

# Class, Resistance & Social Transformation

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*Ray Bush*

Much has already be made in the post-*Africa Commission* years of the over-weening optimism regarding growth and development in Africa. The continent, we are now regularly reminded, can indeed claim the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After all, isn't average per capita growth improving, trade in raw materials once more booming and stability returning to a once unstable and violent continent? Yet despite the pop-star hype and the G8 announcements of policy *for* Africa, we know all too clearly that the Millennium Developments Goals (a much used but inappropriate measure of 'development') will not be met in the poorest of continents. The real overall gross domestic product rate of growth of 5.7 per cent in 2006 may have been better than that recorded in Latin America. Yet continued external debt of about \$250 billion remains. It is like a rock around the necks of Africa's poor and the conditionality it engenders prevents even the few enlightened governments from reducing poverty and promoting sustainable and autonomous development. The reality that the whole of sub-Saharan Africa has an income of not much more than Belgium, blights prospects for human development now and prevents any opportunity to generate growth with social justice from domestically available savings and investment.

Forty-five per cent of the continent live on less than \$1 a day with a target for 2015 of just 22 per cent living in such misery. Would that continued suffering be something to be proud of? One-third of Africa's people are undernourished and rates of stunting are around 40 per cent. The West's repeated mantra to 'save' Africa is to try and integrate the continent more fully into the world economy – an economy that has generated the uneven incorporation of the continent in the first place. One thing is clear, the handwringing by western leaders and by African politicians intent on capturing the crumbs of aid, debt relief and expanded trade will not, under the circumstances of existing capitalism, deliver sustained growth and justice in Africa.

Many in Africa realise this. The smoke and mirrors of NEPAD, the AU and failure to promote poverty reduction, justice and redistribution of scarce resources for sustainable development is well known. And the struggle against western donors and African officials is expanding dramatically. Of course just what this opposition means, how it can oppose capitalist development and promote an alternative that is not barbarous is often mute. Yet the resistances that are evident and the struggles that do shape political programmes and economic alternatives need to be explored more fully, in Africa and beyond.

Resistance is at fever pitch in the Niger Delta. It is opposition to international oil companies and Nigerian state collusion with exploitation in the region. It is opposition to corrupt local politicians and leaders and it is driven significantly by the youth. The young in Africa are so much neglected in debates about the

continent's future and about their felt needs rather than those of 'traditional' leaders intent on seeking benefits of spoils and proximity to the agents driving exploitation – companies, donors and officials.

Michael Watts in this issue of ROAPE explores the many different dimensions to Nigeria's oil complex, directing us to a close examination of the Nigerian state's role. Elsewhere this issue examines the way in which the 'development state' in South Africa is making a comeback, although this is without the active involvement of the majority of black South Africans able to set and enforce an agenda around justice and equality. Instead, as Freund documents, while the ANC's embedded elite have many records of important achievement they are unable, or unwilling, to deliver radical improvements in the life chances and opportunities of South Africa's poor and historically dispossessed.

Freund uses comparisons with Malaysia to examine the efficacy of policies in South Africa that drive 'Black Economic Empowerment'. While he concludes that different sectors of the black population have clearly benefited from BEE the majority have not. It is an important time to ask questions of the developmental state. Just what might it mean in the contemporary period? What might its new social base look like, might there even be an 'African model' to drive alternatives to existing capitalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Can progressive forces prevent the state from being hijacked by neo-liberal advocates, many of whom are now at least rhetorically keen to revisit 'poverty' and 'the poor' using a human face? It is clear that the familiar declarations by international agencies, donors and others that Africa is set for sustained growth, cautiously embrace the need for state social safety netting – as long as the developmental state does not impede private capital accumulation.

There is political space here for *resistance*, to mount campaigns revisiting what it is that the state can, and should deliver and how decisions about state intervention are decided upon democratically. It is also important, of course, to open up the agenda of whether, and under what circumstances, the state can match the power of international capital in determining national strategies for development with justice. Nielsen in this issue asks important questions of just how such opposition or resistance to 'dysfunctional' states might emerge. In a challenging debate about neo-patrimonialism, or the pathologising of African politics, Nielsen argues that poor and ineffectual or incoherent state practices do not automatically mean that states lose their legitimacy. They can moreover, remain vehicles for socialism. He notes how people in Mozambique generate their views of the state to define their entitlements to it and to evaluate the efficacy of state and donor driven agendas. This has the consequence, he argues, of establishing opportunity for critique of the mainstream, as ideas about the state can become the basis for social action and form elements of the critique of the state itself and also donor policy and intervention.

Zimbabwe may be viewed as a dysfunctional state *par excellence* in terms of the damage that Mugabe's regime has brought in its wake. Alternatively it has been effective in securing the interests of high ranking military commanders, party henchmen and other clients. It has done this by strategies of capital accumulation locally and in the southern African region with intervention in Congo. Henning Melber's short briefing in this issue raises fundamental issues at the heart of struggles in Zimbabwe for the reintroduction of the rule of law, human rights and the ability to promote criticism and political debate. Denied the right to deliver his briefing in person to a meeting in Zimbabwe, Melber demonstrates why criticism of

Mugabe and his regime is neither nor necessarily part of an imperialist agenda. Instead he reminds us that the struggles for basic rights in contemporary Zimbabwe are similar to the struggles fought during national liberation. This is because they are struggles around, and conflicts between those with power and wealth and those without it. Views on struggles internal to the state, factional conflict within the ruling party and attempts locally to develop a post-Mugabe development agenda cannot be dominated by the regional superpower, South Africa, or imperial forces of the UK/EU, US or China. A major struggle in Africa will inevitably be how to ensure that the outcome of local struggles in Zimbabwe do not create conditions for the demise of sovereignty and opportunity for development agendas shaped by local democratic struggles.

One line of resistance to Mugabe has been the exodus of Zimbabwe's citizens. Many have gone to South Africa and many as farm workers to the South Africa's northern border with Zimbabwe. The changing position of these farm workers is documented here by Rutherford and Addison. Their work also exemplifies one of the dimensions of social and economic policy that confronts the ANC government in South Africa. They look at the harsh conditions that Zimbabweans escape to in northern South Africa. While the neo-liberal restructuring of agriculture and paternalistic rule is harsh and arduous, the labour regime in the border zone also creates a 'state of exception' where farm workers establish new patterns of survival and resistance. The question nevertheless needs to be raised: how effective is this 'exit resistance'? What is learnt and mobilised politically, as well as economically through the life-line of remittances, and how do experiences in 'exile' serve to generate progressive political consciousness about reform and transformation inside Zimbabwe?

These patterns of survival and resistance in southern Africa and the forms that they may take elsewhere on the continent need to be recorded and understood in terms of the relationship between opportunities for struggle and transformation on the continent. *This theme is central to this journal.* We welcome contributions that explore the dynamics of contemporary resistance and the character of obstacles and opportunities that protagonists in struggle have. This also involves the importance of theoretical and empirical analysis to ascertain which struggles in Africa are progressive and which struggles might be defended and promoted by workers, peasants and intellectuals in Africa and elsewhere? How can the counter hegemony so necessary for revolutionary transformation of relations of production in Africa, while promoting the growth in productive forces (in some cases perhaps *introducing* rather rudimentary production facilities in the first instance) be promoted by what Gramsci identified as such a crucial link in the revolutionary chain of action – the organic intellectual?

African leaders seem to have universally met the definition of what Gramsci had called the *traditional* intellectual – those who regularly and rhetorically claim independence of thought from ruling classes and ideas yet fail, many actively, to redress inequality and poverty, promoting instead the so-called benefits of late capitalism. Thus strategies of NEPAD and governments clamouring for debt relief through increased conditionality, the dominance of neo-liberal hegemony of donors and corporations shamelessly determines state policy. Yet there remains, alongside the struggles of the dispossessed, of workers and peasants, and of worker-peasants who straddle town and country, a role for intellectuals who challenge authority, the hegemony of neo-liberalism, and forge strong living links with those in struggle for justice and equality.

There are many different types of struggle and resistance in Africa. Many are organised and structured by leaders in political parties and trade unions but many are informal and unstructured. These seek to deliver often quite small but significant resources for the poor. Struggles over access to electricity, water, housing, land, irrigation and so on do have a cumulative impact in the struggle for rights and power. Here, the poor are clearly agents for social change rather than just categories of vulnerable. Their struggles may not always be against the state although they are mostly against injustice. We need to pursue an evaluation of everyday struggles for survival to see how they form part of a broader struggle for socialist development. And what value is there in these struggles? In addition to the crucial capture of daily survival, itself the most important aspect of struggle, do informal and 'ordinary' struggles have an impact on the struggle for socialism and the struggle against commodification of every aspect of social life? And if they do not, what agencies exist to help transform struggles from classes-in-formation to classes-in-action, developing strategies to challenge authority sufficiently to generate social movements that confront and challenge state bureaucracies? Or perhaps the challenge to states is not what is important at the moment for the development of alternatives to existing capitalism? Do unstructured and informal struggles inform a debate about the efficacy and possibility for the promotion of a developmental state? Indeed, does the 'idea' of the developmental state feature at all in those whose daily crises for survival must always take precedence over grandiose programmes of political action?

It is time to again revisit the role of social class in promoting agendas for transformation in Africa. The essay in this issue by Michael Watts on 'Petro-insurgency or Criminal Syndicate?' detailing conflicts in the Niger Delta is instructive here. Watts goes beyond the sterile debate about the 'resource curse' to look at, amongst other things, the dynamics of opposition and resistance in Nigeria, the world's ninth largest oil producer and one soon to account for at least 25 per cent of petroleum imports into the US. Watts thus goes beyond not only the resource curse and Paul Collier's recent pot boiler, *The Bottom Billion*, to examine the inter-relationship between strategies for accumulation, the global war on terror and local struggles to capture local wealth to address local poverty and patterns of impoverishment.

We will return in early 2008 to the debates about resources and mining as we retain momentum in the struggle of ideas against the neo-liberal barrage. Blair commissions and musical concerts and the idea we should buy 'red' to help Africa, seem to hold sway amongst Western commentators on Africa. This sloganising ignores a fundamental concern raised here: underneath the language of transparency, stakeholders, partnerships and responsibility, inextricably linked to the hype about potential for resource development in Africa lie economic processes of capital accumulation, dispossession and continued uneven incorporation of Africa's economies into the world economy. This is a continued process of dispossession that is not the result of the absence of the continent from the world economy, or globalisation as many prefer to say; Africa's poverty is the outcome of the continent's differential incorporation into economic and political processes.

Neo-liberal bias in debates regarding African development, whether mineral or petroleum-fuelled is accompanied by a new rhetoric of corporate responsibility. This claim implies that corporations will now deliver what they promise and together with host governments will form partnerships to improve community well-being destroyed by international corporate activity.

Neo-liberalism wrongly asserts that markets can be accessed equally between people and the state, and workers and consumers, that markets are neutral arenas to facilitate the efficient allocation of resources and that the state can at best help facilitate the smooth running of markets – but must not regulate them. But neo-liberalism is quiet about understanding the prior exclusion of communities and categories of ‘the poor’ in Africa, in oil producing areas, agricultural estates and those beyond. Neo-liberalism is short on the need to understand how African men and women, young and old remain impoverished and are increasingly impoverished as a result of amongst other things, relations with resource companies and their agents. We are told that the unfortunate ‘externalities’ of oil and mining, agriculture or other resource driven strategies can be addressed through ameliorating palliatives, alternative livelihood strategies, environmental monitoring and the like.

While donors and philanthropists assume globalisation, and the role of mining companies and the extractive industries sector more generally can work for the poor, there is overwhelming evidence that the poor are working instead for globalisation. Globalisation of course means the use of systematic state power to impose financial market imperatives but many in Africa search for and demand local impulses and pressures from advocacy groups and communities on the ground rather than externally driven models of development and progress. This journal wants to explore these themes further: they go to the heart of oppositional politics in all its guises.

There has, of course, been a mushrooming of advocacy groups in Africa and outside that have tried, amongst other things, to maximise the potential of knowledge as a vehicle for the poor to use as critique, and as resistance. And it is clear, as Watts demonstrates beyond doubt in the case of Nigeria, that resistance to existing globalisation, where oil companies are identified as exploiters of local rights and resources, can be a catalyst for agendas for social change and action against the state. Such action becomes pervasive, directed not only against particular externalities of mineral extraction but also against government neglect, inefficiency and collusion with petroleum companies and the US. Here we might note that if oil companies and their workers are indeed part of a particular type of uneven capitalist development in Africa, where commodification of land and labour is partial and restrictive rather than universal and generalised, what strategies are available to counter the poverty generating consequences of mining on a world scale? We need also to note that there is a ‘dark’ side to many militia’s, and gangs of youth who may not use their positions of power to redress inequalities and corporate exploitation: they may just be gangsters. They sometimes operate at the behest of state officials but they also go beyond that control. And where lawlessness does nothing to challenge sources of power and injustice, gangs clearly do not hold the answers for the emergence or even the catalyst of socialist organisation reinforcing instead the inequalities and injustices, exploitation and dispossession, that is at the core of contemporary imperialism.

If mining companies are now keen to embrace social responsibility, is this embrace merely to retain passive community consent to land loss and denial of access to crops and dispossession at the local level that is matched by African marginalisation globally? And is the struggle around social responsibility all advocacy groups are left with in bargaining with states and companies in the contemporary period? In

addition, and something we will look at in more detail in a future 2008 edition, if the concern has historically been how to manage western capital in mining, what is the likelihood of managing Chinese investment with a 'human face'. And where emphasis has often been on the rhetoric of companies and states, we now need to detail the character of social movements, social class, labour unions, advocacy groups and gender-based movements that struggle daily against dispossession and the accumulation strategies of companies and ruling classes.

It is important to heighten the discussion of alternatives to the current global situation, what Ngugi Wa Thiong'o has recently noted as

*a world shaped by the imperative of capitalist fundamentalism with its quasi-religious ideology of privatisation and imperial requirements for the unfettered movement of capital across national borders – poses a special challenge to social science and the organisation of knowledge in Africa today. Fundamentalism, secular or religious, is a belief, or claim and assertion that there is only one way to organise reality – it demands that all conform to that idea or else be excommunicated from the temple of true believer, and in some cases be hauled to hell (Wa Thiong'o 2005:155).*

We know that many people in Africa feel they are in hell and they struggle daily to sustain themselves and their families to positively transform their livelihoods. Future issues of this journal want to examine experiences in Africa where the hell of existing capitalism can be transformed into zones of economic growth with social justice and equality.

