors – ‘high ranking, ambitious individuals who were looking at them-selves’ – that he would not be pushed out of office. While the day would come when he would retire, that point had not yet been reached. ‘Can you see any vacancies?’, he asked rhetorically. ‘The door is closed’ (BBC News, 21 February 2007). Preparations were anyway well-advanced for a huge birthday party to be staged in a football stadium just outside the midlands city of Gweru. For several months, the 21st February Movement, a state youth organisation whose sole purpose turns on Mugabe’s annual birthday festivities, had been raising funds and finalising arrangements for the big day. ‘Farmers have donated 38 cattle while others said they would bring processed beef’, declared one of its leaders: Our initial target was to raise Z$532 million (US$2.1 million) ... but so far we have received well over Z$700 million in cash and kind (Mail & Guardian, 23 February, 2007).

The contrast between such extravagance and the plight of ordinary Zimbabweans was not lost on local people or on critics of the regime. Such displays, of course, were neither new nor unexpected, but their insensitivity was seen as crassly provocative at a time when political tensions were rising. As hyper-inflation spiralled ever upwards, from an estimated 1,300% p.a. in the week ending 13 February, to 1,600% a week later, to over 1,700% in March, and predicted to hit 4,000-5,000% by the end of the year (Mail & Guardian, 13 February 2007; Daily Telegraph, 19 February, 2007; BBC News, 26 March 2007), evidence of acute hardship was everywhere. Emboldened by the manifest desperation of workers whose wages did not even cover the cost of daily transport never mind food, and by the swelling ranks of jobless youths in the high density townships surrounding Harare and Bulawayo, both the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and the two factions of the divided opposition MDC had decided to raise their heads above the parapet. A deci-
sion by the general council of the ZCTU to prepare for a two day stayaway for early April (IOL, 25 February 2007), followed hard on the heels of a declaration by Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of one MDC grouping, that he would launch his campaign for the 2008 presidential election in Harare’s Highfield township.

On Sunday 18th February, crowds making their way to attend the rally, for which the required legal permission had been obtained, were dispersed by police firing teargas and water cannon. Clashes between heavily-armed riot police and stone-throwing protesters ended with an unknown number of assaults and the arrest of 122 people. In Bulawayo, a march through the city led by Arthur Mutambara’s MDC faction was broken up in similar fashion. The next day, Highfield’s deserted streets were still being patrolled by riot squads on foot and in armoured trucks. A heavy police presence was in evidence around the township shopping centre where roadblocks remained in place. Meeting on Tuesday, the Cabinet decided to ban all opposition political gatherings in Harare for three months. ‘The regime is panicking’, announced a spokesman for Morgan Tsvangirai. ‘They are trying to impose a state of emergency. This is tantamount to banning the MDC and all political activity’. But the MDC, he declared, would ignore the ban and continue ‘to organise our rallies and meetings where necessary’ (Mail & Guardian, 22 February 2007).

On the face of it, the ruling party certainly had plenty to be concerned about. Serious splits within ZANU-PF had burst into the open in December 2006. A Mugabe-backed motion to combine the forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections, ostensibly on grounds of efficiency but actually to extend his term of office until 2010 was not endorsed by conference delegates. In particular, it promised to frustrate the succession ambitions of the increasingly impatient factions clustered around retired army general Solomon Mujuru and his wife Joice, still deputy vice president but no longer enjoying Mugabe’s favour; and Cabinet minister Emmerson Mnangagwa. More worrying for the regime were the first public signs of disaffection amongst rank and file members of the police and army. Claims to this effect carried by The Zimbabwean towards the end of last year now found independent confirmation. In late January 2007, junior officers were reported as having mutinied over low pay, this coming after a warning by the Commissioner of Police that ‘pay disparities within the security services risk(ed) propelling officers into “active rebellion against the government”’ (ICG, ‘Zimbabwe’, Mail & Guardian, 9 February 2007; Zimbabwe Standard, 17 February 2007).

Mugabe himself, however, displayed little outward sign of concern. Short-term measures to alleviate discontent took the form of the immediate issue of food rations to lowly-paid junior army officers and their families, with similar arrangements for the police to follow. Each junior officer received a ten kilogram bag of maize meal, two litres of cooking oil, a one kilogram packet of fish, and a one kilogram packet of sugar beans (Sunday Times, 18 February 2007). As the mouths of those higher up the food chain had had long been stuffed with gold – ‘majors, colonels, lieutenant colonels and brigadier generals are pampered with (Toyota) Prados, residential stands in posh suburbs like Borrowdale, Chisawash Hills, and farms’ – their loyalty was more certain (Mail & Guardian, 9 February, 2007). But leaving nothing to chance, the Central Intelligence Organisation began deploying secret agents inside the police and army with the aim of flushing out officers suspected of sympathising with the opposition (Ibid. 9 March 2007).

Satisfied that the situation was well in hand, Mugabe then flew off to Namibia
on a four-day official visit. Ever true to form, Mugabe used a speech at a dinner hosted by the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry to rail against the ‘nonsense’ touted by the International Monetary Fund. ‘If you follow the IMF you will not go anywhere. They will always prescribe for you’, he told his appreciative audience.

We can help each other among ourselves. When we don’t have that capacity, then we are like economic slaves. We go begging. There are still countries in Africa which go begging for money in order to pay their civil servants, and they got independent in the 1960s (The Star, 5 March 2007).

Yet in Harare and Bulawayo, it was precisely the civil service, reeling under the shock of recent price increases which had pushed the cost of living for a family of five up to Z$686,000 a month, from Z$460,000 only a month previously, which was now threatening strike action (Financial Times, 17 March 2007). To observers, it seemed that ‘economic meltdown’ would propel ZANU-PF towards change, ‘since business interests of key officials are suffering’. In a report released on 5 March, the Brussels–based ICG argued that ‘after years of political deadlock and continued economic and humanitarian decline, a realistic chance has at last begun to appear in the past few months to resolve the Zimbabwe crisis, by retirement of President Robert Mugabe, a power-sharing transitional government, a new constitution and elections’. For all that, elements of the report had the appearance of a wish-list rather than a likely scenario, its claim that sections within ZANU-PF were not only pushing for Mugabe’s retirement but also negotiating transitional arrangements with the MDC, clearly hit the rawest of ruling party nerves (ICG, ‘Zimbabwe’). The very next day, the Minister of Information, Sikhanyiso Ndlrovu, angrily denounced the report and its authors as guilty of ‘political hallucination’.

‘No one within its (ZANU-PF’s) ranks is poised to betray the national liberation legacy that binds the ZANU-PF government with the masses’, insisted Ndlrovu. The government, he said, remained ‘people-centred’ (IOL, 8 March 2007).

Be that as it may, it was certainly prepared to beat people who stepped out of line. In late February and early March, members of the National Constitutional Assembly, an umbrella grouping of opposition movements, defied the recently imposed ban on demonstrations by staging marches in Harare, Bulawayo and other urban centres. Those taking part had been arrested and assaulted by the police, but this sporadic violence went largely unnoticed by the outside world until renewed clashes in Highfield between demonstrators and the police resulted in mass arrests, beatings and the death of one opposition activist. On Sunday 11 March, a prayer meeting called in Highfield’s Zimbabwe Grounds dissolved in chaos as heavily armed riot police used road blocks, tear gas, and water cannons to prevent people from reaching the event. As running battles erupted between stone-throwing activists and police, one man was killed and more than 100 were arrested. According to a police spokesman, MDC supporters hurling stones and teargas at the police, had defied orders to disperse.

One person has been shot dead by the police and three police officers are detained at Harare Hospital after sustaining serious injuries during an attack by MDC thugs this afternoon … Warning shots were fired and the group still advanced. The police shot one male adult, who appeared to be the leader of the group, in the chest.

The arrest of MDC leaders Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambura, and other party officials ‘going around inciting people to come and indulge in violent activities’ was confirmed (IOL, 3
By Tuesday, that is, two days later, it had become apparent that those arrested had been repeatedly and brutally assaulted while in police custody. Photographs of bruised and battered MDC members flashed around the world, particularly those of the grotesquely swollen features of Morgan Tsvangirai, whose skull had been fractured, it was subsequently confirmed. As Tsvangirai and other detainees, many alleging they had been tortured and some with broken limbs, were released into hospital care after briefly appearing at Harare Magistrates Court, it seemed that the Mugabe regime had spectacularly miscalculated the consequences of its heavy-handed actions. Far from the beatings having had the desired effect, they had revitalised a divided opposition which for some time past had been going nowhere. They had driven Tsvangirai and Mutambara together, if only for the moment, and they had left the MDC in undisputed possession of the moral high ground. ‘There are lots of people who’ve been subjected to this kind of torture, this kind of brutality by this regime’, declared Tsvangirai from his hospital bed. ‘It just shows the extent to which this brutal regime is trying to protect its power. For the struggle, I think it’s an inspiration to everyone. There is no freedom without struggle, and there is no freedom without sacrifice’ (BBC News, 14 March 2007; The Independent, 15 March 2007).

International condemnation of Harare’s actions was quick in coming. Citing eyewitnesses who claimed that activists had only turned on the police after the fatal shooting, most foreign media coverage was extremely critical of the official version of events which blamed the opposition MDC for the violence. Amongst the first to weigh in was United States Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, who demanded Tsvangirai’s immediate release. ‘The world community again has been shown that the regime of Robert Mugabe is ruthless and repressive and creates only suffering for the people of Zimbabwe’. The US, she said, would hold Mugabe personally responsible for the safety and well-being of those in custody. She was joined in her condemnation by the UN Secretary General, by the European Union, and by Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Even the discredited former colonial power, Britain, managed to muster a junior Foreign Office minister, who described the situation in Zimbabwe as ‘appalling’ (Daily News, 13 March 2007; Mail & Guardian, 14 March 2007; Zimbabwe Independent, 16 March 2007).

Paying no heed to Western criticism, Mugabe acted accordingly. On same day that the police were unleashed in Highfield, Mugabe had announced his intention of standing for another six-year term of office. Any lingering doubts about his seriousness of purpose were dispelled at mid-week when the offices of the ZCTU were raided by members of the CIO.

In Bulawayo, Gweru, Kwekwe, and Mutare, more than 100 opposition supporters and students activists were rounded up and arrested. By this point, protest within the region had begun to mount. For the South African Foreign Affairs Department to observe only that ‘the problems of Zimbabwe will be resolved by the people of Zimbabwe’ was ‘disgraceful in the face of such massive attacks and human rights, especially coming from those who owed so much to international solidarity when South Africans were fighting for democracy and human rights against the apartheid regime’, noted a COSATU spokesman. Stung by such sharp criticism coming from one of its partners in the Tripartite Alliance, South Africa’s ANC government belatedly called on Harare ‘to ensure that the rule of law including respect for the rights of all Zimbabweans and opposition leaders is respected’, but...
beyond that point it was not prepared to go. (IOL, 13 March 2007; Mail & Guardian, 14 March 2007)

For Mugabe, what was crucial was South African president Thabo Mbeki’s silence and implied support. Nothing else mattered, not even Ghanaian president and current African Union chairman, John Kufor’s off-the-cuff remark that the situation in Zimbabwe was an ‘embarrassment’. Much more significant was public support from the Angolan government for the ‘appropriate measures’ taken by the Zimbabwean police in dealing with violence. In Harare to sign a security cooperation accord, Angola’s Minister of the Interior referred warmly to the ties of friendship between the two countries which dated back to the days of the liberation war. These ties, he said, had now been strengthened (BBC News, 13 March 2007; IOL, 16 March 2007; Financial Gazette, 16 March 2007; The Herald, 19 March 2007). Also in the Zimbabwean capital was Tanzanian president, Jakaya Kikwete. His Tanzanian counterpart had visited as a brother and an ally explained Mugabe, unlike the West

which has always supported the opposition here and elsewhere … Naturally, we take great exception to any support that has been given by foreigners or representatives of foreign countries to the political parties or opposition in the country. When they criticise Government when it tries to prevent violence and punish perpetrators of that violence, we take the position they can go hang (The Herald, 16 March 2007).