## **Bibliography**

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**'Good Friends, Good Partners'  
The 'New' Face of China-African Co-operation**

**Giles Mohan & Marcus Power (eds.)  
with Sanusha Naidu (University of Stellenbosch)**

# Zimbabwean Farm Workers in Northern South Africa

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*Blair Rutherford & Lincoln Addison*

**This article analyses the precarious livelihoods of Zimbabweans working on commercial farms in northern South Africa. Based on research carried out in 2004 and 2005, we examine how these Zimbabweans seek pathways of survival and, for a few, potential accumulation across space, sectors, and international boundaries. The article analyses how these Zimbabwean farm workers are situated in an ambivalent legal terrain, the neo-liberal restructuring of agriculture and the articulation of paternalistic rule into a far more authoritarian logic of rule on the farms, all of which have made the border-zone a 'state of exception' for them which conditions their livelihoods. The article highlights that although these processes intensify labour exploitation, they also recalibrate the survival strategies of Zimbabweans and generate varied forms of resistance.**

Zimbabweans working on the farms in northern Limpopo province, South Africa are becoming more visible in public policy debates. They have been the subject of human rights reports and academic studies documenting abuses of commission or omission by state officials, white and black farm employers and farm management staff (Lincoln & Mararike, 2000; SAHRC, 2003:105-106; RI, 2004; HRW, 2006), threatened targets of mass deportations (SABC, 15 October 2001), viewed as potential HIV/AIDS carriers (IOM, 2004), objects of international memoranda of understanding (Eveleth, 1999a), and cited as examples of the violent despotism of the ZANU (PF) regime (SPT, 2004:64ff). While we have learnt much from this growing attention on the possible legal, policy or activist interventions arising out of human rights or development agendas, we highlight here the importance of also paying attention to the precarious transnational terrain of economic survival these Zimbabwean farm workers pursue. We also stress the particular politics that shapes their reception in South Africa. In so doing, we can better situate the proposed interventions into the wider politics of land in the region.

Our analytical starting point is Henry Bernstein's argument that perspectives locked in the historical frameworks of *the* agrarian question overlook how agrarian struggles today are shaped more by the systemic crisis in the reproduction of labour and their contingent politics rather than following prescribed trajectories of national level changes. He thus calls for:

*an agrarian political economy less confined by its historic sources and preoccupations and more committed to problematising what is changing in today's (globalising) capitalism* (Bernstein, 2006:13; see also Hart, 2002; Bernstein, 2004; Peters, 2004).

Accordingly, we examine particular changes within the political economy of South African agriculture that unsettle historical forms of labour relations and production arrangements, while also reconfiguring racialised paternalism and predominant sources of profitability (du Toit, 2003; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Greenberg, 2003; Mather & Greenberg, 2003). Our focus is upon how these social processes intersect with the particular location of the 'far north' of Limpopo province, creating a particular 'crucible' of cultural politics through which 'transnational and hegemonic influences are challenged, reworked and rearticulated' (Moore, 2000:656). By considering the intersections of transnational influences, state practices and grounded livelihood struggles of Zimbabweans, we illuminate shifting forms of rule and resistance through which exploitation of Zimbabwean migrant labour occurs. An assumption crucial to our argument is the severe economic disruptions and political displacements in Zimbabwe (e.g. Sachikonye, 2003a; Hammar, Raftopoulos & Jensen, 2004; Bond & Saunders, 2005) that have forced so many Zimbabweans to leave the country generating the systemic crisis in the reproduction of labour. Our main focus is to examine how Zimbabwean farm workers are situated by an ambivalent legal terrain, the neo-liberal restructuring of agriculture and the articulation of paternalistic rule into a more authoritarian logic of rule on the farms, all of which condition the livelihood practices of Zimbabweans. Although these processes intensify labour exploitation, they also transform survival strategies and can generate varied forms of resistance.

Based on ethnographic research and interviews carried out in 2004 and 2005 and a survey of 143 Zimbabwean farm workers in 2005, we examine how these Zimbabweans seek pathways of survival. Over 100 interviews were carried out, including with various government officials working in provincial departments of labour and health and national departments of immigration, home affairs, defence and land; provincial and national officials of trade unions and non-governmental organisations; farmers and farmers' association officials; and Zimbabweans currently or previously working on northern Limpopo farms, or seeking work on them. Short periods of ethnographic research were carried out on six different commercial farms that were predominantly involved in citrus production. The participant observation and interviews sought insight into state practices, state and non-governmental policy contexts and interventions, and on-farm arrangements regarding farm workers and their livelihood practices. The survey of Zimbabwean farm workers was conducted on four different farms in the last half of 2005. The sample was random, but biased towards permanent farm workers who were more willing to respond to questions than seasonal workers.

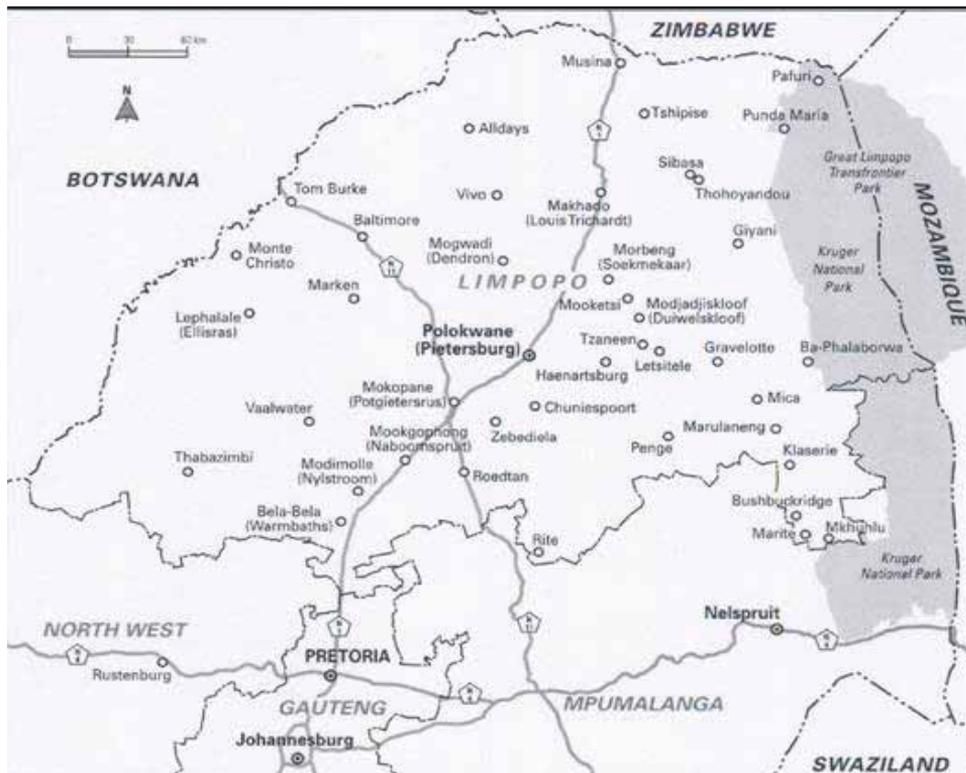
The overall aim of this research was to analyse how the economic activities of these Zimbabweans are informed both by ambivalent state practices towards them in this border-zone and shifts in the political economy of the South African agricultural sector. By exploring overlapping and at times competing power relations at the points of intersection between the farm, state and region, we outline practices of rule, relations of accommodation, and forms of resistance that shape the livelihood strategies. This can help rethink interventions predicated on this newfound visibility through overlapping and, at times, contesting frames of human rights and sovereignty.

## The Soutpansberg 'Zone of Exception': Northern Limpopo

Each commercial farming area found in the semi-arid region south of the Limpopo River and north of the Soutpansberg mountains, a 130 kilometre long strip of volcanic and sedimentary rock ranging in altitude up to 1,700 meters, is said to be 'full of Zimbabweans'. Zimbabwean farm workers are also found in other parts of Limpopo province (formerly called Northern province and then part of Transvaal) as well as elsewhere in South Africa. The presence of Zimbabweans working on these farms is not new, but their numbers, their geographic origins, and their social characteristics have changed since 2000.

Before 2000, Zimbabweans who came to the farms did so almost exclusively because of dwindling economic opportunities in Zimbabwe largely as a consequence of the adoption of a structural adjustment policy (Zinyama, 1999). As others have noted, this transnational movement was facilitated by the 'opening-up' in post-apartheid South Africa, attracting immigrants from southern and other parts of Africa, even though apartheid immigration policies and attitudes continued to hold sway in the 1990s (Crush, 1998; Harris, 2001). Zimbabweans who work on the northern Limpopo farms are largely part of the widespread displacement of Zimbabweans that has occurred since 2000. That resulted from the ZANU (PF) government seeking to maintain power at all costs and the subsequent dramatic economic decline. Some are Operation *Murambatsvina* ('refuse trash') refugees, who sought work on South African farms following destruction of their urban-based livelihoods and homes in Harare starting in May 2005 (see UN, 2005; Bracking, 2005). Others have fled

Map of the Limpopo



persecution for their explicit or putative political affiliations. Most saw the need to find work in South Africa arising out of the drastic reduction of economic possibilities at home. As one put it,

*It is hard now in Zimbabwe. It is like you are in jail in Zimbabwe; the government is the new jail. Individually you can't do anything but jumping the border to save your life and family.*

Many cross the 225 kilometre-long border outside the official border posts, weighing the risks and dangers of robberies, beatings, wild animals, and capture to make it to South Africa (see SPT, 2004:56-58). Once over the border, many aim to go further south, trying to join relatives in Guateng province or elsewhere or to look for better remunerative jobs outside the agricultural sector. Some head to farms because of previous contacts there, relatives or friends working on farms; others seek work on the farms as they have no money, are starving, had their clothes and other belongings stolen by thieves, and so forth. They may move from farm to farm looking for work or stealing to survive. Seasonal workers, which most Zimbabweans are, work on these farms during picking season from about April to September. Some then return to Zimbabwe, perhaps with the intention of returning next picking season, while others move onto other South African farms or seek employment elsewhere in South Africa.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of Zimbabweans who have been working on these farms just as it is for figuring out the total number of undocumented immigrants living in South Africa today (SAMP, 2001). On the 200 or so South African commercial farms north of the Soutpansberg range, estimates suggest 70-85% of the farm workers are Zimbabwean, with at least 15,000 to 20,000 of them working and living there (Lincoln & Mararike, 2000; NPDoL, 2000; IOM, 2003:18, 2004:17). In July 2005, four farmers gave Rutherford estimates on the percentage of Zimbabweans in their workforce. The figures ranged from 63 to 91 per cent of the total workforce, including 80 to 100 per cent of the seasonal workforce. Of the total workforce on these four farms of 1,330 farm workers, 82% (1,084) were from Zimbabwe.

The dramatic growth in the number of Zimbabweans 'jumping the border', including those seeking work on the border farms, is also evidenced by the increasing number of Zimbabweans caught and deported from South Africa from 17,000 in 2001 to nearly 100,000 in 2005 (HRW 2006:9). One estimate indicates from May 2005 to around January 2007, 80,000 Zimbabweans were deported (Honey, 2007). Although the IOM and the Zimbabwean government are trying to limit this transnational movement with the opening of an IOM office in Beitbridge, many Zimbabwean deportees still simply make another attempt at crossing back into South Africa (Chibaya, 2006).

The increasing numbers of the Zimbabwean farm workers in northern Limpopo province signal the growing crises in Zimbabwe itself as other recent studies on Zimbabwean emigration have noted (Bloch, 2005; McGregor, forthcoming). But the situation facing these Zimbabweans on the northern Limpopo farms are also shaped by what Lincoln and Mararike (2000) call the 'special employment zone,' a historical zone of exception for this farming area in regards to immigration laws and practices.

The legal status of these Zimbabwean workers has been contested. Until the late 1990s, state officials had made exceptions for the farmers between the Soutpansberg

mountains and the Zimbabwean border by enabling them to 'legally' hire Zimbabwean workers without going through normal worker permit state administrative channels. In interviews with farmers and government officials that had been working since the apartheid era, the exception was justified through an intertwining of cultural claims and labour supply. Most of the Zimbabwean workers were initially said to be Venda from the Beitbridge area. They were said to have family ties to South African Venda living in the Soutpansberg area so the border control for them was quite lax. It enabled them to cross over and visit family and friends and to work on the white farms. After the end of apartheid, this argument became more relevant in light of farmers' claims there were insufficient farm workers from South Africa. Farmers said there were no South African Communal Areas (former Bantustans) near the border, that government-provided family allowances was a 'disincentive' for unemployed South Africans in Musina, Thohoyandou, and other areas in the region to work on farms, and South Africans did not like to work on farms but rather waited for 'desk jobs'. Needless to say, farmers and their supporters rarely mentioned the issue of low wages and harsh working and living conditions as a 'disincentive' to attract South African workers (Crush, 2000 for an overview of the debate).<sup>1</sup> The ANC government continued the practice of exempting these border farmers from the normal immigration channels, albeit putatively with some reluctance (Crush & Tshitereke, 2001:57; Peberdy & Crush, 1998:33-34).

This special dispensation was increasingly challenged in the late 1990s by a variety of actors (Ratshitanga, 1998; City Press, 22 February 1998; SAPA, 10 February 1999; Eveleth, 1999a, 1999b; *Sowetan*, 9 December 1999; NPDoL, 2000; Crush, 2000:10; SAHRC, 2003). The contemporary 'special employment zone' north of the Soutpansberg has ended. Any farmer in South Africa can make a request to recruit Zimbabwean workers through a corporate permit if they can get Labour Department attestation that there are no South Africans who can do the job and, theoretically, an inspection to say they are complying with labour laws (see HRW, 2006:14-15). But the 'legality' of these permits is still in dispute as farm workers complain they can still be deported if they have corporate permits or if they are missing aspects of it due to a bureaucratic delay on the South African or Zimbabwean side (HRW, 2006:25-26). We also learned that those Zimbabweans who simply carry identity cards issued by the farmer, with no basis in law, can at times avoid deportation by showing that card to soldiers, police officers or Department of Home Affairs officials if stopped or confronted during 'raids' of farm compounds in this border zone. The history of this 'zone of exception' thus conditions the responses of state officials on occasion and creates an insecure terrain for the livelihood practices of these Zimbabweans (Rutherford, 2006). We heard of a number of raids on farm compounds in this zone, grabbing and deporting in particular those who had just started working or had yet to secure employment. Even for those who had worked for a number of years on these farms noted that they needed to endure through occasional raids in the middle of the night and, as one put it,

*who knows if the soldier is going to let my farm i.d. work this time? We just don't know what orders they are following from their commanders, the government or even the boss.*

This overlap and potential tension between state and farming practices are also found in the changes in the political economy of agriculture, providing another important context informing the situation of these Zimbabweans.