Quite who was responsible for the escalating violence was far from clear. Over the next ten days, that is, the second half of March, there were reports of sporadic clashes between opposition activists and riot police, mainly in Harare and Bulawayo townships, but in smaller urban centres too. Four police stations were petrol-bombed, three in and around Harare, and the other in Gweru (Financial Gazette, 16 March 2007; Zimdaily.com, 17 March 2007; The Herald, 28 March 2007). A ZANU-PF office, a house belonging to a ZANU-PF councillor, two supermarkets, and a night club were all attacked. Boulders and logs were placed across the main railway line leading into Bulawayo, and a Bulawayo-bound passenger train was petrol-bombed as it was leaving Harare (Zim Online, 16 March 2007; The Herald, 28 March 2007). These and other violent episodes were seized upon by Western countries and Harare alike, but for very different reasons. For the former, it was all part of growing evidence of the long-predicted uprising by a population driven beyond endurance by an incompetent and tyrannical regime. ‘What I think we have seen in the last week is that people have turned a corner’, claimed the US ambassador to Zimbabwe. ‘They’re not afraid any more’ (BBC News, 21 March 2007). This was not at all how Harare saw events. One week after the arrests and beatings administered to his opponents, Mugabe solemnly pointed to ‘terrorist attacks that are part of the desperate and illegal plot to unconstitutionally change the government of the country’ (Sunday Mail, 18 March 2007).

Even as Harare assiduously compiled a dossier of such ‘terrorist’ incidents, its agents continued severely to assault and arrest MDC office-bearers and supporters (The Times, 20 March 2007; The Independent, 21 March 2007; for the dossier itself, see Zimbabwe Republic Police, ‘Opposition Forces in Zimbabwe. A Trail of Violence 1 January 2007 to 15 March 2007’; Ibid., Vol. 2). The initiative was now beginning to slip away from the opposition, for all that its leaders talked up the prospect of change. ‘We are in the final stages of the final push’, declared Arthur Mutambara.

We are going to do it by democratic means, by being arrested, beaten, but we are going to do it. We are continuing with defiance in spite of what Robert Mugabe
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says. We are talking about rebellion, war ... Mugabe is fighting against his own people. That is war against the people. Already there is violence.

‘Things are bad’, Morgan Tsvangirai said in an interview, ‘but I think that this crisis has reached a tipping point, and we could see the beginning of the end of this dictatorship in whatever form’ (The Times, 17 March 2007; The Independent, 19 March 2007). Other MDC members were not convinced. ‘For all the publicity of the past week, the fact remains that the opposition hasn’t been able to mobilise tens of thousands of people which is partly to do with fear, partly to do with divisions in the opposition and partly to do with a shocking lack of information for ordinary people about what is going on’, observed one opposition Member of Parliament. ‘This is a very weak population; weak economically, unhealthy because of AIDS, and a population that is starving’ (The Guardian, 20 March 2007).

With a call by the Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo for the population to fill the streets in protest falling on deaf ears, a note of caution crept into MDC pronouncements. Prudently distancing themselves from petrol bomb attacks, not least because of mounting suspicion that some had been the actions of agent provocateurs in the pay of the state, opposition leaders now acknowledged that it was ‘too early to talk of victory or tipping points’ (The Zimbabwean, 22-28 March 2007; BBC News, 26 March 2007; The Independent, 28 March 2007).

By mid-week, the Zimbabwean president was in Dar es Salaam for a meeting of the 12-nation SADC, where, according to Western prognostications, he was due to come under unprecedented pressure to accept an exit package and make way for an interim government. Instead, Mugabe briefed his fellow leaders on ‘MDC violence which its Western backers wanted to use to bring Zimbabwe under the UN Security Council’. Their attention was drawn to a dossier detailing ‘acts of terrorism’ carried out by the MDC’s underground ‘Democratic Resistance Committees’, members of which were fortuitously being charged in Harare with attempted murder in connection with a string of fire bombings, even as the Summit was meeting (The Herald, 26 March 2007; BBC News, 29 March 2007; IOL, 30 March 2007). Apparently impressed and certainly unwilling to bow to Western pressure, the SADC leaders rallied around Zimbabwe’s autocratic ruler. Far from criticising Mugabe, they directed their fire at the West. Recalling that ‘free, fair and democratic presidential elections were held in 2002 in Zimbabwe’, and reaffirming ‘its solidarity with the Government and people of Zimbabwe’, the official communiqué called for the lifting of ‘all forms of sanctions against Zimbabwe’, while reiterating an appeal to Britain ‘to honour its compensation obligations with regard to land reform’. Almost as an afterthought, President Mbeki was mandated to promote political dialogue within Zimbabwe (The Herald, 30 March 2007; BBC News, 30 March 2007).

order to beat MDC activists into submission (The Herald, 26 March 2007; Zimdaily.com, 27 March 2007). Having accused Morgan Tsvangirai the previous day that ‘you want to rule this country on behalf of Blair, (but) as long as I am alive that will never happen’, Mugabe rammed home the message by authorising the temporary re-arrest of the MDC leader and his senior aides (BBC News, 28 March 2007; The Independent, 29 March 2007).
Pleased with what he described as an ‘excellent meeting’, Mugabe returned home to further good news. Addressing a crucial meeting of his ruling ZANU-PF party, he claimed that he had not heard one word of criticism from his fellow southern African leaders at the summit just ended. Morgan Tsvangirai, he said, ‘deserved to be assaulted’, and to thunderous applause, he dismissed Western hopes of regime change. ‘Both governments of Bush and Blair think we have reached what they term a tipping point because of the hardships wrought by the illegal sanctions they have imposed on us … They are gravely mistaken’. Confounding MDC and Western expectations that the powerful factions associated with Solomon Mujuru and Emmerson Mnangagwa would unite to depose him, Mugabe was again selected as the ZANU-PF presidential candidate for the 2008 election. This election would coincide with elections for parliament, which would be brought forward by two years. Standing on the steps of ZANU-PF’s headquarters, and surrounded by cheering supporters, an obviously jubilant Mugabe denounced the West and Britain in particular, for funding the ‘violent’ MDC. ‘We can never entertain … a party that is walking the road of terrorism’, he told the crowd in footage subsequently screened on national television. ‘We will not allow that in Zimbabwe’ (BBC News, 30 March 2007; The Times, 30 March 2007; Mail & Guardian, 31 March 2007).

The SADC invitation for Mugabe to enter into mediation with the opposition, is a process that the Zimbabwean leader cannot easily refuse if he is to maintain the integrity and support of the region. Developing regional solidarity has all along been a key element of Mugabe’s survival strategy. It is certain, however, that Mugabe will make the mediation process as difficult as possible for his South African counterpart, Thabo Mbeki. Already the period since 11 March 2007 has witnessed continued arrests, violence, torture and killing of MDC activists, usually on allegations of terrorism. Equally significant is the fact that the recent violence is ZANU-PF’s introductory gambit into the mediation process. Mugabe is likely to drag out the mediation for as long as possible, even as he prepares for another problematic election in 2008. The Zimbabwean government has already announced that a general election will take place at the end of March, and the current general assault on the opposition indicates Mugabe and ZANU-PF’s election campaign is already underway.

Both Presidents Mbeki and Mugabe understand that the opposition forces in Zimbabwe have been seriously weakened by a combination of state repression, the split within the MDC, and a lack of support within the region. The MDC are unable to exert strong internal pressure as a bargaining strategy in the talks. This places the organisation in an invidious situation, in which their major points of pressure are a reluctant SADC mediation, pressure from the West and the possibility of a resurgent opposition in the future. The balance of forces in the current context thus weighs heavily against them. For Mugabe the two major pressures that confront him are the rapidly declining economy and the factional battles in his party. The indicators of decline in Zimbabwe have become a standard global reference for economic failure. At the time of writing, the inflation rate stands at about 3,700%, while by 2006 the GDP per capita was 47% below the level in 1980. At the end of 2006 the average minimum wage of Zimbabwean workers was only 16.6% of the Poverty Datum Line calculated at December 2006 levels, while the formal sector decreased from 1.4 million in 1998 to 998,000 in 2004. When these indicators are combined with anticipated shortage of food this year and the continued loss of high level skills from the country, the picture is bleak indeed.
An important dimension of the factional struggle within ZANU-PF is about a strategy for the normalisation of relations with the international community, one that will provide the party elite with time and space to consolidate recently acquired wealth. The terms of this re-engagement will form the core of the mediation talks, while the future of Mugabe himself will be a major feature of this normalisation. On this matter, the veteran leader does not feel that he can hand over the torch to anyone else. It is for this reason that the ruling party structures were manipulated to ensure Mugabe’s presidential candidacy in 2008. From this perspective, mediation is about making as few reforms as possible to gain acceptance for an election next year. On the other hand, the opposition faces pressures of growing national and international impatience with their divisions, and the prospect of major strategic and organisational dilemmas should mediation fail to open up new political spaces. This is not the best position for the Zimbabwean opposition to be in, but it is the reality that has to be confronted and negotiated.

More broadly, it is the dilemma of post-liberation opposition movements that must confront the anti-colonial discourse of authoritarian nationalist governments, with a political language that negotiates the tensions between democratic political questions, and the pressures of redistributive economic demands. It may be that in the current regional and global context, diminished economic alternatives will continue to provide the conditions for generating renewed authoritarian nationalisms. However the challenge of developing an alternative, and more tolerant, language of national belonging remains an urgent task.

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**Trading Guns for Gold: Pakistani Peacekeepers in the Congo**

**Martin Plaut**

The United Nations Mission in the DR Congo (MONUC) was established as a result of the Lusaka Accord of 1999. The Accord was signed in the Zambian capital, Lusaka, on 10 July, by leaders of six countries involved in the conflict (the DR Congo, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, Rwanda and Uganda), but not by the Congolese rebel groups. Monuc itself came into being on 24 February 2000, when the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1291. With a budget of over $1 billion it is the largest and most expensive peacekeeping operation currently run by the UN with a total of 16,500 troops at its disposal. Monuc’s mandate was to take the Congolese – by stages – from a civil war to civilian rule, via democratic elections. The current head of Monuc, Ambassador William Swing outlined the magnitude of the task.

Two wars in the DRC from 1997 to 2002 produced the following sad legacy at the time of the first peace agreement, the Lusaka accords of July 1999: a country divided under three different belligerent’s administrations; armies of six foreign nations occupying bits and pieces of the DRC; wide-scale plunder of the Congo’s abundant natural resources; four million...
dead from war-related causes; 3.2 million internally displaced persons; 2.4 million HIV infected; 500,000 refugees; infrastructure of the country destroyed (William Swing).

The elections – the first truly democratic, multi-party elections to be held in the country’s history – took place on 30 July 2006 with a run-off between the presidential candidates on 29 October. The incumbent, Joseph Kabila was declared the winner in December 2006. Although the elections were far from perfect it was something of a miracle that they were held at all in such a war-torn country. It was a real credit to Monuc, which continues to work to bring a semblance of order to the country.

Having said this, the UN operation in the Congo has not been without its flaws and its critics. With its troops dispersed across this vast country and few means of policing their behaviour (since they are on loan from their respective countries, and not therefore directly answerable to the UN) some of the troops became a law unto themselves. The Washington Post uncovered a UN report documenting no fewer than 150 allegations of sexual misconduct by UN staff against girls and young women. UN investigations into these abuses were blocked and obstructed.

UN peacekeepers threatened UN investigators investigating allegations of sexual misconduct in Congo and sought to bribe witnesses to change their testimony, a confidential UN draft report says (Washington Post, 16 December 2004).

These abuses have provided ammunition for long time critics of the UN, including the Heritage Foundation as well as cause for concern for organisations like Human Rights Watch. They provide the background to the allegations which were uncovered by Human Rights Watch, and reported on by the author concerning UN peacekeepers trading in gold and guns with some of the worst human rights violators in Congo.

There is evidence that Pakistani peacekeeping troops with the United Nations operating in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of Congo established a network of gold trading with some of the militia they were supposed to be suppressing. As this developed in 2005 and 2006 they brought in Indian traders from Kenya and cut the Congolese army in on the deal. When the UN attempted to investigate what was taking place the Pakistanis refused to co-operate, putting UN military police behind barbed wire, and placing armoured personnel carriers outside the monastery where the investigators were living. The UN investigation team, believing they were at risk, requested that they be airlifted out of the area. The UN investigation descended into acrimony, with allegations that it was being blocked for political reasons. Only after the UN was confronted with what had taken place was the investigation expedited and promises given that the UN would enforce a new system of disciplining its troops in peacekeeping operations.

The Gold of Mongbwalu

Gold was discovered in the area as early as 1903 and although around 400 tonnes of the precious metal are estimated to have been mined since then, the area is still described as containing possibly ‘one of the most exciting, and potentially the largest, unexplored gold reserve in Africa’ (Wardell Armstrong, 2006:2.1) Armed groups fought for control of this resource from the start of the Congolese war in 1998. It was, quite simply, the way of paying troops, providing them with arms and obtaining wealth for the leadership.

Mongbwalu, the town at the centre of much of the gold mining activity, changed hands between militia in bitter fighting no fewer than five times from
2002 to 2004. The majority of the fighting was between two ethnic based militia: the Hema based Union des Patriots Congo-lais (UPC) led by Thomas Labanga and the Lendu based Front des Nationalites et Integrationnistes (FNI) led by Floribert Njabu. It was the FNI that came to control the town and its mines, holding it until the UN Mission to the Congo (Monuc) stationed sufficient Pakistani troops in the area in 2005. The UN then held the area, with the Pakistanis patrolling on foot and in armoured cars, much to the relief of local people who had suffered terribly at the hands of the militia (Human Rights Watch). Over time the Congolese army also established a presence in Mongbwalu.

Pakistanis Turn to Trading

Evidence that the Pakistanis had more than peacekeeping on their minds emerged during a visit by Human Rights Watch (HRW) to Ituri in late 2005. Their researcher, Anneke van Woudenberg, collected detailed information about their involvement in the trade, including photographs and other documents, which were passed to senior officials in Monuc in the hope that they would investigate the matter and halt the smuggling activities. When this investigation appeared to be stalled, the information was passed to the author, and the BBC World Service began looking into the allegations. Much of the evidence in this article comes from that work.

There is little doubt that some Pakistani officers used their time in Ituri to make money. In Mongbwalu it is hard to find anyone who does not believe that UN troops were engaged in gold trafficking. Liki Likambo is the head of the association of miners.

I saw a UN Pakistani soldier who came to buy gold from one of the gold negotiators here in Mongbwalu. I was there in the shop.

And you saw PAKBATT (the Pakistani battalion) paying money for the gold?

Yes I saw it with my own eyes. I was a witness in a black market place, they could not see me, but I was there and I saw it. They wanted to buy gold in hidden places, where they could not be seen by people.

And you saw money change hands?

Yes, I saw that (interview with author).

Others will testify that the trade was directly with the FNI militia. Evarista Anjasubu, a local businessman was in the Monuc camp and saw a transaction between Pakistani officers and two of the most notorious FNI militia leaders, General Mateso Ninga, alias Kung Fu and Colonel Masasi, alias Dragon. Both were men with blood on their hands and both were arrested in October 2005 for war crimes. According to Evarista Anjasubu this did not deter the Pakistanis from dealing with them:

They had a very strong relation so generally the authorities [i.e. Pakistani officers] gave them food in sacks. I don’t know if there was money inside. They were 20-30kg sacks with flour, fish inside.

Why did they give them the food? What did they get in return?

They were already friends, I knew well it was gold which was the basis of their friendship ... I can confirm that because the two commanders were controlling the gold mines here – the mines were already in their hands. So the gold extracted from the mines went directly to the Pakistanis. They used to meet in the Pakistani battalion’s camp – in a thatched hut ... Dragon use to tell me that if I had gold I could give it to him, and he could sell it at a high price (interview with author).

Having established this relationship the Pakistani officers set about turning it
into a professional operation. Indian traders were contacted, and links built with the Congolese army in the area. The traders were flown into Mongbwalu using UN helicopters, and put up at the Pakistani battalion base from where they proceeded to trade. According to Anneke Van Woudenberg (HRW), this soon became a lucrative process.

*We documented that gold went to another eastern Congolese town, Goma, and then on to Rwanda and from there to the Middle East – Dubai – where it was sold on to world markets. We were able to document two trades, estimated to be worth $1-3 million. So these were substantial trades. I assume anyone involved making good cut (interview with author).*

Among those observing this process was the Congolese official responsible for checking visitors passing through Mongbwalu airstrip, Richard Ndilu. In late 2005 he became suspicious when an Indian businessman arrived and was picked up by the Pakistani peacekeepers. Richard Ndilu says the next day he received a visit from a Pakistani officer – a Major Javed – along with the Indian businessman: The purpose of their visit soon became clear.

*The Pakistani Major Javed brought the Indian to my house, asking me to buy gold for them. I told him that I don't know anything about gold. I said I am a civil servant and we don’t trade in gold.*

So what did they do?

*When I said I could not help them, they went to look for other Congolese people to buy gold for them. Then he (i.e. the Indian) was driven to the airport on board a Monuc vehicle (and helped onto the plane.) He returned to Bunia (after 6 days) on a MONUC helicopter – all with the intervention of Major Javed, because at the first the pilot refused to take Mr Kagram but the Major himself insisted. I was there – he discussed for a long time, and finally the pilot agreed to take Mr Kagram.*

How can you know what was on board the plane?

*I did not know what was on board the plane, but I was persuaded the Indian left with gold, I say I don’t know because this Indian was protected by the military authorities.*

If you suspected something why did you not inspect the baggage?

*I could not touch his suitcase, because this Indian was protected, supported by the Congolese army. … I made a report about the Indian to the authorities in Bunia.*

That report reached the headquarters of the regional administration in Bunia. The district commissioner of the province of Ituri was Petronille Vaweka. Mrs Vaweka says when she heard about these attempts to illegally buy and export gold from Mongbwalu, she told the local authorities in the town to inform her immediately, if the Indian businessman or any of their associates returned. Soon she got a call.

*Some days later, the mayor of Mongbwalu called me to say the Major from Monuc was going to the airport to collect a group of Indians. I said OK you follow him to the airport Then I called the head of UN here in Bunia and told him: there is a Major in Mongbwalu who is with a gold trafficker, and he’s taking him to the UN camp. Then, the Mayor of Mongbwalu told me the plane was going to leave for Bunia, I again informed the head of UN and I asked him what shall I do? He said, I think, do your job. So, I went to the airport in Bunia. The plane arrived from Mongbwalu, and I arrested the Indians, and verified that their passports were not in order – no visas, nothing.*

Mrs Vaweka concluded that members of the Pakistani UN contingent along with
members of the Congolese army and Indian traders from Kenya were involved in a network, smuggling gold out of the country, without any of the necessary export permits. But the involvement of the army meant she could not keep the plane or the Indian businessmen under detention:

I knew they had gold because the price of gold increased when the Indians went to Mongbwalu. But when we wanted to verify that by looking inside the plane, the pilot refused to allow us to enter! Me, and I was in charge! He refused! But I could not use my police to enter the plane because certain members of the Congolese army were complicit in this. It was a major scandal! (interview with the author).

The activities of the Pakistani peacekeepers were therefore not only flouting Congolese law, but also undermining the fragile structure of Congolese local government.

Guns For Gold

In early 2006 the UN launched a major investigation into what was taking place by its internal investigation and auditing unit, the Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). The OIOS team’s preliminary enquiries confirmed that the Pakistani battalion was, indeed trading in gold, but what they uncovered went much further. OIOS discovered that not only were Pakistani peacekeepers involved in smuggling gold they bought from militia in Ituri, they were also trading weapons in exchange for the gold. In effect they were re-arming militia who had just been disarmed under the UN assisted Congolese government’s disarmament programme.

The evidence they found for the trading of guns for gold was, prima facie, compelling. One of the witnesses they interviewed was a Congolese army major who has asked not to be named. This is from his statement.

The officer expressed his regrets over the malpractices of a Pakistani battalion under the auspices of Major Zanfar. He revealed the arms surrendered by ex-combatants were secretly returned to them by Major Zanfar thereby compromising the work they had collectively done earlier. Witness was not in a position to say why Major Zanfar did this, but knowing Major Zanfar’s thirst for gold witness believes that it is highly, very probable that he did this in exchange for gold. He continued that he personally knew some elements of the UPC militia who had been armed by Major Zanfar himself. Repeatedly he saw militia who had been disarmed one day, but the next day would become re-armed again. The information he could obtain was always the same, that it would be the Pakistani battalion giving arms back to the militia (UN record of interview with witness, in author’s possession).

The second source was an interpreter, who was used because the Pakistanis spoke no French. Called to the Monuc camp, he was asked to interpret between the Pakistani officer in charge of the Mongbwalu contingent, Major Ali and the FNI commander, known as Kung Fu.

(The interpreter) when asked what transpired at this meeting stated that the first comment from Major ALI was to Kung Fu and he said ‘what about the weapons I gave you, what about the weapons Monuc gave you?’ Witness claimed that Kung Fu’s response was ‘we share them out to different positions, the militia don’t respect us, Kuliba don’t respect me as a General, it is tough trying to control them’. Witness stated that Major ALI’s response to this was ‘Monuc gave you weapons to control the border, you should stay there to keep our security’. Witness stated that Kung Fu responded saying that ‘we will try to capture back the weapons, we don’t need them at the moment, we have no problems’ (UN record of interview with witness, in author’s possession)
The UN’s Troubled Investigation

On 14 August 2006 a team of three investigators from OIOS, accompanied by UN Military Police from Morocco and South Africa, were deployed to Mongbwalu to try to conclude their work. At first they were cordially received by the Pakistani battalion, which had orders to co-operate with them. But when they began probing into the question of weapons and asked to inspect files on one of the Pakistani computers, the atmosphere soured. After seeing files, which apparently contained information they considered important to their investigation, the OIOS decided to seize the computer. The Pakistani legal adviser refused, saying it contained personal information.

The ‘PAKBATT Liaison/Legal Adviser walked into the office declaring that he had just received new orders, and that the orders were that it was clear that the team is looking to dishonour PAKBATT, and that he therefore would no long allow anyone to walk or move inside the camp’ (Confidential Mission Analysis Report, 24 August 2006, in author’s possession).