## Changing Political Economy of Agriculture

The widespread violations of Zimbabwean farm workers in the border zone of exception go contradict the South African government's stated objective of improving conditions for all farm workers, regardless of nationality (SAPA, 2001). It is therefore unsurprising that the government tends to place all responsibility for the violations – which include paying below minimum wage, unlawful deductions from workers remuneration and overtime without workers consent – upon the mainly white farmers who employ Zimbabweans (*Sunday Times*, 14 October 2001; SABC, 15 January 2006). The scapegoating of (predominantly white) farmers masks the role of the government as the facilitator of agricultural restructuring processes that enable the incorporation of Zimbabweans under such adverse terms. While it is important to address the often illegal employment practices of South African farmers, it is also important to understand how they have employed Zimbabweans as responses to both sectoral deregulation and instances of post-apartheid re-regulation, as in the introduction of minimum wage laws and the land reform programme. Moreover, the adverse incorporation of Zimbabwean migrants produced by restructuring is only one example of intensified exploitation for casual labour across the agricultural sector (Ewert & du Toit, 2005). It is crucial therefore to connect the disadvantaged incorporation of Zimbabweans with the wider political-economic processes that have produced the conditions of their employment. Although agricultural restructuring originated under the National Party (NP) in the 1980s, the developments since 1994 show how the ANC-led government's policies contribute to the employment of low waged Zimbabweans in northern Limpopo as farmers try to remain competitive under new conditions.

On coming to power in 1994, the ANC's approach to the agricultural sector was framed within what Neva Makgetla (2004) termed the ANC's 'competitiveness strategy'. This broad growth strategy was premised upon export-led development and attracting foreign investment. It became crystallised in 1996 with the adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme. As part of GEAR, the state was explicitly designated a 'facilitative' role for capital – focused around setting up preferential trade agreements, helping establish new export markets and directing the economy towards an outward orientation (Greenberg, 2003:54). Under these terms, government economic policy became based upon the 'freeing up' of markets through deregulation and privatisation, ending of tariffs and state subsidies on production and a conservative monetary and fiscal policy (Makgetla, 2004:269). Throughout the 1990s but especially after 1996, the agricultural sector underwent a thorough process of deregulation. This was evidenced by the dismantling of apartheid-era marketing boards, privatisation of cooperatives and removal of practically all direct subsidies for (white) farmers. Trade liberalisation was also accelerated after 1996 when South Africa became a member of the Cairns group, and committed itself to tariff reductions irrespective of progress developed countries make in phasing out subsidies (Van Zyl, Vink, Kirsten & Poonyth, 2001:728-732).

Restructuring under these neo-liberal terms did not lead simply to increased productivity or efficiency in agriculture as some proponents of the competitive strategy argue. Rather, the impact was uneven across the agricultural sector, as the state reconfigured the system to channel support towards capital-intensive and export producers (Makgetla, 2004:270). As previous subsidies and trade barriers were removed, an increasingly competitive environment forced many commercial farms out of the sector (Hall, 2004:45). The 2002 agricultural census noted that there

were 57,980 commercial farming units in 1993, but only 45,818 in 2002. In terms of labour, some farm workers had their position as higher paid, 'core' workers entrenched while others were phased out or subjected to intensified exploitation, often as seasonal labour (Ewert & du Toit, 2005). In a recent study, Wegerif, Russell & Grundling (2005:33) noted that the total number of paid employees decreased from 1,093,265 in 1993 to 940,815 in 2002. The trend of casualisation can be noted in the increased ratio of casual workers over the same period. There were 647,839 permanent workers and 445,360 casual workers in 1993, and 481,375 permanent workers and 459,445 casual workers in 2002.

As part of deepening trends towards labour casualisation, migrant labour (often undocumented) became increasingly central to commercial agriculture (Crush, 2000; Landau, 2005:3). Undocumented migrants are attractive to farmers because they are easily accessible and disposable virtually on demand (especially for farms in border areas or along migration routes) and are vulnerable to a wide-range of abuse and exploitation (HRW, 2006). As the case of Zimbabwean migrants confirms, the employment of migrants has enabled many farms to adapt to the more competitive environment ushered in by sectoral restructuring.

Within Limpopo province, the national trend of consolidation appears particularly marked. To cite figures from the Department of Agriculture (2006), in 1996 there were 7,200 commercial farming units in Limpopo but in 2002 this number dropped to 2,915. Farmers who remained on the land by apartheid-era subsidies were no longer viable in the deregulated environment, causing many to leave crop farming. A small section of the sector benefited from the process of consolidation, namely the large-scale, export-oriented citrus and vegetable producers, confirmed by the vast expansion of production and output of the two main crops – oranges and tomatoes – since the mid-1990s (Department of Agriculture, 2006).

Changes in agricultural labour market patterns over the same period reflect the ongoing casualisation of labour. Yet, over the period from 1993 to 2002, the total paid farm employment in Limpopo increased from 93,116 to 101,249 (Department of Agriculture, 2006). This seems to make Limpopo something of an anomaly compared to national employment trends in agriculture which reveal a total decrease in employment. However, it is important to observe that job creation in Limpopo occurred on the casual or seasonal basis, while permanent or 'full-time' employment decreased along with the national trends. This can be seen when figures from the 2002 census are compared with an employment survey conducted by the Department of Agriculture in 1997. The latter survey suggests that there were approximately 28,000 casual workers in 1996, and the 2002 census notes a figure of 38,614 casual workers. Moreover, the growth of casual employment in Limpopo reflects the growing incorporation of Zimbabwean migrants as seasonal workers on the farms of the 'special economic zone'. Hence, despite the high unemployment in Limpopo and the appearance of a surplus of 'local labour' in the former homeland areas adjacent to this 'special economic zone' (NPDOL, 2000; Lahiff 2000:76-78), commercial farms phased in Zimbabwean labour at unprecedented rates over the past decade.

The introduction of minimum wage laws and other progressive legislation such as ESTA for farm workers appear to offer little or nothing for most Zimbabwean migrant farm workers in Limpopo (and, incidentally, most South African farm workers). In the absence of enforcement mechanisms, the minimum wage laws have merely encouraged farmers to seek out undocumented migrants. As Wegerif et al.

(2005) have noted with regard to tenure security, evictions of farm dwellers have actually *increased* since tenure security laws have been introduced.

Given these trends, it appears the nominal 'intentions' of the government have been superseded by the logic of the wider restructuring process itself. Seen in this light, the large number of vulnerable and disadvantaged Zimbabwean farm workers in the 'special economic zone' are definitely not an 'unintended consequence' of otherwise sound deregulation policies. Rather, their presence and conditions of employment are bound up with a more fundamental class project associated with the current phase of neo-liberal restructuring.<sup>2</sup> We can now see how Zimbabwean farm workers have managed to cope with their adverse incorporation.

## **Strategies of Survival & Resistance**

Zimbabweans sought employment on these farms for both their own survival and that of dependants. Their survival strategies on South African farms varied according to the time that they began work and there are differences along gender lines. The former is of interest in terms of examining how the crisis in Zimbabwe that noticeably began in 2000 played out. Gender is important to investigate as it strongly structures and differentiates livelihood practices in the region whether they are land-based, trading, or formal sector employment. Many of the farming jobs were reserved for men or women, with seasonal jobs in citrus packsheds, for example, being given mainly to women while seasonal citrus-picking went mainly to men. Gender also is important in shaping access to resources back in Zimbabwe and forms of responsibility to relatives. Here we merely note any relevant differences in livelihood practices along gender lines or year of starting work in South Africa, leaving further analysis for future research. We then briefly examine how this adverse terrain for the livelihoods of these Zimbabwean farm workers generates its own forms of social agency by providing an example of a strike.

In the survey of 143 Zimbabwean farm workers in northern Limpopo province, there were 79 men and 64 women in the sample. The ages ranged from 15 (3 workers) to 60 years old, with the average age of the workers being 29 and the mode being 21 years old. The average year in which they arrived in South Africa is 1999, with the mode being 2005. There was only a slight difference by gender, with 2000 being the average year for the arrival of the women respondents. The survey was biased towards permanent workers (just over 50% of the sample). On average the respondents worked for 50 months on the farm they were surveyed, whereas most Zimbabweans working on the border farms were temporary, seasonal workers. There were similarities between men and women surveyed, with just over 50% of the men and 50% of the women being permanent workers, with the men on average working for the last 49 months and women for the last 51 months on the farm. Despite the fact that most were permanent workers, the average pay in the survey was just under 571 Rand per month, below the minimum wage of 785 Rand. The mode was 300 Rand per month. Men on average received higher wages than women, 605 Rand to 530 Rand.

Those who came in the 1990s did so seeking better economic chances in South Africa than in Zimbabwe or were fleeing some situation 'back home'. At that point, they knew there were opportunities in Zimbabwe but they decided instead to come to South Africa. In contrast, all the Zimbabwean farm workers we met who came to South Africa after 1999 saw the need to find work there arising out of the drastic reduction of economic possibilities back in Zimbabwe. As one put it, 'Individually

you can't do anything but jumping the border to save your life and family.' Loss of jobs, thwarted educational ambitions and food insecurity were common themes explaining presence in South Africa.

A number of workers had educational and trade qualifications and experience that had given them reasonable jobs in Zimbabwe which they had lost due to disruptions in the last six years, relating to the systemic crisis in the reproduction of labour there. The average educational level achieved of the surveyed workers was Grade 7, with 24% achieving their O levels and 1 worker A levels. There was a slight difference by gender, with the average level of school achieved for men being Grade 8 and Grade 6 for women. There was a more noticeable difference in terms of year of arrival on the South African farms. Over 50% of the 90 workers who had arrived since 2000 had some secondary school education. Nearly 80% had at least 7 years of schooling, having on average just under 8.5 years of schooling. In contrast, the average of the 53 workers who arrived before 2000 was just under six years, and only 53% had at least 7 years of schooling. The survey suggests that Zimbabweans with greater educational qualifications may find work on these South African farms since 2000. Farm workers we interviewed also made this point, as many of the Zimbabwean farm workers talked disparagingly about needing to work in harsh, low-paying jobs on farms, despite having educational qualifications or even work experience that should mean they would have 'better jobs'.

We also met a number of young men and women – who claimed to be in their late teens, but some looked younger – who came to earn money to try to pay school fees to continue with their education. They said that their parents or older siblings could no longer afford to pay for their school fees or examination fees so they followed a relative to a borderland farm to earn money on their own. If they actually end up resuming their education is another matter, especially given the difficulty of finding decently paid work in Zimbabwe even if one has educational or training qualifications. This situation is exemplified by those with recognised qualifications (including teaching certificates) now working on South African farms as either general labourers or as low-level management workers, typically not making that much more than minimum wage. In the survey, the reason most given why the worker stopped schooling was that they or their guardians lacked money for the student to go further.

Before coming to South Africa, 53 respondents, or more than a third, had no paying job in Zimbabwe. The jobs of the others included 19 in agriculture, 16 domestic workers, 12 who called themselves 'general labourers', 8 in retail, 6 were drivers, 5 workers as small-scale miners, and 3 teachers. There were also a few who worked in Zimbabwe as a soldier, an accountant, and a receptionist, among other occupations. There were more women who were not working before coming to South Africa than men, 45% and 30% respectively. The main reason given by both men and women why they were not working, or no longer working in Zimbabwe was that it was not remunerative enough or that they had been retrenched from work. A few said they were chased away from their job.

We heard several histories of Zimbabweans whose jobs were closed down due to political pressure. For example, one man said he worked in a printing company in Bulawayo until 2003 when the employers caved in to political pressure to hire more graduates from the government-organised Border Gezi youth camps, and all employees who were suspected of voting for the opposition MDC lost their jobs. Some young men lamented that they could not find work because they refused to

enroll in the youth camps, whereas others tried to get into the 'Border Gezi' programmes to get a job in the police or army but were told that all the posts were full. Both groups of young men felt that without certificates of completion at these camps their job opportunities in Zimbabwe were limited so they 'jumped' the border to look for work.

Others had been working at their *musha* (chiShona for a rural home with land) and found it difficult to produce enough because of drought and/or lack of inputs. One man had farmed on his Masvingo *musha* for 15 years and never had a wage-labour job before crossing the border in July 2005 to find work on a commercial farm as he failed to harvest anything from his fields. A number of others had access to a *musha*, but said money was needed to afford the inputs and to buy consumer goods.

The survey showed that 79% (113 of 143) of the Zimbabwean workers had access to a *musha* (31 on resettlement land and the remaining, or 73%, having land in a Communal Area). Just over 43% (49 of 113) of those with access to a *musha* were its main landholder, with it belonging to their parents (or, more commonly, their father) for 48 of them, and grandparents or siblings for the remainder. Although both men and women respondents had similar percentages with access to a *musha* (79% and 78% respectively), there was a difference in how many were the main landholder of the *musha*, with 51% of the men (32 of 63) and 34% of the women (17 of 50) doing so, signaling the gendered nature of land access in Zimbabwe and southern Africa. Yet having access to land was not the same as being able to survive from it. For example, over 66% of those with access to a *musha* (75 of 113) said nothing was harvested from the land the previous growing season due to a combination of weather and lack of inputs. As others have noted, the livelihoods of smallholder farming in Zimbabwe have been so intertwined with wage jobs held by others in the family that they suffered along with others with the widespread loss of jobs and retraction of the national economy (Sachikonye, 2003b).

Most Zimbabwean workers we met anxiously tried to keep in touch with family members and dependants back in Zimbabwe (West & Selian, 2005:9-13), finding ways to send money, food items, and occasionally other consumer products back to them. A main motive in our interviewees for coming to South Africa was to earn 'real money' to help out family members back in Zimbabwe whether they were spouses, children, or parents.

The survey showed respondents aimed to return to Zimbabwe on a regular basis. Almost 90% had returned to Zimbabwe in the year before, on average 9 months previously. Men and women respondents had similar responses on average. They often went to visit dependants, with the survey showing that workers had on average 4 dependants back in Zimbabwe. Men were supporting slightly more dependants than women, averaging 4.5 compared to 3.7. When workers recounted what they brought back to Zimbabwe on their return trips – be it at the end of the month when they received their salary, the end of the picking season, when they hear of family emergencies, or whenever they could get enough money to head back to Zimbabwe to see a spouse, children, parents or other family members – it was often a list of items that were once basic to many Zimbabwean homes: maize meal, cooking oil, sugar, and soap were the most commonly mentioned, given such 'necessities' were scarce in Zimbabwe or too exorbitant in price. A few who had money saved up would bring radios, CD-players, TV's, clothes, and bicycles, among other items. They would also bring South African Rand to convert into Zimbabwean dollars at the blackmarket rate to give to dependants, buy food and clothes, pay

school fees, and so forth. All but 3 of the surveyed workers who returned to Zimbabwe brought food, while less than 50% also brought money back, on average just under 490 Rand. There were noticeable gender differences here as 52% of the men who returned brought money while only 39% of the women did, with the average for men being over 1096 Rand and less than half of that for women at 526 Rand. This may speak to the higher average wages men received.