The OIOS team withdrew to the mission station where they were staying, only to discover that two Pakistani armoured personnel carriers had been brought up outside the building ‘... without clear justification and no evident change of the security situation ...’ The UN military police, who were stationed at the Pakistani camp, were, according to the Report, surrounded by barbed wire and not allowed to leave their barracks even to shower, wash or shave. Believing that their investigation had been brought to a halt, and fearful for their safety, the OIOS team contacted their superiors in the regional capital, Bunia to request an immediate evacuation from Mongbwalu.

At this point the OIOS investigation descended into chaos. Their superiors in Bunia questioned the assessment of the team on the ground and tried to get them to stay. When the Mongbwalu team insisted, they were effectively removed from the investigation. The controversy about the way in which the investigation has been handled went all the way up the organisation. On 11 September 2006, the head of the OIOS Investigation Division, Vladislav Guerassev wrote to Inga-Britt Ahlenius, the Under-Secretary-General in charge of OIOS, complaining that one of his most senior African staff was implying that he was ‘behaving like the KGB’ (letter in the author’s possession).

Deeply divided, the OIOS investigation into the Pakistanis made little apparent progress. Worse still, a UN official, who asked not to be named, was told that the enquiry was going nowhere because it had been blocked for political reasons. Essentially, Pakistan, as the largest troop contributor to the UN, with 10,000 of its soldiers wearing blue helmets, was too powerful to touch. The investigators were instructed to lay off.

The UN & Pakistan Respond

The evidence from Human Rights Watch, interviews, witnesses and the internal documents from the OIOS was compelling. A picture had emerged of a contingent of UN peacekeepers involved in illegal gold trading and smuggling through a network of connections that involved not just the Congolese army and miners, but also some of the most notorious militia in the country. The UN investigation into these events had apparently been blocked, both by the Pakistanis and UN officials fearful of jeopardising their relationship with the most important troop contributing country in the world, providing the UN with around 10,000 troops at any one time.

When the allegations of gold trading were put to the head of the UN operation in the country, Ambassador William Swing, he pointed to the ongoing investi-
gation being conducted by the OIOS and promised swift action if these were proved. But on the question of arms being traded his response was a categorical denial.

We also have evidence that United Nations peacekeepers in the same region re-armed the militia who had already been disarmed by the Congolese troops.

This I can categorically deny. What we have done is just the opposite. We have demobilised more than 20,000. We are continuing to demobilise. We have taken in caches of arms. We have destroyed arms. We have done public burnings of these arms. And there is absolutely nothing to that allegation.

Well, let me read to you from a United Nations document, which refers to what was said by a Congolese major who witnessed this: ‘The major revealed that arms surrendered by ex-combatants were secretly returned to them by a major in the Pakistani contingent, thereby compromising the work that they had collectively done earlier.’ What do you say to that?

Your question was suggesting that it was something much larger than that. That a contingent or a battalion was automatically returning arms. If an individual, such as this major in question has done this, this would be an extremely serious offence and I would make sure that the full weight came down upon him. But our major focus has been at great cost to us – don’t forget that we have lost 35 soldiers by bullets in Ituri and we are taking this very seriously. We believe we are making progress. There are three major groups left and we expect to have them disarmed in the very near future, co-operating with the government authorities (interview with author).

There was also the question of the treatment of the OIOS investigation team by the Pakistani battalion in August 2006. When the head of the Investigations Division of OIOS in New York, Vladislav Guerassev heard what had taken place, he demanded action from the UN force commander in the Congo, Lieutenant General Babacar Gaye. On 9 October 2006 Lieutenant General Gaye replied saying:

Thank you for your email requesting information on action taken with regard to the Bunia and Mongbwalu investigations. Following the report of obstruction, which occurred as a result of the initial joint attempt to conduct an enquiry into reported offences by the PAKBATT 1, I have directed the Military Police to conduct an immediate enquiry into these additional offences (letter in author’s possession).

When asked to explain what the enquiry outlined in this letter had discovered Lieutenant General Gaye refused.

It’s not normal that this letter be under your control … Do you think an investigation that is a UN one, I will have to discuss this type of thing publicly in all the radio stations? Really it’s not normal … its not the way we are conducting something … I don’t think it is normal. Any decision has been done by chain of command by Monuc be discussed publicly – you know – let’s say - released on a radio station. I don’t think its normal and I will not do it (interview with author).

The UN in New York also refused to say anything further, arguing that there was an ongoing investigation into the allegations of gold trading. However, on 23 May 2007 the spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the following statement:

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is currently conducting an investigation into allegations that, in 2005-2006, a contingent of peacekeepers serving with the United Nations peacekeeping Mission in the Democratic Republic of the
Congo (MONUC) was involved in mineral resource exploitation and weapons trading in the town of Mongwalu, in the Ituri District of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Secretary-General’s Special Representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, William Lacy Swing, requested an immediate OIOS investigation after an internal MONUC inquiry brought these allegations to light. That investigation began in early 2006.

OIOS informs us that the investigation is well advanced and is expected to be completed in about three weeks. Upon its completion, OIOS will transmit its findings to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for action. As per normal procedures, once the OIOS report is released, Member States will be provided with the report upon request.

The Secretary-General looks forward to the early completion of the investigation. He will act upon its findings expeditiously and transparently. If wrongdoing is found to have occurred, he will hold those responsible accountable. The Secretary-General calls upon any concerned Member States to do the same.

The head of the UN’s Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Undersecretary-General Jean-Marie Guehenno has also indicated that he will be seeking to tighten up troop discipline following the revelations. He said that troop-contributing countries would in future have to accept the introduction of formal discipline standards for peacekeepers or risk jeopardizing the United Nations’ entire recent campaign of zero-tolerance to peacekeeping crimes. The new standards, which would be contained in the Memorandum of Understanding, are part of the UN Secretariat’s response to a series of scandals in recent years over the behaviour by some UN peacekeepers. But Mr Guehenno said some states have indicated opposition to the introduction of such standards, and he called on those unnamed countries to rethink their positions.

‘Sometimes countries want to have their cake and eat it,’ he said. ‘That is, you can’t at the same time want the United Nations to have perfect discipline and everything, and then resist any U.N. encroachment or interference with their own national disciplinary procedures. It makes things very difficult.’ Although the UN can send misbehaving peacekeepers home, troop-contributing countries are responsible for their uniformed personnel, and UN rules can be made binding only with their agreement. Mr Guehenno said it is vital both the UN and member states ‘have the same understanding of what is acceptable, what is not acceptable, what is criminal, what is not’ (UPI, 30 May 2007).

Pakistan’s response has been one of denial. Major-General Wahid Arshad, spokesman for Pakistan’s Inter-Services Public Relation, who was contacted for a comment prior to the broadcast of the programme, but failed to respond, dismissed the allegations as ‘preposterous, malicious and baseless’.

Aspersions have been cast on us without evidence. This is trying to tarnish our image and undermine our very strong contributions to UN peacekeeping worldwide (Agence France Press 1 June 2007).

It is important to point out that the allegations were not made against all Pakistani troops serving in the Congo. Only a limited number of officers were allegedly involved and since troops are rotated regularly, no allegations of wrongdoing have been levelled against the Pakistani officers or men serving in Ituri in May 2007.

Nonetheless, it is perhaps worth noting that reports of the Pakistani military’s
Involvement in economic activities are not restricted to Congo. A recently published study outlined a vast array of financial dealings by the Pakistani military – something that could contribute to a climate in which seeking economic advantage from a foreign posting with the UN would hardly be out of the ordinary (Ayesha Siddiqa, 2007).

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Endnotes


US Silence as Sahara Military Base Gathers Dust

Jeremy Keenan

After almost four years of raucous propaganda and disinformation from Washington on its fabricated ‘War on Terror’ in the Sahara, the last five months have been characterised by a stony silence. This is for two reasons.

One is that the widespread anger and political instability generated by the US intervention in the Sahel, notably Niger and Mali, has led finally, and as predicted, to an expanding regional conflagration. At the time of writing (1 September 2007) Tuareg rebellions in both Niger and Mali are escalating across northern Niger and NE Mali. This is immensely embarrassing for Washington. Firstly, since 2003, Washington has been very busy marking this region up (see EUCOM’s maps of Africa) as an Islamist (Salafiste) ‘Terror Zone’. Countless US-inspired media articles have described this specific region (The Niger-Mali-Algeria border zones) as the locale of ‘Al-Qaeda terrorist bases lurking deep in the Sahara desert’ etc. etc. And yet the region is now entirely immersed in a rebellion, reminiscent of anti-colonial days, without a single Islamist in sight.

Secondly, it is not a good advertisement to the rest of Africa of how US-trained troops perform. The Pentagon has spent several million dollars since 2004 training Nigerien and Malian forces under Bush’s much-heralded Pan Sahel (PSI) and Trans Saharan Counter-Terrorism (TSCTI) initiatives. The product is not impressive. Niger’s US-trained forces have been severely humiliated in every encounter since the beginning of the rebellion in February, with an estimated 61 soldiers being killed and at least 70 taken hostage. In contrast, rebel casualties are minimal. The Nigerien army’s consistent combat failure has effectively
confined its troops to fixed bases dotted around the region from where their frustration and anger is being vent on the surrounding civilian population. Reports are growing of soldiers harassing local civilians, while at least ten old men, of whom one was a cripple and seven were on a local pilgrimage, have been murdered in a style of soldiering reminiscent of Iraq. The behaviour of US-trained forces in Mali is no better. Since spring, there have been constant reports of Malian troops violating nomadic camps and their womenfolk, while on the more military front some forty soldiers have now surrendered or fallen into the hands of the rebels, with dozens more having defected. Indeed, the first rebel attack on the police post at Tin Zaouatene (see ‘x’ on map) on 11 May was almost certainly an act of revenge by an aggrieved ‘former rebel’ returning home to find soldiers violating women in his camp.

The second reason for Washington’s silence relates to the deterioration, since mid-2006, of its relations with Algeria, originally its main ally in the fabrication of the Saharan front. Reasons for this include Algeria’s non-delivery on certain hydrocarbons expectations, the huge growth in Algeria’s FOREX reserves (and hence greater financial independence from the US), Russia’s emergence as a major player in the Algerian gas and arms markets and the associated development of tensions between factions within Algeria’s intelligence services. Moreover, and as far as the US is concerned, key elements in the Algerian

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**Sub-Saharan zones with concentrations of foreign investment**

- Oil
- Minerals

**Unstable sub-Saharan zones**

- War Ø severe tension
- Political instability and occasional internal clashes
- Active zones for the Salafist group
- Stable politically
intelligence services have not delivered as originally expected. These same tensions within the intelligence services have led to the public exposé of the activities of the US Halliburton Company in Algeria. In 1994, when the Algerian military regime was at the height of its ‘dirty war’ against Islamists, and the country technically bankrupt, the current US Vice President, Dick Cheney, in his capacity as Halliburton CEO, initiated what many now regard as a thoroughly corrupt and illegal arrangement. This was that Halliburton’s engineering branch, Kellogg Brown & Root (49%) created a joint venture company with Sonatrach (51%) (Algeria’s National Oil Company), called Brown Root Condor (BRC). President Bouteflika’s investigative report (leaked on 23 July 2006) revealed that BRC had been given at least 26 major contracts, without tendering, as is required by law, and at inflated prices (i.e. over-invoicing), in the major markets of Sonatrach, National Defence, the Ministry of Energy and Mines and other industrial and real estate projects. However, the element of this scandal that most damaged US-Algerian relations (and which received hardly any press coverage) was that Russian military information services revealed to the leaders of Algeria’s military intelligence service that the sophisticated communications system purchased in the USA by BRC on behalf of Algeria’s General Staff had been tampered with by US services so that all Algeria’s military communications were permanently connected to both US and Israeli electronic intelligence systems.