Two-thirds of the respondents also regularly sent money or food back to dependants, mainly by sending it with others, while a few sent items by mail. There were informal infrastructures in place on some farms to assist these transnational flows. If they could not afford to go back to Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwean farm workers could potentially find someone else to either take Rand back to convert via the black-market in Beitbridge and mail it as a money order to a family member or to take money or goods back to the recipients if they lived near them. Sometimes truck drivers plying the Zimbabwean-South African routes were relied on as couriers. On the farms on the southern edge of the Limpopo River, there often was support given to travel over the border. Arrangements could be made for gates within the border fences to be opened by a farm employee or a soldier to facilitate the border-jumping. These gates are found in front of farms on the southern edge of the Limpopo River to enable farmers to access their irrigation equipment leading into the river. Phone calls could also be made to ensure that someone would meet the travelers on the Zimbabwean side with a vehicle and to look out for thieves. And, if necessary, people can be found to help carry over large goods such as asbestos sheets for roofing, generators, irrigation pipes and automobile parts.

The transnational livelihood strategies of these Zimbabwean farm workers in northern Limpopo were largely strategies of survival for the majority and strategies of potential economic gain for a few. Most workers we talked to saw their situation as grim. Many complained about their working conditions – low wages, long hours, non-transparent calculations of piece-rates and monthly salary deductions, pesticide exposure, etc. – and about their living conditions – crowded, as too many workers were living in one room, unsafe drinking water, unclean or non-existent toilets. Racism and sexual harassment were also common complaints. Workers had examples of how Afrikaner farmers treated Africans as ‘a different species’. They also talked about occasional sexual abuse of women workers by foremen and management workers who used their gate-keeping positions over hiring and allocation of work tasks to demand sexual favours from women workers (see also Lincoln & Mararike, 2000:58). Concerns raised in the survey related mainly to working, living and health conditions and issues of dignity (‘I hate being called a baboon,’ said one worker – complaints that are common to commercial farms in South Africa; see Ewert & du Toit, 2005). The difference the Zimbabweans felt was that employers took advantage of their desperation and the fact that their legality was unclear, as noted by a number of respondents who complained about harassment by police and soldiers and the threat of deportation. Many noted how this limited their potential recourse when they faced a problem in South Africa; as put by one, ‘If you have a problem you may get arrested if you go to the government to complain.’ There were a whole set of issues arising out of the ambiguous legal position they were in. Just over 40% (58 of 143) said they had problems with the police or army in South Africa, with a greater proportion of men (54%) than women (23%) saying they have encountered such problems. The problems ranged from harassment, asking for documents, to 16 cases of deportation and two allegations of torture by security forces.

Whereas shifts in the political economy of agriculture create a greater attraction for farmers to hire the workers and the ongoing crisis in Zimbabwe means potential workers are constantly appearing, employers are in a very powerful position. Nonetheless, Zimbabweans work through this marginalised position to try to acquire minimal resources for themselves and possibly their dependants. The ambivalent and adverse incorporation of Zimbabweans in northern South Africa ensures their livelihoods are on uncertain terrain. Yet, most told us that this uncertainty is better than even worse situations back in Zimbabwe.

These Zimbabweans do not necessarily simply accommodate themselves to these largely adverse conditions to survive. There are occasions when they seek to work through some of the power relations and contingent possibilities to potentially improve their livelihood practices. As a gesture towards recognizing such forms of social agency, we end by briefly discussing a significant strike by Zimbabwean farm workers near Musina. Hundreds of Zimbabwean fruit pickers at Maswiri Boerdery, a citrus farm in Tshipise about 30 kilometers southeast from Musina, went on a 10 day strike in June 2005. Although the result was not necessarily positive for the workers, this example provides insight into the cultural politics of the paternalistic forms of dependency operating on most farms, which are relevant to consider during this conjuncture when these Zimbabweans are highly visible in media and policy discussions and debates.

As Andries du Toit (1993, 1994) has argued, paternalistic discourses are the central modality of power on South African commercial farms (see Moyo, Rutherford, Amanor-Wilks, 2000). However, paternalism is changing as farmers react to increasing pressure from post-apartheid labour legislation and restructuring. Farmers withdraw paternalistic welfare services often on the basis of 'free market' principles; for example, whereas it used to be a paternalistic custom for farmers to provide housing and food for their workers, they are now commonly deducted as 'fees' from farm worker's remuneration (Ewert & du Toit, 2005:320). Furthermore, the withdrawal of paternalistic services focuses on the casual or seasonal portion of the workforce, while for permanent and highly skilled workers it is likely paternalistic 'entitlements' continue to be provided (Ewert & du Toit, 2005:322). It thus appears that paternalism is not entirely disappearing, but is mixing with neo-liberal 'free market' logic in various ways.

How paternalism shifts and rearticulates with neo-liberalism is very much a 'localised' question; that is to say, in different regions and across specific farms one finds different hybrid formations. The case study of Maswiri Boerdery presents only one discursive formation, with its own particular terrain upon which cultural politics are negotiated. To come to terms with this particularity, we begin our discussion of Maswiri by referring to how Zimbabweans were originally brought onto the farm in 1998.

The Maswiri Boerdery company owns many farms in Limpopo province, but the farm of concern here is called Hayoma. This is a large citrus and vegetable farm that employs over 1,000 workers during picking season, most of whom are now Zimbabwean, although a smaller portion of the work force is drawn from neighbouring Venda communities. Zimbabwean migrants were employed at the Hayoma in 1998 after 400 or so South African workers – the vast majority of whom were Venda labour tenants – had been dismissed following strike actions which had allegedly not followed proper procedures (Lahiff, 1997:39). While most of the South Africans were able to keep their homes on the farm land, a Zimbabwean farm worker

recounted that at least 500 Zimbabwean migrants were recruited and brought to the farm in large trucks to replace the dismissed workers. Most of these Zimbabweans were employed as seasonal fruit pickers and were initially housed in the barn where cattle feed was stored (Lahiff, 1997:38).

The June 2005 strike related to form of payment for citrus pickers. Before 2005, pickers were paid according to a 'punch card system' whereby each picker carried an individual card that was hole-punched by foremen for each bag of oranges dumped in the trailer. In 2005, the piece rate for each bag was 28 cents. Pickers submitted their card at the end of the day to the foreman, and received payment once a month for the number of bags accounted for on the cards.

Yet in May 2005, the punch-card system was replaced by a technologically-intensive 'computer-tag system'. This latter system required pickers to carry a small electronic tag and, after dumping a bag of oranges in the trailer, to press the tag against a scanner attached to the trailer, which was supposed to record electronically the picker's bag count. This change constituted a major disruption of the particular paternalistic power relations. Many of the striking pickers had worked on the farm previous seasons and said they were 'cheated' by the new system, earning less than previous years.

One observed, 'The system before the computer allowed us to see what we had done, to check our counts with the boss.' Other pickers said the computer technology was faulty; sometimes the scanner and tag did not function properly and consequently bags dumped in the trailer would go unrecorded. For many pickers, the faulty technology meant they received less pay than under the more transparent punch-card system. Although they were only being paid only 28 cents per bag, they said they earned more with punch cards than the 300 Rand per month they were receiving on average under the computer-tag system. The former system enabled pickers to monitor their own counts and compare them with management. When the computer-tag system was imposed, the sense of oversight was denied and amounted to a moral affront.

The combination of feeling cheated and the existing low pay scale erupted into a strike on 23 June 2005. Hundreds of pickers went out to the field but refused the directives of their foremen to start work, demanding a meeting with the manager regarding payment. When that did not materialise, the pickers left the field and marched towards the compound in a demonstration.

After more than a week of sometimes tense negotiations between management and the workers, with an Nkuzi official acting as an advocate for the strikers an agreement was reached. The striking workers received their final pay and were dismissed. Many of these workers sought work elsewhere in South Africa, with some receiving employment back at Maswiri while others were black-listed. Conditions improved slightly as the piece-work system was replaced by part-time hourly wages as stipulated by the sectoral determination for farm worker wages. Under the new arrangement, pickers were guaranteed to receive at least 430 Rand per month if, that is, they maintained a 13 bag per-hour 'standard of production' in order to qualify for the hourly wage. Thus the new hourly wage system retained aspects of a piece-work regime.

Although we cannot examine the strike in detail here (see Addison, 2006:91-108), this example shows that despite their multiple vulnerabilities Zimbabwean farm

workers sought to improve their income possibilities. While the on-farm power relations coupled with the ambivalent legal status of most workers clearly enforced the authority of the farmer, it also entailed mutual obligations (du Toit, 1993:320). Although the farmer expects deference and loyalty, workers could make certain claims, producing a site of cultural politics. Importantly, these claims are not understood as unalienable rights, but they constitute provisional claims over areas that are of most importance to workers. The pickers staked a provisional claim over the punch-card system, arguably because it determined the pace of work and indirectly determined how much money they earned under piece-work. Such regimes of payment are crucial because they often embody both paternalistic and class dimensions of power. They can enable some control over the production process, (often through paternalistic claims) but also have a direct relationship in determining wages and hence the livelihoods of farm workers. Regimes of payment thus represent a terrain of intersection between paternalistic entitlement and the social reproduction of workers.

## Conclusion

We welcome the increased visibility for Zimbabwean farm workers in northern Limpopo province. The emphasis on human rights abuses and the limited laws and improperly implemented regulations have drawn attention to the often grim working conditions and point to forms of redress through the institutional channels of the state and its interlocutors. Although we recognise the attraction of appealing to 'the state' and its sovereignty and laws, we are also cautious about the effects of such appeals if they do not also engage with the political economy and the practices within the particular 'crucible' of this locality shaping the livelihoods of these Zimbabweans.

By examining some of the livelihood strategies of the Zimbabweans working on the farms in northern Limpopo, it is clear that enforcing the laws will not necessarily deter their migration or improve their conditions. Changes in the political economy of agriculture in South Africa and of the 'meltdown' of the national economy in Zimbabwe suggest that standard solutions will not suffice – that these Zimbabweans working on northern South African farms are part of the transnational livelihood practices and rural struggles, including the different struggles for land in both countries. By recognising and analysing some of 'the contradictory sources and impulses' of them we proffer a few points that 'can inform a realistic and political responsible assessment' (Bernstein, 2007:49). As these Zimbabweans are largely jumping the border for their own survival and that of their dependants, and given that the conditions for their reproduction of labour are extremely difficult in Zimbabwe, their desperation will ensure that they continue to cross the Limpopo to escape the 'jail' of Zimbabwe. White commercial farmers are not the only ones taking advantage of their desperation in South Africa (SPT, 2004), let alone elsewhere

(McGregor, forthcoming). Moreover, commercial farmers seek to maximise their profitability in a neo-liberal environment in agriculture – an environment that the ANC government has established. Any state interventions and laws will not only be informed by this larger political economy but also will be shaped by the history of this zone of exception towards Zimbabwean farm workers in the far north, suggesting that the emphasis will most likely *not* be interested in the well-being of workers – South African, Zimbabwean or any other nationality. The strike action centered on regimes of payment in our brief example suggests that there can be a

terrain of mobilization, but it would need a more systematic effort on the part of civic groups and others than occurred on Maswiri farm in 2005 to link it to wider 'politics of possibility' that can link these farm workers to others who are struggling in South Africa and the wider region. Such a task entails going beyond the visibility of the Zimbabweans as victims – or in xenophobic instances, of job-stealers or worse – and addressing some of their own capabilities, linkages, and networks and limitations as they engage in struggles for livelihoods in South Africa and Zimbabwe. We have shown that analyzing the changing dynamics of agrarian political economy in northern South Africa highlights the importance of examining a broad set of issues that cut across rural political economy and resistance to neo-liberalism from what are particularly vulnerable groups of workers.

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## Endnotes

1. Other motivations farmers and others mentioned for employing Zimbabweans include the prevention of 'local' populations from becoming 'permanent occupiers' on farm property through the Extension of Security of Tenure Act or ESTA (see also du Toit, 2003:13), the desire to undermine unionisation efforts, and to maximise profits in the short term as their own future is insecure since most of these farms are under land restitution claims (see Wegerif, 2004).
2. This restructuring process also speaks to the balance of forces within the post-apartheid social formation. Taylor and Williams (2006:10) describes the current hegemonic bloc in South Africa as consisting of 'elite fractions of the ANC, a developing and increasingly strident black bourgeoisie, and white business elites. The last group continue to control most of South Africa's financial markets, their accumulation patterns are primarily export-oriented, and they are acutely sensitive to trends and developments initiated outside South Africa within the capitalist core.'

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# Petro-Insurgency or Criminal Syndicate? Conflict & Violence in the Niger Delta

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Michael Watts

The volatility of world oil markets, and the grumbling of American consumers over rising gas and heating oil prices over the last year, has highlighted a number of key trends in world oil markets: the rapidly growing demand for oil by China and India, the questionable status of some of the mega-oilfields in the Gulf, the aggressive nationalism of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and President Ahmadinejad in Iran, and not least the spill-over effects of the Iraqi insurgency across the Gulf. But there has been another presence contributing to this volatility, namely the deepening conflicts across, indeed the increasing ungovernability of the oil fields of the Niger Delta in Nigeria. A spectacular escalation in violent attacks on oil installations and abduction of oil workers beginning in December 2005 and January-February 2006 by a shadowy and largely unknown militant group MEND (the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta), have thrown into dramatic relief the enormous fragility of the Nigeria's oil economy. Among MEND's demands were the release of two key Ijaw leaders but as their operations became more brazen and daring so did their political demands. MEND claimed a goal of cutting Nigerian output by 30 per cent. Within the first three months of 2006, \$1 billion in oil revenues had been lost and over 29 Nigerian military had been killed in the uprising. By early July 2007, 700,000 barrels per day were shut (deferred) by growing political instability and insurgent attacks. The situation across the oilfields is now as fraught as at any time since the onset of civil war in 1967. How did this instability and political order arise and does it reflect, as some have suggested, an oil insurgency draped in the garb of organised crime?

*[I]f low income and slow growth make a country prone to civil war ... why [?]. ... low income means poverty, and low growth means hopelessness. Young men, who are the recruits for rebel armies, come pretty cheap ... Life is cheap and joining a rebel movement gives these young men a small chance of riches ... [People in the Niger Delta] with a sense of grievance were no more likely to take part in violent protest than those who were not aggrieved. So what did make people more likely to engage in political violence? ... well, being young, being uneducated, and being without dependents ... [There] was no relationship between social amenities that a district possessed and its propensity to political violence. Instead the violence occurs in the districts with oil wells. ... [A]lthough the risk of violence jumps sharply if there is at least one oil well, if there are two oil wells in the district it starts to go down. And with twenty oil wells it is lower still ... To my mind this looks more like a protection racket than outrage provoked by environmental damage. In the absence of an oil well there is no scope for extortion and so no violent protest. With an oil well the*

*protection racket is in business. But the more oil wells ... the greater the incentive for an oil company to pay up and buy peace. ... [O]ver time the situation has evolved. There is now a huge amount of money being directed by the Nigerian federal government to the Delta region and the oil companies are desperately paying protection money ... Within the region local politicians are fighting it out for control of all this money and violent protest has become an orchestrated part of the political rent seeking. Grievance has evolved, over the course of a decade, into greed (Paul Collier, 2007:30-31, emphasis added).*

*Blood may be thicker than water, but oil is thicker than both (Perry Anderson, *New Left Review*, 10, 2001:30).*

Among the chattering classes of the Washington, DC beltway there has been a deep concern, bordering on panic, over the implications of the growing presence of China on the African continent. It has been driven by an aggressive expansion into the energy sector and by what is seen as a new 'scramble for oil' against a backdrop of tight global oil markets, and a post-9/11 US obsession with energy security including a dovetailing of the 'global war on terror' with the 2001 Cheney Report's expressed concerns over an unhealthy dependence upon Middle East oil imports. There are those – Frynas and Paulo for example (2007) – who argue that the oil scramble does not resemble in any way the late nineteenth century African counterpart and the hype over Sino-oil power is exaggerated. Historical parallels aside, it is indisputable that a number of important reconfigurations in the oil complex are in fact in train. Chinese oil contracts from the three largest oil companies (Sinopec, CNOOC and CNPC with a combined market value of \$225 billion) have grown dramatically – from virtually nothing in 1995 to 70 contracts in 16 countries by 2007 covering a total acreage of over 8.2 million sq. kms (Yan, 2007) – predicated upon an 'integrated independent energy and security model'. These are based on long term stable agreements backed and linked to large infrastructure and aid projects sustained by China's massive reserves of accumulated liquidity now in excess of \$1 trillion. It is a strategy that includes a number of other Asian NOCs (national oil companies) – most especially KNOC (Korea) and PETRONAS (Malaysia) – that reflects a reconfiguration of oil operations as alliances, constructed typically around bi- or tri-lateral arrangements lubricated by aid, capital, and expertise. The Gulf of Guinea is, moreover, a 'hot' new and dynamic supply zone – the so-called 'new Gulf states' – and has emerged as a major supplier to the seemingly insatiable US market. Its obvious geo-strategic advantages – large and accessible reserves of 'light, sweet crudes', a large liquefied natural gas sector and proximity to north American markets – have all contributed to the fact that Nigeria alone in 2007 supplies over 12 per cent of total US crude imports. And not least, there are the twin developments of new institutional and financial complexity of oil projects, especially deepwater offshore production and multi-train liquefied natural gas infrastructures, coupled with what the industry sees as the assertive 'petro-nationalism' of African oil states and their national oil companies (the passing in 2007 of an ambitious new local content law in Nigeria is simply one case in point).

Whether or not all of this warrants the term 'scramble', the reality is that oil investment is substantial and growing. Cheney's National Energy Strategy Report highlighted the fact that the region was driven by a 'huge exploration investment' contributing over 30 per cent of world liquid hydrocarbon production by 2010. Over the last five years when new oil field discoveries were a scarce commodity, Africa contributed one in every four barrels of new petroleum discovered outside of North America. It is the West African Gulf of Guinea, encompassing the rich on and offshore fields stretching from Nigeria to Angola, that are a key plank in Bush's

alternative to the increasingly volatile and unpredictable oil states of the Persian Gulf. Oil investment now represents over 50 per cent of all foreign direct investment in the continent (and over 60 per cent of all FDI in the top four FDI recipient countries) and almost 90 per cent of all cross-border mergers and acquisition activity since 2003 has been in the mining and petroleum sector (WIR, 2005:43). Between 1995 and 2001, FDI inflow amounted to \$7 billion per year but almost two-thirds of the portfolio was destined for three countries (Angola, Nigeria and South Africa) in which oil FDI accounted for 90 per cent of all FDI inflow. The Gulf of Guinea figures centrally in this new African oil landscape and within the West African oil triangle Nigeria dominates, producing 2.4 million bpd with an ambitious programme to expand output to over 4 million bpd within the next decade.

Running across this picture of dynamic energy capitalism is a deep vein of political volatility. This is seen most dramatically in the Niger Delta which has experienced 15 years of deepening political turbulence and violence that burst open into something like a full blown insurgency almost two years ago. To put the matter as starkly as I can: the Niger Delta is a vast oil basin of some 70,000 sq. kms and composed officially of nine states (Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Imo, Ondo and Edo), 185 local government areas and a population of roughly 28 millions; it possesses a massive oil infrastructure consisting of 606 fields, 5,284 wells, 7,000 kilometres of pipelines, ten export terminals, 275 flow stations, ten gas plants, four refineries and a massive liquefied natural gas (LNG) sector. Currently the Delta is, more or less, ungovernable. The litany of indices speak for themselves: remotely detonated car bombs and highly sophisticated arms and equipment are the tools of the trade; over 300 foreign hostages have been abducted in the last 15 months and close to 1,000 Nigerian workers detained or held hostage; major and often spectacular attacks on offshore and onshore facilities are endemic and can be perpetrated at will. Unlike the 1980s or 1990s, militants are willing and able to directly confront federal and state security forces. The vast cache of sophisticated arms are skilfully deployed in an environment of mangrove creeks running for hundreds of miles along the Bight of Benin in which the Nigerian security forces – to quote the new Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan – ‘cannot cope with the situation’ (*Daily Trust*, 27 February 2007). Pipeline breaks due to vandalism and sabotage have almost doubled between 1999 and 2004 (from 497 to 895); product loss (in metric tons) due to pipeline ruptures have grown steadily from 179,000 to 396,000 metric tons over the same period (a figure roughly equal to four supertankers; see STATOIL 2006:25). According to UNDP (2007), there are currently 120-150 ‘high risk and active violent conflicts’ in the three key oil producing states. While Nigeria meets its OPEC quota, up to 900,000 barrels per day are deferred (or shut-in) and another 100,000 barrels per day are stolen or ‘bunkered’. Collectively this amounts to over one-third of national output. This is the cost that the oil companies must carry for their ‘licence to operate’ – a licence that is clearly in question.

The costs of this turmoil had been vast. Direct assaults on oil installations and infrastructure cost the Nigerian government \$6.8 billion losses in revenue between 1999-2004 but in the last three years the figure has increased dramatically (currently the conflicts cost Nigeria \$60 million per day, roughly \$4.4 billion per annum in damages and lost revenue ([www.strategypage.com/qnd/nigeria/20070630.aspx](http://www.strategypage.com/qnd/nigeria/20070630.aspx)). In May 2007, Nigeria drew upon \$2.7 billion from its ‘domestic excess crude’ (a windfall profits account) to plug revenue shortfalls from oil deferment. In the face of descent into further violence, in mid-2006 President Obasanjo ordered the military to adopt a ‘force for force’ policy in the Delta in a vain effort to gain control of the creeks.

In early 2007, the Nigerian navy had embarked upon its biggest sea manoeuvre in two decades deploying 13 warships, four helicopters and four boats to the Bight of Bonny to test 'operational capability'. May 2007, according to a Norwegian consulting company Bergen Risk Solutions (2007), witnessed the largest monthly tally of attacks since the appearance of a shadowy but militarily well-armed insurgent group called the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in late 2005.

Standing at the heart of these contested communities is the 'restive youth problem'<sup>1</sup> (as it is known in local parlance), a tectonic shift in inter-generational politics in the region that has occurred over the last two to three decades driven by the consequences of structural adjustment and state authoritarianism, and given a huge boost of adrenaline by the return to civilian rule in 1999. Youth as a social category of great historical and cultural depth, provides an idiom in a gerontocratic and authoritarian setting in which power, secrecy and sometimes violence can be harnessed as a sort of counter-movement, built on the ruins of failed oil development (Watts, 2005). Youth organisations have multiplied and metastasized: they often refigure cultural traditional institutions like *egbesu*, *agaba* or mutual support clubs.<sup>2</sup> Since the 1980s they have directly attempted to capture organs of community power (for example Community Development Committees), but also challenge directly gerontocratic rule; not least they have adopted an increasingly militant stance acting as the erstwhile liberators – vanguard movements in effect – for the oppressed of the region. As Gore and Pratten (2003:240) properly put it, youth represent 'shadow structures':

*covert and secret forms of organization ... salient to the practices of everyday life. As a basis for access to resources and the distribution of power, these modes of collective youth action are generated at the interesting and interfacing of top-down modes of governance and bottom-up responses to disorder ... expressed as counter-movements against marginalization and coercion.*

The social field of youth violence is as complex as it is variegated, a diversity captured in the breadth of the local lexicon itself (militias, 'area boys', vigilantes, gangs, cults, secret societies) (Ukeje et al. 2004). Many of the youth grievances – poverty, lack of employment, minimal educational opportunities – are felt widely across the region beyond a generation who would identify as militant (Ikelegbe, 2006). A far greater proportion of Deltans perceive economic neglect ('marginalisation' in local parlance) than other regions in the federation and over 50 per cent of all respondents identify governance as the fundamental problem working against their opportunity to benefit from oil (UNDP, 2006; STATOIL, 2006). According to a large survey of Niger Delta oil communities by Oyefusi, five per cent of the population felt satisfied with the status quo and 36.23 per cent revealed a 'willingness or propensity to take up arms against the state' (2007:16). Sources put the figure of trained militants at over 25,000 strong, commanding monthly salaries of over N50,000 – well above the wage that can be plausibly commanded by an educated youth in the formal sector. It is really an extraordinary train wreck. In some respects, the current crisis confirms Ken Saro-Wiwa's prescient and bleak prediction in 1990 on the 'coming war' in the Delta; 'the people must be allowed to join in the lucrative sale of oil' he said to avoid 'the cataclysm that is building up' (ICG, 2006:16). Small arms and light weapons are now 'endemic' in the Delta and the 'pace of acquisition and the lethality of weapons is increasing' (Ginifer & Ismail, 2005:2).<sup>3</sup> Chief Philip Asiodu's confident claim two decades ago that the oil-producing communities

'cannot threaten the stability of the country nor affect its continued economic development' (cited in Ukeje, 2001:15) now seems naïve and delusional. With the emergence of the MEND in late 2005, the dynamite had exploded. MEND's spokesperson referred to a 'malignant growth' spreading violently and fast becoming 'Nigeria's Vietnam' (ICG, 2006a:29). How has it come to this? does it all amount to, as some suggest (Collier, 2007), little more than a vast criminal syndicate overlaid with a patina of social justice rhetoric?

## **Nigeria's Perfect Storm**

The rise of Nigeria as a strategic player in the world of oil geopolitics has been dramatic and has occurred largely in the wake the civil war that ended in 1970. In the late 1950s petroleum products were insignificant, amounting to less than 2 per cent of total exports. Between 1960 and 1973 oil output exploded from just over 5 million barrels to over 600 million barrels. Government oil-revenues in turn accelerated from N66 million (naira) in 1970 to over N10 billion in 1980. A multi-billion dollar oil sector has, however, proven to be a little more than a nightmare. To inventory the 'achievements' of Nigerian oil development is a salutary exercise: 85 per cent of oil revenues accrue to 1 per cent of the population; perhaps \$100 billion of \$400 billion in revenues since 1970 have simply gone 'missing'. The anti-corruption chief Nuhu Ribadu, claimed that in 2003, 70 per cent of the country's oil wealth was stolen or wasted; by 2005 it was 'only' 40 per cent. Over the period 1965-2004, the per capita income fell from \$250 to \$212; income distribution deteriorated markedly over the same period. Between 1970 and 2000 the number of people subsisting on less than \$1 a day grew from 36 per cent to more than 70 per cent, from 19 million to a staggering 90 million. According to the IMF, oil 'did not seem to add to the standard of living' and 'could have contributed to a decline in the standard of living' (Martin & Subramanian, 2003:4). Over the last decade, GDP per capita and life expectancy have, according to World Bank both fallen.

Petro-development offers the terrifying and catastrophic failure of secular nationalist development (ICG, 2006; UNDP, 2005). It is sometimes hard to grasp the full consequences and depth of such a claim. From the vantage point of the Niger Delta – but no less from the vast slum worlds of Kano or Lagos – development oil wealth is a cruel joke. But the costs of oil are experienced not only in class terms but equally importantly geographically. These paradoxes and contradictions of oil are nowhere greater than on the oilfields of the Niger Delta. In the oil rich states of Bayelsa and Delta there is only one doctor for every 150,000 inhabitants. Oil has wrought only poverty, state violence and a dying ecosystem (Okonta, 2005). By conservative estimates there have been over 6,000 oil spills since 1970 and according to the World Wildlife Fund report released in 2006, the Delta is one of the most polluted places on the face of the earth. The government's presence, Okonta notes, 'is only felt in the form of the machine gun and jackboots' (2005:206). The recent UNDP report on human development in the Delta (UNDP, 2005) was unflinching in its assessment: the 'appalling development situation' (p.2) reflects the uncontestable and shameful fact that after a half century of oil development, 'the vast resources from an international industry have barely touched pervasive local poverty' (p.1). A much-publicised Commission of Nobel Laureates on Peace, Equity and Development in the Niger Delta Region concluded that the 'wealth earmarked for the region' was 'largely stolen by politicians'; the frustration and violence, they concluded, was 'rising ... and getting worse' (*Vanguard*, 2 December 2006, p.1). It is all too easy to be apocalyptic in tone – and to endorse a certain sort of catastrophism that afflicts so

much writing about the continent – but if truth be told, Executive Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Nuhu Ribadu, was right when he observed that the Niger Delta situation was ‘not being taken seriously’ and might ‘end up like ... Somalia’ (*This Day*, 11 March 2007, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200703110090.html>).