BRC has now been closed down. Money has dried up. The huge military base that BRC has been constructing in the middle of the Sahara, next to Tamanrasset’s airport, since 2001 and the focal ‘lilypad’ in US EUCOM’s ill-conceived ‘War on Terror’ across the Sahara, has now been deserted by construction workers and US Special Forces. For the last five months, Africa’s greatest monument to imperial over-reach has stood abandoned, sentry pill-boxes empty, dogs cocking their legs against its perimeter fortifications, gathering sand and dust in the middle of the Sahara. A day’s drive south of it is the other legacy of America’s Saharan intervention: the escalating Tuareg rebellions in Niger and Mali.

Endnotes


2. This is evidenced, for example, by the fact that ROAPE has been able to keep up a running commentary on the shenanigans of the US-Algerian ‘war on terror’ since its launch in 2003. See ROAPE 98, 2003 et passim.


We may never know who was responsible for shooting down the jet aircraft killing Rwanda’s president, Juvenal Habyarimana, in the night sky over Kigali at 8.30 p.m. on 6 April 1994. All that is certain is that several eye witnesses saw two missiles fired – others claim there were three – and then hit the Falcon jet as it was coming in to land. As the wrecked plane lay smouldering in the presidential garden, the rumours began and today there is a plethora of speculation about who was responsible. The unlikelihood of an international investigation would give it the appearance of a perfect crime. The International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) did not conduct an enquiry. The aircraft was a state aircraft in its own territory and so it was not covered by the ICAO international convention. No investigation was required and none was undertaken.

This event, which is popularly believed to have triggered the 1994 genocide, is today of pivotal political importance for in November 2006, in a judicial report published in France, it was claimed that the missile attack had been planned by and perpetrated by the current president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. Almost immediately, international warrants were issued in Paris for Rwandan officials named as responsible for the missile plot. These included senior Rwanda military and civilian officials who from now on will face restrictions on travel, especially within the European Union.

The report, written by a French investigative magistrate, Judge Jean-Louis Bruguière, further alleged that so keen to take power in Rwanda Kagame, who was the military leader of the largely Tutsi Rwandan Patriot Front (RPF) which had fought a civil war for three years with the Hutu regime in Kigali, was prepared to risk the elimination of the Tutsi living in Rwanda. The ultimate instigator of the 1994 genocide of the Tutsi, according to Bruguière, was Kagame.

The response to the publication of the Bruguière report was swift. The Rwandan ambassador in Paris was recalled, and in Kigali the French ambassador expelled. France was accused by Rwanda officials of attempting to divert attention from Rwanda’s own investigation in to the role of France in Rwanda and allegations that French military support was given to the regime that perpetuated the genocide. Furthermore, the French were accused of publishing the report in order to further undermine the Rwandan government, seen in Kigali as an ongoing process by the French which had never accepted an ‘anglophone’ government of Rwanda.

A few weeks after the publication of the Bruguière report and during public hearings in Kigali held in December 2006, ex-members of Rwandan government forces and militias who participated in the genocide alleged that they had been trained by French instructors and gave examples of how French military equipment was delivered by France to Rwanda during the genocide.
The credibility of the Bruguière report rests on its witness testimony. The witnesses quoted in the report include defendants on charges of genocide at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), and defectors from the RPF. One of the key witnesses is the author of this book, Lt. Abdul Joshua Ruzibiza. His central accusation is that the RPF shot down the plane and that he had been a witness to the planning of the attack and had taken part in it. Ruzibiza has repeated these allegations in testimony at the ICTR in defence of military officers on genocide charges. His book has been admitted as evidence. He claims he was a member of a ‘network commando’ created by the RPF leadership to carry out political assassinations in Rwanda on the orders of Kagame.

Ruzibiza’s own story is intriguing. According to the Africa Editor of Le Soir (Brussels), Colette Braeckman, Ruzibiza was in Kampala in June 2003. She had met him there. He said he had fled Rwanda in February 2001 ‘for security reasons’. She said that the Ugandan intelligence service had given his name to the French intelligence services, the Direction générale de la sécurité extérieure (DGSE) who had ‘spirited’ him out of Uganda and brought him to Paris where he had made a statement before Bruguière. He had then sought and obtained political asylum in Norway. In Kigali, his superiors in the RPF insist that Ruzibiza was merely an auxiliary nurse trained on the job, and who was in Byumba in the north of Rwanda in April 1994.

In Ruzibiza’s story about the assassination of president Habyarimana he claims that the missiles were fired from a farm near the airport on Massaka hill. There are flaws in his account not the least, as the journalist Colette Braeckman has shown, at that time Massaka was controlled by the presidential guard and French military officers and the one road leading to it had eight roadblocks. The farm itself belonged to Agathe Habyarimana, the president’s wife, and access would have been all but impossible for RPF soldiers.

According to Bruguière, those who fired the missiles at the plane left the evidence behind them for in his report there are details of parts of missile launchers that were apparently found by peasants on Massaka hill a few weeks after the attack. The serial numbers of these particular launchers, according to Bruguière, prove that they came from Uganda, where the RPF had its bases. But this missile evidence was given to Bruguière by a colonel in the Rwanda army called Theoneste Bagosora, currently on genocide charges at the ICTR, and the one military officer most popularly credited by the press as the being a genocide ‘mastermind’. Indeed, the claim that it was the RPF which shot down the plane is the foundation stone upon which the defence case rests in these trials. The defendants and their lawyers claim that an international conspiracy has prevented investigation of the crash in order to protect the current leadership in Rwanda. They claim that the genocide – far from being planned – was caused by the spontaneous fury of the people at the death of their president and because they feared that the Tutsi RPF was coming to Rwanda to enslave them. They alleged that international opinion has been tricked into thinking that a genocide took place by an effective and educated ‘pro-Tutsi lobby’. With a denial of culpability in the missile attack, the defendants at the ICTR challenge the legitimacy of the court, for in neither the court, nor anywhere else, has there been an investigation into the death of the former president. As Bagosora recently told the court, the real culprits were circulating misleading information so that people should go after the wrong information and so cover up the true information.
A major blow to the credibility of Bruguière – and by extension this book – came at a press conference on 31 November 2006 held at the ICTR when the press spokesman stressed that in all their rulings so far the judges had confirmed the existence of a planned and systematically organised conspiracy to commit genocide. The assassinations and killings could not be considered ‘a spontaneous reaction’ to the assassination of Habyarimana.

This book does not read well. Neither does it effectively argue its case. Some parts of it are a seemingly endless list of names and places, of massacres and killings. None of the information it contains is tried and tested. The book serves only to muddy the waters for those still trying to fathom the 1994 genocide.


The title of this book is somewhat misleading. It suggests that the author is engaged in an orthodox assessment of the extent to which aid actually ‘works’ to achieve its stated objectives. As such, it would fit squarely with the host of other recent studies which take something like this as their starting point. Usually these studies conclude that aid can ‘work’ under some conditions, but that a great deal of it does not ‘work’, and indeed that it is often counter-productive to the stated aims of aid donors. In turn these studies usually end with a series of exhortations to donors and recipients alike to help make aid ‘work’ better. Although Stephen Browne is not immune from this latter tendency, the thrust of his critique of donor policy is much more profound. And it is perhaps particularly powerful coming from someone who has held a variety of senior positions within the donor community (including as a Director within UNDP, and UN Coordinator of Development and Humanitarian Assistance in Rwanda and Ukraine).

Browne’s basic argument is that aid and development practice is donor driven. That is, although the provision of aid is justified on developmental grounds, in fact the forms that aid takes, the kinds of policies advocated by donors, and the kinds of development practices used by donors, derive from the domestic institutional and ideological environment that donors inhabit, and from the particular bureaucratic imperatives of donor agencies (aid agencies are organisations, after all). Aid is in these senses profoundly autobiographical. The great merit of this argument is that it helps explain the ‘dysfunctional’ (in a development sense) policies and practices pursued by donors, rather then seeing them as unfortunate deviations from some kind of ‘best practice’.

One implication of this kind of argument, however, is that not much can reasonably be expected to change. Of course aid policies and practices do change (up to a point), but the donor driven nature of much aid provision does not change so there is no very good reason to think that ‘ownership’, ‘participation’, or ‘harmonisation’ (to use just a few recent buzzwords) will make any substantial difference to the aid relationship, as recent critical studies of these issues have begun to show. Indeed, the more ways in which one comes to see that aid is autobiographical, the harder it is to imagine that aid policies and practices will ever come to reflect the real needs and capabilities of aid recipients. Browne wrestles with this problem. Through the book he offers various kinds of recommendations. Many of them are eminently sensible: improved borrower control over the types and forms of aid;
better local knowledge on the part of aid donors; better aid coordination and reduced use of conditionality. The trouble with these recommendations is that Browne gives not very good reasons for supposing that donors will really make any of these changes.

In the final chapter of the book, Browne makes some more radical suggestions which involve, among other things, doing away with ‘donor cartelisation’, making international trade rules fairer, and developing a proper market for technical assistance. Again, of course, there are good reasons for thinking that none of these things will come to pass. And this is, finally, the problem, not so much with Browne’s book, which is in many ways excellent, but with any critical account of aid: the more we know about why it doesn’t work, the harder it is to think it could be any different.


This edited volume sets out to understand the dynamics behind the Eritrean-Ethiopian (border) war of 1998-2000, a war whose fighting phase ended in June 2000 but for which a lasting settlement has still not been found. The strength of the volume lies in its quite comprehensive coverage of underlying grievances that ultimately led to a full-scale interstate war that neither side desired or had planned for, but that nonetheless both sides engaged in with full strength and vigour once fighting had erupted at a contested geographical location along the common border.

The biggest single focus in untangling those dynamics is on different conceptions of nationhood and identity separating the two protagonists, which are discussed in their various guises. In addition, the volume sheds light on economic ties between the two states and the hidden dynamics behind: on developmental implications of the war with an explicit focus on food security or rather insecurity, and on regional dimensions and implications of the conflict. Last, but not least, the politics of intervention by different actors within the international community, geared at first towards bringing the fighting phase of the war to an end and later to find a lasting long-term solution acceptable to both sides, are discussed. The appendix makes available a number of documents, including maps produced by the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), the quasi international guardian of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities signed by both countries in 2000. The latter are difficult to access to anybody not resident in one of the two countries and connected to any of the parties involved in the implementation process of that agreement. Taken together, the volume is thus a valuable source of information for those interested in past and current relations between the two countries and the wider political and economic dynamics in the Horn of Africa.

The volume has a number of weaknesses, however. It is on the whole highly descriptive and many chapters lack an analytical component. Some of its contributions in the main sum up previously published work, in particular the chapters on the outbreak and conduct of the war, as well as some of the issues discussed in relation to an international response. While it is an innovative idea to have commissioned chapters on the personal views of journalists who followed the war on both sides of the border (of which only a view from the ‘Eritrean side’ materialised, a fact regret-
ted by the editors and not of their making), such a personal account would have benefited from some analytical contextualisation by the editors. This could have shown what such accounts can offer in terms of facilitating an additional level of understanding of the dynamics of that war – or any war indeed. As it stands, Last’s journalistic account is left standing alone as the individual account of a ‘personal war’.

Another weakness of the volume is that many of its contributors – a notable exception is the refreshing history chapter written by Reid – are ‘old hands’ who have been writing on the dynamics between Ethiopia and Eritrea for decades. They have, more often than not, a personal involvement with one country or the other, coupled with deeply engrained convictions about the wider rights and wrongs of Eritrean nationhood in the first place. This is in particular a pity as quite a number of young scholars have emerged, both from inside and outside both countries and on both sides of the Atlantic, with a view less tainted by such personal histories.

The book’s main weakness, however, is its lack of focus on ways forward to solve a conflict that still seems intractable to many. The volume was published five years after the fighting phase of the war ended. One would thus have wished that the detailed discussions of what has caused the war and how the international response has so far failed to find a lasting solution is complemented by a framework on how such a solution might be achieved. Some of the contributions do at least touch on potential future directions, most notably the chapters by Styan and Cliffe. Styan argues that the thus far dangerously neglected aspect of economic normalisation between the two countries needs to be put high on any agenda when engaging with the future. Cliffe argues in favour of political mobilisation from below and above to arrive at different patterns of regional cooperation, a mobilisation that could start with various forms of civil society dialogue. While even the possibility for such action seems a long way off at present, conflicts in other parts of the world have shown that such initiatives are possible, often against the odds at the outset.

A comparative perspective might have had something to contribute here. As it stands, the volume partly leaves the reader with this all too familiar taste of a war somewhere in ‘Africa’ that is intractable and potentially follows a logic we cannot quite fully understand, however hard we try.


This volume results from the ongoing work of a group of scholars linked to the Institute of Development Policy and Management of the University of Antwerp. Since 1999 the IDPM has published an annual edited collection on the Great Lakes, but as these excellent volumes are published in French they have a more limited audience. This English edition could be described as a ‘best of’ the French yearbooks, but it is also more than that, since all included chapters have been updated.

The book is in two parts, one on Rwanda and one on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There has always been more interest generally in developments in Rwanda and the DRC then in Burundi. Maybe this is the reason why Burundi has been left out, despite the fact that excellent scholarship is available at the
IDPM. The editors have tried to find the middle ground between a volume giving a general overview of the region for readers less familiar with the Great Lakes and a more specialised approach dealing with quite specific topics such as malnutrition in Kinshasa. People who have previous experience with Rwanda and the DRC will therefore have the tendency to flick through certain sections of the book quite quickly. Others who are new to the region, might be a bit lost as an edited volume always contains some overlap and voids. The ‘Political Economy’ in the title of the volume is therefore a bit misleading. It is not a political economy analysis as such and it does not provide us with a comprehensive analysis. It deals with a broad variety of economic and political topics pertaining to the region.

The first part, about Rwanda, contains some of the most critical scholarship on Rwanda that is available in English. Filip Reyntjens starts of with an unsettling analysis of the post-genocide Rwandan government. After being presented with a detailed overview of its policies, one indeed has to agree that the Rwandan government has received too much credit and preferential treatment by the international community. While Rwanda is often praised for its very technocratic approach and much more professional style of government (in contrast to neighbours Burundi and Congo), Ansoms and Marysse conclude in chapter 2 that Rwanda has not made any progress in terms of poverty reduction and that inequality has dangerously risen. Both these chapters send us alarming warning signals that Rwanda is not on the road to recovery (be it socially, politically or economically) and that renewed (ethnic) violence is not unimaginable. Chapters 3 and 4 are more contemplative. Eminence grise, Réné Lemarchand, explains why the Rwandan genocide differs from the holocaust. Vandeginste and Huyse ponder if consociational theory can offer solutions for deeply divided societies such as Rwanda. This is a very interesting chapter in many ways although the remedies they suggest do not address the real problem. Ethnicity is not the source of Rwanda’s problem but the outcome.

The second part on the DR Congo is a bit of a mixed bag. Marysse puts Congo’s bleak economic outlook after many years of war into figures and charts. He focuses both on the plunder by neighbouring countries and the Congolese state itself which, it can indeed be argued, has been robbing its own citizens. Erik Kennes’ contribution complements this argument, stating that Congo is not really a victim of globalisation (i.e. plunder or unfair deals by foreign companies). The relationship between a corrupt and incapable Congolese state and the international mining industry is, argues Kennes, much more complex. The chapter gives a good insight to people unfamiliar with the mining industry in Congo and has been updated to include the latest developments and some future scenarios. Chapter 7 discusses two of the hot spots in Congo’s last war, namely Kivu and Ituri, drawing some comparisons between both regions. A short chapter 8 by De Herdt and Tshimanga discusses how ordinary people in Kinshasa have survived the war economically – mainly by looking at food (in terms of price evolution, consumption patterns, household budgets etc.).

Voices of Protest brings together a rich collection of empirical studies on social movements in post-apartheid South Africa. An accessible and compelling read, the book covers a remarkable 16 movements in total, with a chapter devoted to each one. From the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) to the Self-Employed Women’s Union (SEWU), this book provides an excellent overview of the various social movements currently active within the country. Moreover, the rising influence and importance of these movements in South Africa (and beyond) certainly warrants such a discussion.

The book begins with an introduction by the editors, which includes a survey of social movement theories, and a general description of the post-apartheid political and socio-economic conditions under which the movements emerged. After the ruling African National Congress (ANC) embraced the ‘Washington consensus’ in the immediate aftermath of the transition to democracy, resistance surfaced within marginalised communities across the country. According to the editors, the growth in social movement activism has largely been a reaction to ‘neo-liberal globalisation’ which was embodied by the ANC’s implementation of GEAR (Growth, Employment, and Redistribution) in 1996. Rising unemployment, poverty, and inequality in the new South Africa have driven many communities to seek creative ways to sustain themselves. Thus, a diversity of social movements has emerged in a struggle for survival, and in some cases to more directly contest the ANC’s neoliberal political project.

Voices of Protest covers an impressive range of social movements that address issues such as privatisation, land reform, women’s rights, the environment, homelessness, refugees, and HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, each chapter of the book presents a wealth of empirical data regarding the particular movement under analysis. The book’s contributors provide detailed accounts of the origin, structure, leadership, and activities of the movements in question, while also discussing the broader implications of the movement’s struggle. The various authors combine a comprehensive knowledge of the post-apartheid political context with valuable primary research, including a plethora of interviews. For example, chapter 2 on the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) draws on 18 interviews, in addition to substantial theoretical literature. Overall, the various movements are documented and discussed thoroughly, resulting in an extremely productive and timely piece of scholarship.

There are, however, a few issues that require further analysis on the important topic of social movements in South Africa. This is not necessarily a criticism of the book, but perhaps a suggestion for further research and debate. First, there is very little discussion in the chapters regarding the existence of, or potential for, cooperation and collaboration between the various social movements. The question remains: to what extent do/can the multiplicity of movements work together, or is this even desirable? Many of the issues addressed by these social movements are inextricably connected to one another (land, housing, water, HIV/AIDS, etc.). Thus, it would be interesting to assess the degree of collaboration among the movements today, and the potential opportunities or barriers for future cooperation.

My second point of concern involves the connection between social movement theory and the empirical analysis con-
tained in the book. The Conclusion to *Voices of Protest* brings together many of the themes discussed throughout the book, and also touches on the issues of theory building and the implications of social movement activism on democracy and development. While the editors’ analysis is thought-provoking, multiple research questions emerge from this final chapter. For example: to what extent are the social movements capable of creating and implementing an alternative socio-economic political project in South Africa (or beyond)? Do they need to capture the state, or can a sustainable political project be constructed outside of the state? And what is the relationship between the various social movements and the traditional ‘left’ forces within the Tripartite Alliance? Perhaps the mark of an outstanding book is its ability to stimulate further discussion and research. This collection will almost certainly do just that, as it provides a comprehensive, intelligent, and engaging assessment of social movements in South Africa.

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‘Darwin’s Nightmare’: A Critical Assessment

*Thomas Molony, Lisa Ann Richey & Stefano Ponte*

**Introduction: Sauper’s ‘Heart of Darkness’**

‘Darwin’s Nightmare’ (Hubert Sauper; 2004, France/Austria/Belgium, 107 min) is a documentary film about the Nile perch fishing industry around Lake Victoria in Tanzania. Since its release in 2004, it continues to generate accolades and criticisms that fall outside of conventional ideological boundaries favoured by globalisation’s fans and its discontents. The film’s director, Hubert Sauper has been embraced and rebuked by those claiming to promote the interests of the film’s subjects. Yet the film has not yet been taken seriously as a discursive construction of particular ideologies of development, nor has it been subjected to the scrutiny necessary in order to understand the film’s power to confirm, for a popular audience, much of what they think they know is ‘true’ about Africa and how such a representation can be both problematic and dangerous.

In the film, lawless ‘fish cities’ have mushroomed around the filleting factories, peopled by fishermen, prostitutes and feral, glue-sniffing children. Factory owners have grown relatively rich on the proceeds of a thriving export industry, while the locals eat the dried leftovers. AIDS ravages the fishing settlements and, when the dying fishermen limp home to be comforted by their relatives, AIDS destroys the inland villages as well. Fish are responsible for all of modernity’s ills, including the crashing of cargo planes around Mwanza airport because they are too heavily laden with Nile perch fillets for the European dinner table.
While we are not averse to relevant criticisms of globalisation, international trade, African gender relations, geopolitics and biopolitics, we argue here that such a totalising vision of Tanzania, Africa and international development reduces gender relations, sexuality, socio-economic change, homelessness, poverty and complicated vectors of disease transmission into stale tropes associated with Afro-pessimism. We contend that ‘Darwin’s Nightmare’ is an ethically dubious piece of journalism that exploits the power imbalances it claims to critique.

Social Darwinism

The film harks back to the late nineteenth century sweep of ‘social Darwinism’ – a popular corruption of Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection. Some whites predicted on this basis that the ‘Negro’ race (the term used at the time) would be extinct by 1900. Their idea was that Darwin’s ‘survival of the fittest’ implied a competition between races that the ‘Negroes’ would lose. (It is worth noting that ‘survival of the fittest’ was first used by a philosopher, Herbert Spencer; and it bears repeating that ‘social Darwinism’ is a misconception and misapplication of Darwin’s actual theory). This popular belief was shared by some white physicians, who thought that it was confirmed by ‘defects’ in black peoples’ anatomy, and therefore became obsessed with the details of such presumed imperfections. Although comparable defects in white patients went unreported, those in black patients were described in great detail in medical journals and became the basis for sweeping conclusions, for example, that genital and brain development were said to vary inversely. Social competition was assumed to be the essential characteristic of human nature understood through biological reality.2 ‘Darwin’s Nightmare’ is meant to refer to the pariah Nile perch fish (Lates niloticus) that feeds on the very social fabric of Mwanza, Tanzania’s most populated region. It can also refer to the nightmare perpetuated by this film of social Darwinism, where nature and global trade relations are portrayed as red in tooth and claw. This is not a new perspective on African development issues but a reiteration of nineteenth century pseudo-science. The implication seems to be that Africans will annihilate themselves because they are not fit enough to negotiate in the European’s modern world.

As we all know, ‘globalisation’ and ‘modernisation’ are contentious, jagged amalgamations of contradictory components. Some of the forces that perpetuate the spread of HIV are the same ones responsible for ‘empowerment’ of women within families, families within communities and communities as part of a global vision of ‘development’. More money can indeed mean more prostitution, family disintegration and disease spread as implied in this film, but less money can also mean the same.3 This film perpetuates a common patronising belief among the elite that when the poor get money they will spend it on the wrong things, like the Mwanza fishermen indulging themselves in purchases of beer and sex.