The heart of the Nigerian petro-state is unearned income, and its central dynamic is the fiscal sociology of the distribution of and access to oil rents. The oil revenue distribution question – whether in a federal system like Nigeria or in an autocratic monarchy like Saudi Arabia – is an indispensable part of understanding the combustible politics of imperial oil. In Nigeria there are four key distribution mechanisms: the federal account (rents appropriated directly by the federal state), a state derivation principle (the right of each state to a proportion of the taxes that its inhabitants are assumed to have contributed to the federal exchequer), the Federation Account (or States Joint Account) which allocates revenue to the states on the basis of need, population and other criteria, and a Special Grants Account (which includes monies designated directly for the Niger Delta, for example through the allegedly corrupt designated entities such as OMPADEC (Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission), abandoned in 2001, and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Over time, the derivation revenues have fallen (and thereby revenues directly controlled by the oil-rich Niger Delta states have shrivelled) and the States Joint Account has grown vastly. In short, in the post-1960 period there has been a process of *radical fiscal centralism* in which the oil-producing states (composed largely of ethnic minorities) have lost and the non-oil producing ethnic majorities have gained – by fair means or foul. The process has not been linear and since 2001 there has been the beginning of an important reversal in the sense that the oil producing states have expanded their control (in theory) over national oil income. The history, nevertheless of post-colonial Nigeria is in a sense the history of the reconfiguration and contestation over revenue allocation.

The shifting politics of fiscal centralisation, and decentralisation, provides the ground on which three important aspects of the ‘new’ Nigerian political economy: first, the *decentralisation of corruption* (associated with, in the case of the Delta, the vast increase in revenue flows associated with the increase of derivation to 13 per cent after 1999); second, the *democratisation of the means of violence* (or the extent to which the state monopoly of the violence means of destruction has been undercut by the widespread deployment of arms locally by militia and other militants); and third, the rise (in part associated with changing revenue allocation) of *enormous power and wealth at the level of the state governors who become not only counterweights to the federal centre but machine politicians ('Godfathers') in their own right* (HRW, 2007). This trio of forces frames any discussion of what is called the resource control debate in the Delta and a political movement with a deep history dating back at least to the issues raised by the Willink Commission on the plight of the ethnic minorities in the Delta during the 1950s. It assumes great visibility as it was propelled by youth and other movements since the 1980s – and indeed captured by many governors from the oil producing states as a means of providing political pressure on the revenue allocation process. Since Obasanjo’s return to power in order to maintain a balancing act – balancing a growing Niger Delta clamour for resource control backed by an insurgency against the array of political forces rooted in the hegemony of powerful northern and southern political interests – the Federal centre has increased derivation to 13 per cent. It drew a line in the sand in its refusal to meet the Delta’s demands of 25 per cent derivation or more – an echo of the 50 per cent

derivation of the 1960s – during the 2005 National CONFAB and in the struggle over offshore control of oil resources (which following a Supreme Court decision affirmed Federal control over oil resources in 2002). Nonetheless, it is incontrovertible that as a consequence the oil boom since the late 1990s and the vast windfall oil profits as prices rose to \$90 per barrel, has produced a vast influx of monies into the Delta through the state and local government structures. (This is despite the fact that it is perfectly clear the actual disbursement of monies and the flow of oil revenues from Abuja to the oil producing states is marked by massive malfeasance and diversion). Currently Rivers and Delta States for example receive in excess of \$1 billion in federal revenues each year. Since 2004 (until the present), the four largest oil producing states have received at least \$2 billion annually such that, to take one example, in the first six months of 2006 the 23 local governments in Rivers State received more than \$115 million in federal allocations (including derivation). There is a sense in which the Delta is awash in oil monies. This is in sharp contrast with say the 1980s and it is notwithstanding the fact that nobody believes the full complement of statutory allocations are received in their entirety by the oil-producing states (HRW, 2006).

Overlaid upon the Nigerian petro-state is a volatile mix of forces that give shape to what one can call 'the oil complex'. First, the geo-strategic interest in oil means that military (foreign, local, private and state) and other security forces are part of the local oil complex. Second, local and global civil society enters into the oil complex either through transnational advocacy groups concerned with human rights and the transparency of the entire oil sector, or through local social movements and NGOs fighting over the consequences of the oil industry and the accountability of the petro-state. Third, the transnational oil business – the majors, the independents, the indigenous operators, the national oil companies, and the vast service industry – are actively involved in the process of local development through community development, corporate social responsibility and 'stakeholder inclusion'. Fourth, the inevitable struggle over oil wealth – who controls and owns it, who has rights over it, and how the wealth is to be deployed and used – inserts a panoply of local political forces (ethnic militias, paramilitaries, separatist movements and so on) into the operations of the oil complex (the conditions in Colombia are an exemplary case). Fifth, multilateral development agencies (the IMF and the IBRD) and financial corporations like the export credit agencies appear as key 'brokers' in the construction and expansion of the energy sectors in oil-producing states (and latterly the multilaterals are pressured to become the enforcers of transparency among governments and oil companies). And not least, there is the relationship between oil and the shady world of drugs, illicit wealth (oil theft for example), mercenaries and the black economy.

It would be wrong-headed to see in the Caspian, in Colombia or in the Gulf of Guinea identical oil complexes at work – they differ obviously in their historical, cultural and political specificities. Yet they do all operate as enclaves of economic and political calculation – in essence a form of governmentality or rule – characterised by enormous turbulence and wealth creation. In short, the oil complex looks very much like an embattled zone of the most *primitive accumulation* (Harvey, 2005). Empirically, the current operations of the oil complex have been radically shaped by the twin forces of post-9/11 politics, the failure of postwar US oil policy, and the tightness of global oil markets (Barnes, 2005). In the face of support by neo-conservative promoters and opportunistic Washington lobbyists, strategists at the Pentagon have *invented* a new security threat to increase funding for the European Command

(EUCOM's) footprint in Africa (Lubeck, Watts & Lipschitz, 2007; Klare & Vollman, 2006). Recently, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs Teresa Whelan announced the discovery of a 'new threat paradigm' – the threat of 'ungoverned spaces' in Northwest and West Africa (<http://www.jhuapl.edu/POW/rethinking/video.cfm#whelan>). In practice, all four of the military services – including an Africa Clearing House on security information, supported by a Pentagon think-tank, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies housed at the National Defense University – are now involved and implicated in the new scramble for the continent. Against a backdrop of spiralling militancy across the Delta, US interests have met up with European strategic concerns in the Gulf in the establishment of the 'Gulf of Guinea Energy Security Strategy' (GCESS). By December 2005, the American Ambassador to Nigeria and the Managing Director of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) agreed 'to establish four special committees to co-ordinate action against trafficking in small arms in the Niger Delta, bolster maritime and coastal security in the region, promote community development and poverty reduction, and combat money laundering and other financial crimes' (*This Day*, 9 December 2005). US military activity increased from almost no activity in 2004 to '104 ship days' in 2006 (Skorka, 2007:9). The establishment of a new African command (AFRICOM) in February 2007, and the appointment of its first head William 'Kip' Ward, is the final capstone in the militarisation of American energy security policy in Africa.

Energy security is a terrifying hybrid, a perplexing 'doubleness', containing the old and the new: primitive accumulation and American militarism coupled to the 'war on terror' (Harvey, 2003; RETORT, 2005; Barnes, 2005). Into this vortex of forces are set of other global and imperial forces: on the one side, the presence of aggressive Chinese (and other Asian) oil companies – coupled to Asian oil service and construction companies – and the new imperial intentions of the South African energy companies on the other. Put into the mix the resurgence of Islamism in northern Nigeria, and across the Sahelian belt, and the political clout of urban evangelical Christianity across the southern oil producing conurbations and one has the makings of a perfect storm of violence and conflict.

## **An Ungovernable Delta?**

It is a measure of a certain sort of notoriety when Nigerian politics reaches the pages of *Vanity Fair*, penned no less by a prize winning journalist and writer who, to the best of my knowledge, knows nothing of Africa or in this case the Niger Delta (Unger, 2007). Sebastian Unger's account of Ijaw militants operating in the oil-rich creeks of the Niger Delta is little more than tabloid journalism but the realities to which it speaks have been since 2006 an extraordinary combination of the theatrical and the incendiary, worthy perhaps of any tabloid's scrutiny. On 15 September 2005, the Governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha of Bayelsa State, a major oil producing state in the heart of the Ijaw homeland, was arrested by the British security agencies at London airport on three counts of money laundering to the tune of one £1.8 million. The Governor's arrest was designed to send a signal to unruly Governor's everywhere in the run up to the 2007 elections and Obasanjo's ultimately fruitless effort to run for a third term. Released on \$1.25 million bail in early October, Alamieyeseigha dramatically escaped from house detention in central London (disguised as an old woman) and appeared rather magically in the capital of Bayelsa, Yenagoa, on 20 November to adoring crowds after, as far as we can tell, an extraordinary escape via Paris, Yaounde and finally by small boat along the creeks

along the Cameroon-Nigeria border. On 9 December amidst considerable political confusion, he was seized by police in Government House after the State House of Assembly had voted 17-24 to impeach him – all under tight security presence of the Joint Task Force and the State Security Services (SSS).

Shortly after the London arrest, on 21 September 2005, against a backdrop of deepening militancy and oil-supply disruption and undemocratic manoeuvres by President Obasanjo to quite literally purchase the support from the senate for his third term ambitions, Alhaji Asari-Dokubo, the charismatic and savvy leader of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) – an insurgent militia force fighting, by its own account, for resource control and self-determination in the eastern Delta – was arrested by Federal forces on treason charges. Asari, a former Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) President was arrested by police in the River State's Governor's house in a sting operation and was taken to Abuja in spite of the fact that ostensibly a peace settlement, between some of the Niger Delta militants and government, had been brokered in 2004 by Obasanjo himself. Asari has been held in Abuja in SSS custody and appeared in February 2007 to stand trial amidst claims that his previous unruly behaviour in court justified the decision to hold the proceedings with him *in absentia*. In something of a circus atmosphere, Asari referred to the Judge as 'an idiot' and the 80 security agents in the courtroom were unclear as to whether and how the accused was to be removed from the courtroom.

Finally, in what proved to be a trifecta of political crises for the Ijaw community, the Central Bank reported to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on 6 October 2005 that the head of Allstate Trust Bank and Ijaw capitalist, Chief Ebimiti Banigo, was guilty of corruption and failed to meet the capitalisation requirements of \$25 billion imposed by the Chairman of the Central Bank. He was subsequently arrested and the bank was, as a consequence, closed (amidst the loss of substantial personal savings by many depositors in River State). All of these events – in effect the arrest and detention of three major Ijaw notables – were inevitably read as a political attack by Obasanjo's government on a region (the Niger Delta) and people (the Ijaw) that had been at loggerheads with the federal centre, a hostility marked both by the collapse of the national CONFAB in 2005 on the allocation of oil revenues (in which the Delta representatives walked out) and the rapid descent into by violence and political ungovernability across the oilfields after 2002. The stable and regularised flow of oil, as a consequence, was placed in question in an historically unprecedented way.

Out of this vortex of events – one part soap opera, one part machine politics – there emerged in late 2005, in a most dramatic fashion, a hitherto unknown group of masked insurgents (MEND) claiming to be a 'union of all relevant militant groups' (*Daily Champion*, 2 February 2006) and whose public face is a shifting, and sometimes contentious cadre of leaders (and aliases) including Major-General Godswill Tamuno, Tom Pollo, Oyinye Alaibe, Cynthia White and the eloquent spokesperson Gbomo Jomo. Beginning with a massive attack on the Opobo pipeline in Delta State in December 2005, MEND began calling for the international community to evacuate from the Niger Delta by 12 February, or 'face violent attacks'. In a fantastically audacious series of attacks, MEND struck an oil vessel belonging to TIDEX Nigeria fifteen kilometres offshore on 11 January 2006 and four workers were kidnapped (and reportedly released for a N120 million ransom) shutting in over 100,000 bpd; on 15 January, 13 members of the Joint Task Force were killed during an attack on the Shell Benisede flow station and in late January an AGIP platform and its riverfront Port Harcourt offices were attacked in which eight policemen were

killed. On 18 January an email promised 'our operations will shift from the creeks to the cities' and from 1 February 2006 'more aggressive tactics aimed at oil company workers' (*Nigerian Tribune*, 18 January 2006). Following an earlier ultimatum and a promise to reduce Nigeria export capacity by 30 per cent, on 15 February MEND declared a 'state of emergency' and the launch of 'Operation Black February' to demonstrate 'its rugged guerilla wit and dogged intelligence in hunting down every foreign foot' (*Daily Independent*, 15 February 2006). Then, in the wake of a purported peace accord held in Yenagoa on 11 February, the Joint Task Force embarked upon a vicious aerial bombardment of Ijaw villages in Okerenkoko territory (ostensibly to bomb oil bunkering barges) which is the heartland of the Gbaramantu clan. In retaliation on 18 February, MEND launched the most audacious and coordinated of its attacks. Forty rebels overpowered guards and military on Willbros barge 318 (nine foreign hostages were taken) and subsequently destroyed the offshore Forcados crude loading platform, the Ekeremore-Yeye manifold and the NNPC Escravos-Lagos gas pipeline in Chanomi Creek. In a single day something like 20 per cent of output was compromised.

The political agenda of MEND was not clear in the weeks of late December 2005 except that it self-identified as a 'guerilla movement' whose 'decisions like its fighters are fluid'. In fact, in a press release by email – this is the modality of their politically savvy subcommandante Marcos-like exhortations and pronouncements – Jomo claimed that MEND was 'apolitical in structures ... fighters were not communists ... or revolutionaries. [They] are just very bitter men' (Bergen Risks, 2007). But in spite of a welter of email denials – calling an Oporoza-based Ijaw militant group the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC) a 'tribal assembly', claiming to have 'co-opted' the NDPVF, rejecting any connection with oil bunkering, claiming not to be 'an Ijaw militia group' (see Sahara Reporters, 2007), there was in fact a clear political platform. In a signed statement by field commander Tamuno Godswill in early February, MEND's demands were clearly outlined:

- Immediate and unconditional release of Alhaji Asari-Dokubo;
- Immediate and unconditional release of Governor Alamieyeseigha;
- Immediate and unconditional release of youth leader Joshua Macaiva;
- Immediate and unconditional demilitarisation of the Niger Delta;
- Immediate payment of \$1.5 billion compensation from Shell approved by the Nigerian National Assembly covering four decades of environmental degradation.<sup>4</sup>

In an interview with Karl Maier on 21 February 2006, Jomo made it clear that MEND had 'no intention of breaking up Nigeria' but had no intention of dealing directly with government which 'knows nothing about rights or justice'. Resource control meant that the states would 'directly manage' oil. Other communiqués reiterated that these demands were not pecuniary and 'we shall receive no money from any quarters' (*Vanguard*, 4 February 2006).