Representation, Sources & Credibility

Indian feminist Uma Narayan argues that representation of ‘other’ cultures in the mainstream Western media is not a problem of omission, but instead that Western representations have been deeply involved in perpetuating negative stereotypes and imputations of cultural inferiority (Narayan, 1997).4 Hubert Sauper’s film, produced under the guise of a documentary (and categorised as such, and not ‘fiction’), uses the Tanzania subject as a reflecting pool for a meditation on the big, bad West. This is executed in such a way that viewers are blinded by the incredible whiteness of being, under the guise of ‘progressive
politics’ à la Michael Moore. In spite of
the fact that the authors of this article
and the maker of the film are all Europe-
Based white people speaking about Af-
rica, this does not imply that we have one
voice or that we speak with the same
credibility, accountability or bias. Such
issues are frequently raised in internet
discussions about the film, where vitu-
perative remarks are regularly exchanged
between those who laud the director for
exposing the evils of a ‘system’ largely
supported by outsiders, and those who
contest Sauper’s evidence and question
his methods.

The film exploits the perception that
‘Africans know everything about Africa’
in ways that pervert notions of perspec-
tive or authenticity. For example, the film
relies on Raphael (whose surname is
variously reported as Luchikio or
Tukiko), the night watchman of the
Fisheries Research Institute in Mwanza,
to provide the appropriate assessment
and analysis of the impact of interna-
tional trade and fishing on Tanzania’s
local communities. Instead of speaking
for his own condition, perhaps noting
that he himself earns a salary, meagre as
it is, from the fishing industry, he is
cajoled into playing amateur social sci-
entist for a filmmaker eager to ‘indigenise’
his own voice. Staged in darkened foot-
age as the ‘savage’, the night watchman
is armed with only a bow and poisoned
arrows and describes how he does not
fear war and must be ‘ready for fights’.
Yet his arsenal is clearly not depicted as
prepared for ‘modern’ battles. As a per-
formance of ‘local knowledge’, he is
hired to read aloud from an article in The
East African newspaper.

Similarly, the impact of HIV/AIDS on a
local fishing community is assessed by
the village pastor, his subjective demog-
raphy of slightly confusing statistics (‘45
to 50 fishermen dead in the lake’, and ‘10
to 15 dead every month in his area’) is
followed by questioning in the film that
makes him appear, at best, impractical in
his solutions to HIV/AIDS devastation.
Yet why should a documentary ask a
pastor if he teaches about condom us-
age? This makes no more sense than
asking the local clinic staff if they pre-
scribe prayer as the medical cure for sin.
What it does achieve is to privilege his
perspective on how AIDS is affecting his
village and then invalidate his own
beliefs about his religious interpretation
of the disease. Jonathan, supposedly ‘the
only painter in town’ is given a similar
role to play, assessing the realities of
street children and abuse.

Local voices that could be in contrast to
the film’s ideological path are consist-
ently absent. Where are the interviews
with the men and women who work in
the fish factory? How can the selection of
three sex workers (who appear intoxi-
cated as they are questioned over drinks
at the New Mwanza Hotel) and five
street children (shown high on glue) be
considered representative of the local
‘stakeholders’ in the international fishing
industry? And of the other destitute
children shown cooking and fighting
over food, Richard Mgamba (the journal-
ist who helped Sauper after being told
the film planned ‘to market Lake Victoria
and the fishing industry to the rest of the
globe’), reports that they

> were paid between Tshs 1,000/- and Tshs
5,000/- by the producers of the film and
the[n] directed [to] do what they are
doing, paving the way for my guest to film
what they termed ‘striking images’.

This account is supported by the painter
Jonathan and others such as Mangeu
and Matekere who recall that, in ex-
change for cash, they were directed by
Sauper on how he wanted them to act.
Sauper’s claim that he and his crew ‘had
to be very close to our “characters” and
follow their lives over long periods’ should therefore be interrogated. Yet,
glowing reviews in the popular press
praise the director’s ‘admirable facility
for getting close enough to his remark-
ably unguarded subjects’ in a film ‘en-
riched by the candor and dignity of its
shockingly deprived interview subjects.’11

Not that Sauper demonstrated a pen-
chant for getting his facts right. His
depiction of hapless ‘scientists’ discuss-
ing resource management issues in a
local workshop was fairly indicative.
But this time, the ‘other’ talked back. The
Lake Victoria Fisheries Organisation and
IUCN, The World Conservation Union,
replied to Sauper in their poignant pub-
lic letter, dated 8 December 2005:

What you have titled as the ‘IUCN
Ecological Congress’ was in fact the
‘International Workshop on Community
Participation in Fisheries Management on
Lake Victoria’, organised jointly by the
Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization and
The World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Had you stayed in the workshop for more
than 15 minutes, you would have realised
that the workshop was in fact defining
ways to devolve some of the responsibili-
ties and rewards of fisheries management
to local communities. While community
empowerment does not translate into
poverty alleviation overnight, it is a
critical initial step to improve the lives of
communities. The government ministers,
scientists, industry and community rep-
resentatives at that meeting would have
gladly informed you about the purpose of
the workshop, and their view of the impact
of the Lake Victoria fisheries on fishing
communities in Tanzania, had you asked.12

Fish Exports Hurt Local
Economies?

One of the main claims that the film
makes is that Nile perch exports are
‘bad’ for Tanzania. This comes through
most forcefully when images of packed
fish fillets are loaded on Ilyushin cargo
planes, while news of food scarcity in the
country, due to drought, is broadcast on
the radio.

The view that the multiplier effect of
exporting Nile perch13 is what could be
actually needed in such a situation is
never entertained. Food emergency sys-
tems in case of shortages are based on
dry grains, in Tanzania, mostly maize.
These grains are easy to store and trans-
port, readily available in the global mar-
ket, relatively cheap, and a preferred
food staple in Tanzania (although rice
would be a locally-preferred food around
Lake Victoria). The oily *sangala/sangara*
(as Nile perch is known in Tanzania)14 is
not a locally-preferred food; it is an exotic
species that was introduced in the lake
by British colonial officers in the 1950s. It
is also very difficult to handle for local
food distribution – to be eaten fresh, it
needs a cold chain that would make it
unaffordable to most Tanzanians who
may be in need of food supplies; it is a
large fish, difficult and expensive to dry,
smoke and/or fry, the only forms it can
be traded without a cold chain.15 In other
words, despite what Sauper implies, it
can not be used to alleviate food short-
ages in Tanzania. Not catching and
exporting it would likely mean more
households without income who would
add to the count of the food deficient
population. The film fosters a view of
hunger as lack of food, as opposed to
lack of access to food – pace Amartya
Sen.16

A second misrepresentation that the
documentary carries out is that the coast-
line is totally dependent on fish exports.
First, there is a substantial fishing indus-
try that caters for local and regional
markets; this handles tilapia and dagaa,
a dry or fried sardine-type fish that
constitutes the bulk of regional fish
trade.17 The local market for Nile perch
heads and bones is actually quite small
in comparison to these other markets. It
is also decreasing in importance, as
some fish factories have been making
more use of left-overs on the frame to
manufacture fish fillets and burgers and
for animal feed,18 and others have been
exporting the fish products to the Demo-
cratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia. Second, the fish export industry in Tanzania is not a ‘multi-billion dollar’ industry as the documentary claims; Nile perch exports from Tanzania amount to less than $100 million annually. Third, the regions that surround Lake Victoria in Tanzania are not ‘totally dependent on fish’ as is claimed in the film. Such an assertion is incorrect and has led a respected BBC film reviewer to tell his audience that

the inhabitants of the lake [presumably local Mwanans, and not the fish] are now impoverished, and the only industry left to them consists of processing the Nile perch and selling it off to Europe.

There is substantial rice and cotton cultivation and large mining investments, not to speak of commercial and service activities in Mwanza. Yet it would appear from this film that prostitution services is all that Tanzania’s fastest growing city has to offer. The documentary also claims two plane-loads a day (between 90 and 130 tons of fish fillets altogether, depending on the type of aircraft) translate into ‘2 million white people eat[ing] Victoria-fish every day.’ That would mean a fish portion of 4 grams per ‘white person’ per day. The preferred fish fillet size in European supermarkets is somewhere between 200 and 500 grams, for preparations for 2 to 4 people.

A third twist that the documentary does is to forcefully link fishing to all things that are wrong with Tanzanian society. One of the film’s opening scenes is of a sex worker singing ‘Tanzania, Tanzania, nakupenda kwa moyo wote …’ (Tanzania, I love you with all of my heart) while a rude European pilot mocks her. This is not translated, and so to a foreign audience means nothing. To a Swahili speaker, on the other hand, the scene also shows a powerful portrait of a woman whose pride of place and identity remain intact, even under the assaults of the brutish ‘johns’. Her words appear to be lost on Sauper, or at least are left untranslated so to depersonalise the sex worker and reveal yet another heart of darkness.

Further, while we do not want to make light of the conditions of street children in Mwanza, their plight is not fundamentally different to that of those in other cities, where the fishing industry is not operating. Subtle omissions are replaced by a blatantly skewed translation in one of the film’s rare daylight scenes when a Tanzanian working for the film interviews a group of street children by the lake. He asks one of the street children in clearly audible Swahili, Baba yako, anafanya kazi gani? (‘What work does your father do?’), to which the child says Wanalima (‘They farm’) – translated with the subtitle ‘He is on the water.’ The child repeats, Wanalima. A second child is then asked, ‘Is your dad also a fisherman?’ The child says, ‘My dad is dead.’ Then the interviewer returns to the first child (whose father is not a fisherman, but was misleadingly translated into saying that he was) and asks: ‘Do you want to be a fisherman like your dad?’ and the child says, Sitaki (‘I don’t want to’). Such clear manipulation of the subtitles to make this appear to be a group of street children abandoned by their parents at the will of the global fish industry is the epitome of poor journalism. That it presumably comes from ‘good’ or ‘progressive’ intentions does nothing for the cause of any genuine anti-capitalist critique.

Research-based evidence shows that fishing households have on average higher incomes than purely farming households on Lake Victoria. Fishing can help raise cash to get access to agricultural inputs and hired labour (i.e., for cotton cultivation in the hinterlands of Mwanza) and is thus likely to increase productivity and income in farms. We are not arguing here that higher incomes necessarily entail better welfare of households and communities. However, we
take stance against the documentary when it portrays how fishermen with cash ‘squander’ their money on drink and prostitutes. The equation for Sauper is: no cash = poverty; cash = perdition.

**Mwanza, Famous or Infamous for Street Children & HIV/AIDS?**

Mwanza is in fact well-known among researchers on issues of both HIV/AIDS and street children for two reasons, neither of which is acknowledged in the film. Mwanza is home to one of the oldest and most successful grassroots NGOs dealing with problems of street children in Africa. Named from a Swahili word meaning ‘to nurture one another’, *Kuleana* has been a Tanzanian-led centre for housing street children and for advocating for the rights of all children since 1992. The problem of homeless children is severe in Mwanza town, but if the film had explored the actual problem, instead of its archetype as globalisation’s repugnance, *Kuleana* could have provided some perspective.

Mwanza is also the site of the first definitive medical research linking treatment of sexually-transmitted diseases with prevention of HIV transmission. In the late 1990s, the now famous ‘Mwanza study’ conducted by an international team of public health experts showed that treating sexually-transmitted diseases could reduce rates of HIV transmission. This study has provided useful data for advocates of better primary health care provision and increased attention to sexual and reproductive health as a matter of life and death. While the level of health care provision in Mwanza remains in need of improvement, there are anti-retroviral drugs for the treatment of AIDS at the regional hospital, funds from the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and mobile health clinics funded by the Clinton Foundation. AIDS clearly is a devastating disease in the Lake Victoria communities as the film depicts. Nevertheless, this should be placed in the perspective that the area is better-equipped than most of sub-Saharan Africa to deal with the situation.

**Fish for Arms?**

Could ‘awakening’ the European consumers of Nile perch to the negative externalities of the industry stop them from consuming the fish? This may already have started if the BBC’s Nick Fraser is correct; that Darwin’s Nightmare – ‘one of the most shocking films made in recent years’ – has ensured that Nile perch has been removed from French supermarkets. If so, would this possibly make the lives any better for the fishing communities in Mwanza?

Perhaps a focus on the fishing industry is missing the point of the film. The trailer to the film (in French) concentrates exclusively on what could only be described as his fish-for-arms ‘speculation’, where Nile perch is flown to the West in huge cargo planes that apparently return to Tanzania with weapons to fuel Africa’s conflicts. This idea was born during Sauper’s ‘research’ on another of his documentaries, *Kisangani Diary*, that follows Rwandese refugees of the Congolese rebellion. He recalls on the official ‘Darwin’s Nightmare’ website that,

> ... it turned out that the rescue planes with yellow peas also carried arms to the same destinations, so that the same refugees that were benefiting from the yellow peas could be shot at later during the nights ... First hand knowledge of the story of such a cynical reality became the trigger for ‘Darwin’s Nightmare’.

Sauper’s use of the word ‘trigger’ is no accident. The French-language advertising poster for *Le Cauchemar de Darwin* (and the cover of the DVD in widest circulation in Tanzania) is of three white images against a black background: the first, a sketch of a fish.
The second, the skeleton of a fish with the anal fins replaced by the trigger and magazine of an assault rifle; the third, an assault rifle. The implication is that the film will show how fish somehow turn in to, or are exchanged for, weapons. If there is any doubt, then the Spanish-language poster for ‘La Pesa-dilla de Darwin’ is more striking still, with the black background contrasting against the blood-red stencil of a fish that has the butt of an assault rifle for a tail. Reviewers have taken the bait, and have provided prospective film viewers with predictably Afro-pessimistic appraisals:

To make the journey profitable, the planes that collect the fish now come filled up with arms. In addition to destroying the environment, the West has also increased the likelihood of conflict in Africa,

reads the review by BBC’s film critic for ‘Storyville’. The film critic for the New York Post is even briefer in his prognosis: ‘Africa starves because corrupt governments own the natural resources and export them to buy weapons to keep their people at bay.’

This has irked the Government of Tanzania, a country that has welcomed refugees from neighbouring countries and for many years worked hard to negotiate peace in the Great Lakes region. President Julius Nyerere, known as ‘the father of the nation’, gained the reputation as an international statesman in part for his efforts to these ends. His successors, particularly the current president, Jakaya Kikwete, have taken a key role in these negotiations. In a televised address from the Bank of Tanzania Institute in Mwanza on 31 July 2006, a visibly angry Mr. Kikwete argued that the film had failed to provide specific evidence linking fish exports to the arms trade: ‘One of the biggest lies in the film is that the planes that are coming to pick fish from Mwanza bring weapons that are used to destabilise the Great Lakes region.’

President Kikwete asked Sauper to provide evidence linking fish exports to the arms trade, because there is none in the film. Several times in the film, Sauper asks his informants, ‘What do the aircraft bring into Tanzania? Do they come empty?’ No evidence is provided and at times the director is laughed at by those he asks. Still, he continues throughout the film, persistently quizzing pilots and also grilling, as James Christopher of the New York Times puts it, ‘the factory managers, the fishermen, the urchins and the prostitutes.’ Nobody entertains Sauper’s hypothesis until finally an airman confesses to having had ‘two flights from Europe to Angola with big machines like tanks’. Yet the airman makes no mention of having stopped in Mwanza or anywhere else in Tanzania.

The omission of a date line for these events is also significant. Angola’s bloody civil war ran for 27 years from 1975, and of course weapons were delivered to Angola because government troops and UNITA rebel forces were fighting each other and needed arms and ammunition to do so. While there is no direct suggestion in the film that Tanzania assisted in the supply of weapons for the Angola conflict, this does seem to be implied. This is most obvious in references to the article by Richard Mgamba which suggests that Mwanza has been used for the delivery of arms en route to other countries. Since Mgamba wrote his report there have been allegations linking Tanzania to illegal arms trafficking, the most forceful being a report by Mwanakijiji that uses evidence from United States intelligence, among other sources. The article also refers to a UN report on arms smuggling and trafficking with the Democratic Republic of Congo which reveals that Mwanza airport allows flights that do not comply with international civil aviation rules, and provides photographs of ‘suspicious airplanes sighted by the Group of Experts on 16 November 2005 at Mwanza airport.’ The film fails to comment on
any such evidence, nor is Sauper able to provide any evidence of his own.

The Embassy of the United Republic of Tanzania in France concluded that Sauper stumbled upon the perch theme because of his lack evidence about weapons being flown into Mwanza. On the official website's page entitled ‘Filming in the Heart of Darkness’, and with remarkable similarities to Conrad’s work, Sauper describes:

*Forced idleness became a dull routine. We would sit in the merciless equatorial sun surrounded by a million Nile Perch skeletons, the local’s food, trying not to go mad.*

Under such conditions one might speculate that Sauper was tempted to look even harder for the weapons he had heard about years ago when working in another country on ‘Kisangani Diary’. The outcome is a film that, as the New York Times film reviewer A. O. Scott puts it, ‘turns the fugitive, mundane facts that are any documentary’s raw materials into the stuff of tragedy and prophecy.’

**Tanzania’s Nightmare, Sauper’s Dream**

Undoubtedly Sauper and his promoters’ sensationalisation of the ‘fish-for-arms’ boosted sales and has helped advertise their film. President Kikwete, by devoting his entire nationwide month-end address to ‘Darwin’s Nightmare’, unwittingly handed Sauper the best publicity he could have hoped for. While few Tanzanians still appear to have watched the film, the national media discussed it at length. The Daily News supported the government (predictably, some might say), while Uwazi, a Swahili-language tabloid, was forced to make an unconditional public apology to the National Assembly for publishing a cartoon that allegedly belittled a Member of Parliament’s condemnation of the film. Counterfeit DVDs of the *Filamu ya Mapanki*, as it became known, began to be sold on the streets, presumably to make a profit from those who might want to see for themselves what all the fuss was about. Internationally ‘Darwin’s Nightmare’ had become more than Sauper could have dreamt of in terms of publicity. Domestically it had turned into what one commentator has termed ‘a parliamentary nightmare’. The nightmare perpetuated when the Government of Tanzania apparently reacted with what Sauper described as a ‘campaign of intimidation’ against people who spoke out against the film. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, the government threatened to deport some of the journalists who were interviewed in the film:

*Richard Mgamba of The Citizen newspaper was apparently harassed by the authorities and threatened with deportation to Kenya, even though he is a Tanzanian citizen. He fled Mwanza, owing to fears that a demonstration against the film – organised by the local authorities and held in early August [2006] – would spiral out of control.*

A website entitled ‘The Otherside of this Documentary: Know the truth about this documentary film’ has appeared in a bid to defend ‘Brand Tanzania’ on the international stage. There are no formal acknowledgements that the site is supported by the government, but it is likely that it is the product of a resolution passed by Parliament that, ‘[t]o cleanse the country’s name … recommended the production of a documentary that will counter the allegations by giving a true picture of Nile Perch business in Lake Victoria’. It offers a gallery of photos (mostly fish, but a couple of doctored images of Sauper posing with Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden) and an opportunity to send articles to the webmaster. As with visitors’ comments in the discussion pages, all the articles are unified in their condemnation of the film. One article by the Ministry of
Natural Resources systematically attacks the film with clarifications pointing out, for example, that the aircraft used to transport the fish are contracted by companies in Europe, not the Tanzanian processors.46 Another official statement, from the Embassy of the United Republic of Tanzania in France, contests the film’s assertion that globalisation has forced Tanzania to ‘condemn the majority of its population to ... slavery, prostitution, and drug addiction.’47

The site’s pièce de résistance are video clips of interviews with people working in the fish industry and with some of the young ‘actors’ featured in the film. Accounts of the events leading up to the ‘Otherside’ interviews are anecdotal, and it is not difficult to identify who commissioned them, given the Parliamentary resolution mentioned earlier. Yet it is unclear what pressure, if any, the interviewees who had featured in the film were under to speak out about how the film research and filming took place. Speaking from the safety of Europe, Sauper expressed his concern that,

[The very last thing you want as a filmmaker is for the people you left behind to be in danger.

By the time the ‘Otherside’ interviews took place the young men who feature in the film would have quickly realised how Sauper manipulated their words and deeds to fit his own agenda. Under questioning, they tell viewers the ‘truth’ about this documentary film and the actions of the director who shunned his responsibilities to vulnerable people. One of Sauper’s comments during an interview on the ethics of free trade and filmmaking is more accurate, and pertinent, than the director intended and provides a fitting coda to this review: ‘There isn’t anything new in my movie. It’s all known.’48

Endnotes
1. Thomas Molony is Research Fellow, Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, and Postdoctoral Research Fellow, School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Lisa Ann Richey is Associate Professor of International Development Studies, Institute for Society and Globalisation, Roskilde University, Denmark. Stefano Ponte is Senior Researcher, Danish Institute for International Studies. We are thankful to Ben Jones for constructive criticism and feedback.
5. Sauper is so persuasive at this that his film was nominated under the ‘Best Documentary Features’ category at the 2006 Academy Awards. Other hopefuls were ‘Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room’, ‘Murderball’ and ‘Street Fight’. His film was not awarded an Oscar.
7. Bows and arrows have a number of important resonances in the culture of the Nyamwezi and Sukuma (whose power base is in Mwanza), where they serve as major symbols of paternal ancestry and male identity; R. Abrahams, ‘Sungusungu: Village vigilante groups in Tanzania’, African Affairs 86 343 (1987), pp. 179-96.
12. ‘Open letter to Hubert Sauper from the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization and The World Conservation Union (IUCN)’, T. Maembe & A. K. Kaudia, Jinja/Nairobi, 8 December 2005. One of the authors of the letter confirmed with us that they never received a response from Sauper.


14. Lates niloticus is also known in Tanzania as chengu and mkombozi ('saviour').


24. Fraser, BBC Storyville review.


27. Fraser, BBC Storyville review; the film was broadcasted on BBC 2 on 23 May 2006.


35. ‘Le Cauchemar de Darwin: A Response from the Embassy of the United Republic of Tanzania in France’ (Embassy of the United Republic of...


39. *Tanzania Daina*, ‘Gazeti la Uwazi latakiwa kuomba radhi’, 17 August 2006; *Daily News*, ‘Bunge winds up session, demands apology from tabloid’, 17 August 2006; *The Daily News* also reports that the resolution ‘advised the government to follow up some of the allegations made especially of using the planes to import firearms, which are allegedly used to perpetuate conflicts in the Great Lakes region.’

40. ‘Filamu ya mapanki’ translates to ‘Film about the [fish] off-cuts’.


43. Economist Intelligence Unit, Tanzania, p. 17.

44. <http://www.darwinsnightmare.net>


46. Truth On Hubert Sauper’s ‘Darwin’s Nightmare’, URT.

47. Le Cauchemar de Darwin, Embassy of URT in France.