Into 2006, MEND's claims that it was capable of delivering a 'crippling blow' to the oil industry, was increasingly born out. More than 15 Nigerian soldiers were killed and between May and August 2006, and there were at least three kidnappings per month in the first half of 2006 (typically the hostages are all released following the payment of substantial ransoms by the government though it is unclear whether

these payments are being made to MEND).<sup>5</sup> In the last nine months, the escalation of attacks (44 in 2006, nineteenth in the first three months of 2007) including electronically detonated car bombings, brazen attacks on government and military buildings, massive disruption of oil installations deploying sophisticated military equipment, and the audacious kidnapping of workers of virtually every nationality including Chinese and South Korean sometimes from platforms 40-60kms offshore, have confirmed the worst fears of the oil industry. In a deteriorating environment in which many oil companies have withdrawn personnel and cut back production – by mid-2006 there was 500,000-600,000 barrels per day deferment meeting MEND's earlier goal of a 30 per cent shut-in. Julius Berger, the largest construction company operating in the country, announced its withdrawal from the Niger Delta and many companies began to withdraw personnel as oil workers were increasingly reticent to be posted in the Delta (many of whom were holed up in Lagos hotels). President Obasanjo bolstered the Joint Military Task Force (JMTF) in the Delta but the seeming ease with which MEND can operate – 'we navigate the creeks in pitch blackness' crowed Jomo – and overcome local security forces suggests that the MEND 'freedom fighters' control the creeks uncontested. It is quite unclear, when located on this larger canvas, what Petroleum Minister Edmund Daukoru could possibly have meant when he announced to OPEC in February 2007 in Greece that 'the worst is over', that 'it is a very, very temporary thing' (UPI, 28 January 2007, [http://www.upi.com/Energy/analysis\\_nigeria\\_hopeful\\_for\\_oil\\_future](http://www.upi.com/Energy/analysis_nigeria_hopeful_for_oil_future)).

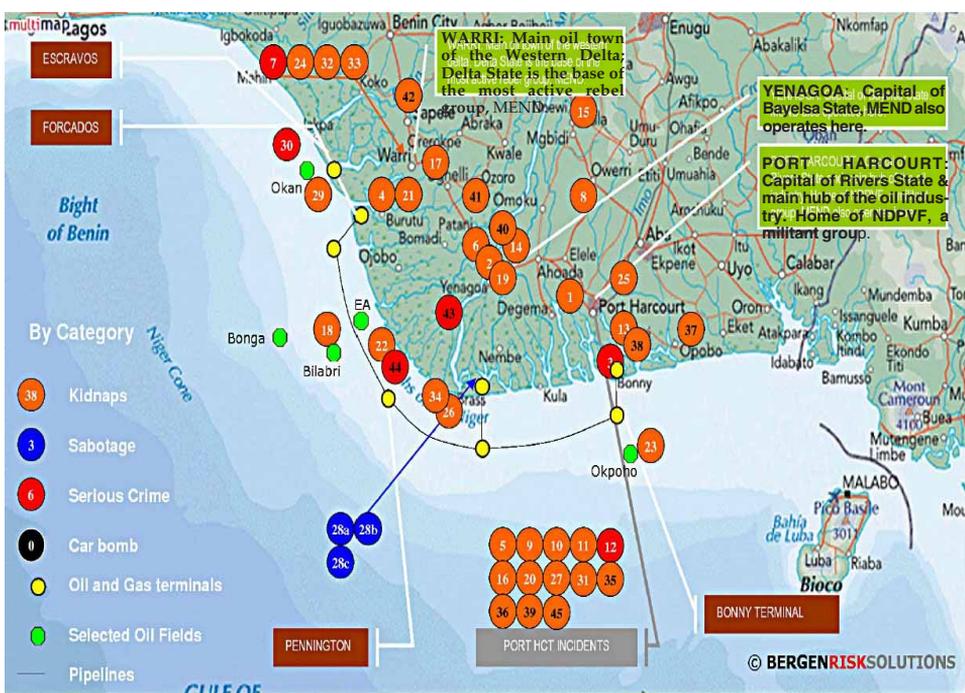
The rise of MEND – and a number of other 'freedom fighters' who apparently stand in some sort of ambiguous and often awkward relation to MEND, such as the Martyrs Brigade and the Coalition for Military Action in the Niger Delta (COMA) – marks something of a watershed in the turbulent history of the Delta oil fields. Yet it arises on the back of a long arc of deepening violence and protest across the oilfield, especially since the late 1990s. By any estimation, the costs of the oil insurgency – MEND is its most visible and most violent culmination – are vast. A report prepared for the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) published in 2003 entitled 'Back from the Brink' – before the latest insurgency took off – painted a very gloomy 'risk audit' for the Delta. NNPC estimated that between 1998 and 2003, there were 400 'vandalisations' on company facilities each year (and 581 between January and September 2004); oil losses amounted to over \$1 billion annually. Already by 2003 oil supply had been compromised by 750,000 bpd as a result of attacks on oil installations across the region. In April 2004, another wave of violence erupted around oil installations (at the end of April, Shell lost production of up to 370,000 bpd, largely in the western Delta), this time amid the presence of armed insurgencies. Two so-called ethnic militia led by Ateke Tom – the Niger Delta Vigilante – (NDV) and Alhaji Asari Dokubo, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), each driven and partly funded by oil monies and actively deployed (and paid) by high ranking politicians as political thugs during elections, have transformed the political landscape of the Delta. In early 2006 MEND claimed a goal of cutting Nigerian output by 30 per cent and they apparently succeeded. Within the first six months of 2006, there were 19 attacks on foreign oil operations and over \$2,18 billion lost in oil revenues; the Department of Petroleum Resources claims this figure represents 32 per cent of the revenue the country generated this year. The Nigerian government claims that between 1999 and 2005 oil losses amounted to \$6.8 billion but in November 2006 the managing director of Shell Nigeria reported that the loss of revenues due to 'unrest and violence' was \$61 million per day (a shut-in of about 800,000 bpd), amounting to a staggering \$9 billion since January 2006. By the end of 2006, Minister for Petroleum Resources Edmund Daukoru claimed that the costs of

the insurgency was N7.5 billion per day. Against a backdrop of escalating attacks on oil facilities and a proliferation of kidnappings (Figure 1), the Joint Revolutionary Council (apparently an umbrella group for insurgents) threatened ‘black November’ as an ‘all out attack on oil operating companies’ (*The Observer*, 5 November 2006); a similar call was made in February 2007. The elections of April 2007 – even more fraudulent than the widely condemned elections of 2003 – and the emergence of an Ijaw politician, Goodluck Jonathan, Governor of Bayelsa State, as the Vice President elect has done nothing to dampen the ire of the militants. Between May and June 2007, 42 foreign workers were kidnapped and four pipelines detonated (http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L20301606.htm, 20 May 2007).

### Oil Insurgency as Organised Crime?

There have been a raft of new books on African oil in the last year (Ghazvinian, 2007; Shaxson, 2007; Forest & Souza, 2006). Written for the most part by journalists (and in one case by two military men), the books are replete with colourful stories – of the devastating intersection of frontier capitalism and the worst of African kelpocracies – neatly captured by such titles as ‘instant emirates’, ‘the Chinese are coming’, ‘wielding the oil weapon’ in ‘some of the most dangerous and dysfunctional nations on the planet’. None of this work would have been possible without 20 or so years of critical academic research and excellent investigative work by the likes of HRW, Amnesty, Global Witness and Oxfam. Whatever one thinks of the ‘resource curse’ literature (Auty, 1999; Ross, 1999) – and I think it comes close to a sort of commodity determinism – this body of work exposed the pathologies of petro-states, the complex complicities between ‘Big Oil’ and African ‘oilgarchies’, and the

**Figure 1: 2007 Oil Disruptions in the Niger Delta**



Source: Bergen Risks 2007

disastrous consequences – environmental, political and economic – of rentier political economies driven by a logic of politicised distribution of oil revenues rather than systematic accumulation, or disciplined development or the construction of transparent and accountable institutions of governance. Over the decade, the ‘resource curse’ which, for the most part, examined the political economy of oil-dependency, was taken up by economists – some concerned with the relations between resource-dependency and poor economic performance and more recently with the politics of oil – not so much at the level of corruption or fiscal mismanagement but rather sub-national conflicts and the relations between oil and civil war and rebellion. The largest and most ambitious programme emerged from the World Bank and the leadership of Paul Collier. His new book *The Bottom Billion* (2007) turns resource dependency into a field theory of poverty. Oil-dependency in this analysis turns on the relation between petroleum (not so much gas) and the means by which rebellions and insurgencies are economically sustained and financed – and by extension the devastating costs for development of long and protracted conflicts (Collier et al. 2003).

This complex and variegated body of work might be dubbed *the predation or rebellion as organised crime* theory of oil. Collier focuses on the important question of financing violence politics and offers an argument that oil provides a ground on which rebels can finance rebellions (through looting of oil resources) which are self-interested and criminal movements against the state. Collier and the economics of war position (‘rebellion is large scale predation of productive activities’) draws upon a related and now large body of work that explores the character of oil as a source of predation by focusing on its *point* (as opposed to *diffuse*) character and its location (in relation to state power) and the ease with which it can be looted. Different political outcomes can then be deduced from specific resource couplets (Le Billon, 2005): warlordism (distant/diffuse), mass rebellion (proximate/diffuse), coups (proximate/point) and secession (distant/point). Oil is characterised by the latter two (it is a point resource that varies along the axis of its location with respect to power) for which Angola and Chechnya, and Colombia and Yemen are paradigmatic cases. Relatedly, Michael Ross (2003) explores the dynamics of oil politics along two parallel axes: *lootability* (understood to be ‘easily appropriated [resource] by individuals or small groups of unskilled workers’ (p.47)) and *obstructability* (that is to say the ease with which its movement or its productive networks can be interrupted or blocked). Oil (onshore and offshore) is unlootable; it is, however, readily obstructable (pipelines can be detonated, flow stations closed) onshore but not offshore. He holds open the possibility that oil (as an unlootable resource) may yield different types of outcomes (separatist in Cabinda), and non-separatist in Sudan), but believes that non-lootability yields general associations; to wit: unlootability is likely to yield separatism (control the territory not the wealth), benefits to government (rather than the poor), reduced duration of conflicts, and enhanced army discipline.

Much could be said about Collier’s work in particular: its deep cynicism (‘rebellion ... is like organised crime’), its belief that motivation of conflict is unimportant (what matters is whether the organisation can sustain itself financially); its assumption that history can be reduced to rates of economic growth or the existence of prior civil conflict; its deep problems associated with the nature of the data and evidence (and sampling), and its claim that insurgent predation is ‘worse’ than state extortion (or exaction) and so on.<sup>6</sup> I simply wish to focus on its foundational claims as a way of grasping the genesis of an oil insurgency across the Niger Delta: namely, that greed is opposed to grievance, that peaceful protest stands in opposition to rebellion, that

government opposes rebellion, and that rebellion equals organised crime.<sup>7</sup> From these assumptions Collier concluded in 2003 that the Delta resembles an 'American gangland' involving a ferocious struggle over drugs; by 2007 it was a vast protection racket run by young, unemployed and poorly educated criminals for whom life is cheap.

The first thing that needs to be said is that the very idea of an impermeable membrane separating or opposing two discrete entities – government and rebels – breaks down immediately. The so-called ethnic militias (the NDV and the NDPDF), for example, got their start by being supported (financially and with arms) by politicians in the oil-producing states; the decentralisation of corruption, the rise of powerful gubernatorial machine politicians, and the 'democratisation of violence' that mark post-1999 Nigeria all signal how porous is the state/rebel divide. The NDV and the NDPDF were deployed as political thugs to deliver votes and intimidate voters in the notoriously corrupt and violent 2003 elections (although they were also operative in 1999). Furthermore, a number of the arms used by the militias have been acquired from the Nigerian military (directly in relationship to electoral political thuggery and indirectly from a notorious corrupt and undisciplined army). And last but not least, the low level oil theft (bunkering) that is controlled by the rebels as a way of financing their struggle, is organised through a vast state-centred syndicate linking high ranking military, politicians, the security apparatuses, and the Niger Delta special military task forces, and the coast guard. The Nigerian state in its various expressions and the rebels are both oppositional *and* organically self-sustaining. The head of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nuhu Ribadu, put the issue with great precision: the state is 'not even corruption. It is organised crime' (*The Economist*, 28 April 2007, p.56). In the same way, Collier's (and Ross's) claim that oil cannot be looted stands in sharp contrast to the existence of a vast oil theft industry. This is not the place to detail the dynamics of its structure (from low level bunkering territories policed by differing sorts of political actors up to the syndicates – global in scope – that orchestrate a vast criminal industry (an estimated 10 per cent of US imports are stolen). My point is that oil *is* looted and very effectively – at its peak in 2004/5 some 350,000 barrels per day were stolen perhaps inserting \$4-5 billion per year into the system – and while the criminal proceeds are unevenly distributed along the commodity chain, the fact is that both rebels and states (the political classes) benefit from it. There is no question that the oil bunkering trade embraces all manner of agents motivated by all manner of desires (greed, grievance, employment, excitement) but there is no reason in principle why organised crime – but not simply extortion and sabotage as the 'obstructability' thesis claims – and grievance cannot co-exist perfectly well. Equally, there is a long history of oil theft in the Delta with no evidence to suggest that there has been, as Collier suggests, a simple shift from grievance to greed (2007:31).

Many of these Delta realities represent an empirical challenge to conceptual claims about lootability. If indeed one were to consider oil in Nigeria unlootable, it is not at all clear that it has contributed to army discipline (arguably one of the most corrupt and undisciplined in the world); it may have contributed to separatism (the Biafran war) but it is equally associated with other non-separatist politics, and it is not at all clear it has reduced the duration of conflicts in any simple way. But the reality is that oil *has* been looted through theft of various sorts – organised and unorganised (hot tapping of pipelines by the poor). This structure of 'predation' has benefited a section of the military-political class, sustained all manner of insurgents (and indirectly sections of the unemployed youth), further contributed to corruption and

indiscipline within the military and contributed to a vast and complex field of violence encompassing as well-organised insurgents confronting the state, ethnic militias, vigilante groups resembling the mafia, anti-chieftainship conflicts, inter-ethnic struggles, and criminal activities (sometimes called 'cultism'). Needless to say the very idea (taken from Ross) that offshore oil cannot be obstructed has been shown to be spectacularly wrong: MEND has taken hostages on a platform 30 miles offshore and MEND's charismatic PR man, Jomo Gbomo, refers to MEND's abode as '200 miles offshore'.

The most striking aspect of these articulations of oil politics and civil conflict is that the agency of the oil companies – whether the national oil companies (NOCs) or the supermajors (IOCs) with whom they operate or the oil service/construction companies – have no analytical presence in the models of rebellion or civil war. At most they appear as the unfortunate corporate entities that are preyed upon by rebels (extortion, sabotage, and kidnapping). Corporate practice and agency are conspicuously absent in any account of politics which is astonishing because the companies *themselves* have acknowledged that they are a central part of the political dynamics of community conflict (most obviously in the internal reports by Shell and Chevron widely leaked in 2003 and 2004; see WAC Global Services, 2003). This is not to suggest that corporations have deliberately instigated or encouraged rebellion. Rather, what passes as community development in the Delta and their related interaction with what are called 'host communities' is a central part of conflict dynamics. It is estimated that Shell spends \$60 million per year on community development yet cash payments amount to at least double that figure. In total these payments amount to perhaps \$200 million per annum, perhaps 10 per cent of the operating budget; some companies spend up to 15-17 per cent on such activities. They represent in practice a massive infusion of cash designed to purchase consent or compliance – but in practice they help generate rebellion and community violence. On the one hand, the companies are constitutionally obliged to pay rents to local communities in which they have operations and have typically cut deals with local chiefs (many of which operate as unaccountable fiefdoms). Community projects and 'Memoranda of Understanding' (to the extent that they exist at all) are shrouded in secrecy and ambiguity, and corporate responsibility on the ground often appears as a raft of unfinished community projects all of which have contributed to festering resentments among the youth. And the policy of 'cash payments' – used to pay for protection services from local unemployed youth to buy off local opposition and to feed vast networks of illicit payments – have had the effect of generating enormously violent conflicts among youth groups who compete to provide protection services for the company, or who attack corrupt local chiefs (that is to say they upend the system of gerontocratic customary rule at the village level) in order to gain access to the company rents and payments that flow from oil operations in their territories (Kemedi, 2003; Watts, 2005).

### **A Brief (and Incomplete) History of An Oil Insurgency**

How then is it possible to grasp the transformation of the Niger Delta into a space of insurgency, and why is its characterisation as a space of organised crime inadequate? I want to identify a key number of processes generated from within the heart of the oil complex. Each is an expression of a long and deeper geography of exclusion and marginalisation by which the oil-producing Delta came to suffer all of the social and environmental harms of the oil industry and yet receive in return very little of the oil revenues. At the point at which the oil revenues begin to belatedly flow

(after 1999), the kleptocratic and venal system of state politics has stolen and squandered what many in the Delta felt to be their rightful heritage. It is from the geo-political contradiction of oil without and with wealth – a bequest of the oil complex – that the insurgency has drawn enormous sustenance.

What were the forces that emerged from this geo-political contradiction? The first, not surprisingly in a region of 60 or more ethnic groups and a powerful set of institutions of customary rule, was ethno-nationalism. This was central, of course, to the Ogoni movement but the banner has been taken up in the last decade of so by the Ijaw, the largest ethnic (or so-called 'oil') minorities in the Delta (the Ijaw are the fourth largest ethnic group occupying the riverine flanks of the Delta and constitute political minorities in five of the six Deltaic states). Their exclusion from the oil wealth (and the federal revenue allocation process) to say nothing of bearing the costs of oil operations across the oilfields, became central to the emergence of a new sort of youth politics. The establishment of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) in 1998 marked a watershed in this regard (though the mobilisation began much earlier and gained strength in the late 1980s and early 1990s) and it became the vehicle through which a new generation of youth leaders took up the struggle; many were mobilised in and around youth movements. They came to assume local positions of power, including a number who took up an explicitly militant anti-state insurgent stance and these struggles, over tactics, played themselves out in the sometimes internecine struggles with ethnically-based youth movements like the IYC. In the wake of the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa, Gandhian tactics were, in some quarters, seen to have failed catastrophically.

The second force was the inability and unwillingness of the Nigerian state in its military and civilian guises to address this political mobilisation in the Delta without resorting to state-imposed violence by undisciplined military, police and security forces. In this sense the history of the Ogoni struggle was a watershed too insofar as it bequeathed a generation of militants for whom MOSOP represented a failure of non-violent politics. The return to civilian rule in 1999 saw a further militarisation of the region in which communities were violated and experienced the undisciplined violence of state security forces. The appalling destruction of Odi (1999) and Odiana (2001) by military forces, and the violence meted out by the Joint Military Task Force based in Warri were the most dramatic instances of state intimidation. This unrelenting militarisation of the region to secure 'national oil assets' further propelled the frustrations of a generation of youth who, in the period since the 1980s, had grown in their organisational capacities.

Third, the militant groups themselves represented the intersection of two important forces. On the one hand, the rise of youth politics in which a younger generation whose economic and political prospects were stymied began to challenge both customary forms of chiefly power, and the corruption of the petro-state (whether military or civilian). These twin processes have a long history dating back at least to the famous Twelve Day Republic in which in 1966 a group of young Ijaw men led by Isaac Adaka Boro proclaimed, against a backdrop of expanding oil output, an independent Ijaw state. But the political mobilisation of the youth turned from a sort of peaceful civic nationalism increasingly toward militancy and this in turn was driven by the violence of the Nigerian military forces but also by the politicians, especially the increasingly powerful governors, who sought to make use of the youth movements for their own electoral purposes (that is to say political thugs to intimidate voters). Paradoxically a number of the militias often got their start by

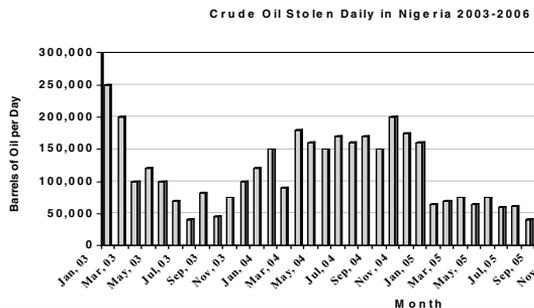
being bankrolled by the state and politicians and indeed the NDF and NPDVF were both fuelled by machine politicians during the notoriously corrupt 1999 and 2003 elections.

Fourth, the existence and proliferation of oil theft, known locally as ‘oil bunkering’ (Figure 2), provided a financial mechanism through which militants could (after being abandoned by their political patrons) finance their operations and attract recruits. The organisation of the oil theft trade, which by 2004 was a multi-billion dollar industry involving high ranking military, government official and merchants, drew upon the local militia to organise and protect the tapping of pipelines and the movement of barges through the creeks and ultimately offshore to large tankers. This is, on its face, a case of the sort of organised crime that Collier invokes in his account of the economics of rebellion – and indeed there are explicitly criminal elements and syndicates at work in the operations of a vast bunkering business in Nigeria – yet the theft of oil provided a lubricant for a ready existing set of grievances. Rebel organisations and insurgents were, in this sense, not merely criminal gangs.

And finally, the operations of the oil companies (Omeje, 2006; Zalik, 2004) – in their funding of youth groups as security forces, in their willingness to use military and security forces against protestors and militants alike, and the their corrupt practices of distributing rents to local community elites – all contributed to an environment in which military activity was in effect encouraged and facilitated. A number of companies used organised (and armed) youth groups to protect their facilities (see WACS, 2003). Corporate practice, and community development in particular, had the net effect of inserting millions of dollars of so-called ‘cash payments’ into the local economy by paying corrupt chiefs, violent youth groups or corrupt local officials in the hope that the oil would keep flowing. In practice, the uneven record of community development projects and the corrupt forms in which cash payments were made, produced a growing hostility (expressed in the growth of oil platform occupations, attacks on pipelines, and more recently hostage taking) to the companies. Directly and indirectly corporate practice were essential to the dynamics of local violence and the escalation of insurgent activity.

The emergence of MEND in 2005 represents the almost inevitable end-point of a process of marginalisation, alienation and political mobilisation that reached a watershed moment with the 1998 Kaiama declaration. The declaration carried more than a faint echo of Boro’s 12 Day Revolution launched in 1966 in which he

**Figure 2: Oil Theft in Nigeria, 2003-2006**



Source: www.legaloil.com, 2007

reminded his followers, like the IYC leadership, to 'remember too your petroleum which is being pumped out daily from your veins and then fight for your freedom' (1982:117). Boro's much vaunted 'Ijaw Republic' lasted less than two weeks ending with his arrest by Federal troops in Oloibiri –ironically the site of the first discovery and commercial exploitation of oil in Nigeria – and his untimely death fighting for Federal forces against Biafra. Kaiama was more than the foundation stone of the IYC: it marked a massive cross-Delta (and cross-ethnic) mobilisation through mobile parliaments and an explicit recognition to diversify the tactics associated with the struggle. The question of militancy was always an object of debate within IYC – and indeed preceded IYC since the so-called 'first Egbesu war' in which Bayelsa youth took on security forces occurred in the late Abacha years – particularly in the face of state brutality and especially the slaughter perpetrated by Federal troops in Odi. The 'second' Egbesu war emerged from the deliberate attempts of the state – then under General Abubakar who had succeeded Abacha in 1999 – to suppress the political project expressed at Kaiama (Ibeanu & Luckham, 2007). Militants in turn, as they had in the first war, occupied flow stations and provided protection for oil companies, the proceeds of which were invested in arms. While Asari Dokubo's rise to the Presidency of IYC was much more than the victory of IYC militants – it was very much wrapped up with efforts by the Governor of Rivers to control a powerful new political force – the reality is that his ascendancy was symptomatic of a movement – he founded the NDPDF in 2003 – that saw not just occupations and seizures of oil installations as necessary but of armed struggle against the state and the companies as the only response to continued state violence and corporate irresponsibility.

The rise of various militias funded as political thugs during the 2003 elections is a very complex story that by 2004 had produced a situation in which Asari's group was at war with Ateke Tom's Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV). These struggles were in part over oil bunkering territory but drew upon many disaffected youth groups in such places as Okrika, Eleme, and Nembe in a shifting set of alliances in which the borders between criminality, mafia-like vigilante groups, and politically organised insurgents was difficult to discern. The Asari and Ateke stories were very much wrapped up with the politics and struggles in eastern Ijaw, and along the Cawthorne channel.

The emergence of MEND shifted the struggle dramatically to the western Delta – the so-called Warri axis. Here a similar set of grievances and struggles were playing out wrapped up with the complex ethnic politics of Warri city, the failures of the companies to provide meaningful benefits to host communities, and the militancy of women most famously against Chevron in Ugborodu in 2003. As Ukiwo (2007) has shown, Ijaw marginalisation stemmed from a long history of struggle over trade during the nineteenth century in which Itsekeri peoples emerged as a comprador class to the European trading houses (and thereby cutting off the Ijaw). The Western Ijaw built up a reputation as 'truculent' and 'pirates' and reactively resisted colonial rule until the 1920s when they were into a Western Ijaw Division cut out of the Warri Division. By the 1940s the Gbaramantu Clan – which is central to MEND's political dynamics – was involved directly in claims over land (with the Itsekeri) and by the 1970s (in the wake of the establishment of oil operations by Chevron and Shell in the mid-1960s), violent conflicts had occurred over the oil-bearing lands near Ugborodo. It was from this axis that MEND dramatically emerged in late 2005. MEND has grown from an earlier history of increasingly militant youth embracing, for example, the 'Egbesu Boys of Africa', the 'Meinbutu Boys' and others (Feibagha Ogbo,



Credit: Ed Kasti, *Corbis*

Dolphin Obo, Torudigha Ogbo) in the Warri region dating back to the early 1990s and before (Courson, 2007).

MEND cannot be understood outside of the operation of the quartet of forces that I briefly outlined, and yet at the same time MEND is inextricably linked to *local* politics: struggles among and between two key Ijaw clans (Gbaramantu and Egbema) over access to oil monies, struggles with Chevron over the lack of a 'Memorandum of Understanding' for so-called 'host communities' in the clan territory, control of oil bunkering territories, and not least the complex politics of Warri city, the large oil town to the north. Here is a multi-ethnic city than has imploded since 1997 as warring ethnic groups (fuelled by machine politics) have fought for the establishment of new local government authorities as a basis for laying claim to federal oil monies (HRW, 1999; 2005). Into this mix was the catalytic effect of the Nigerian special military task force ('Operation Hope') that came to quell the growing militancy across the region in which the Gbaramantu clan territory was repeatedly attacked and bombed (Courson, 2007).

The appearance of MEND marked a new phase both in terms of strategic capacity but also in the franchise character of the insurgency, linking to and speaking for a number of militias and rebels. Whether it is, as Okonta (2006) suggests, not an organisation but 'an idea' is difficult to assess. Certainly the MEND militias operate with ease in and around Warri; the leadership appears, as Okonta says, articulate and politically very savvy. But MEND emerged, and is inseparable from, a number of local and regional issues – the most important of which are the longstanding antagonisms between the oil companies (especially Chevron) in the Gbaramantu and Egbema clan territories and the crisis and struggle over the creation of local government councils in Warri (itself a long festering inter-ethnic struggle) that broke open in 1997. MEND has of course been framed by a wider and pan-ethnic struggle

for resource control and at the same time detonated, so to speak, by what Ijaw see as a deepening assault on their aspirations – what Oboko Bello calls ‘being cut off from being a nation’ – under President Obasanjo. The extraordinarily violent gunship and helicopter attacks on Okerenkoko in February 2006 and the attacks by the Joint Task Force on MEND in the wake of a truce brokered between MEND and the government in August of the same year, were consistent with a much longer history of state violence across the Warri axis. In this sense, Okonta is surely right to say that MEND is

*the violent child of the deliberate and long running constriction of the public space in the Niger Delta ... Behind the mask of MEND is a political subject forced to pick up an KA47 to restore his rights (2006:20).*

The insurgency across the Niger Delta involves a welter of differing groups and often shadowy interests (Peterside, 2007). By 2007 the reality on the ground is a dizzying and bewildering array of militant groups, militias and so-called ‘cults’ – the Niger Delta Militant Force Squad (NDMFS), Niger Delta Coastal Guerillas (NDCG), South-South Liberation Movement (SSLM), Movement for the Sovereign State of the Niger Delta (MSSND), the Meinbutus, the November 1895 Movement, ELIMOTU, the Arogo Freedom Fighters, Iduwini Volunteer Force (IVF), the Niger Delta People’s Salvation Front (NDPSF), the Coalition for Militant Action (COMA), the Greenlanders, Deebam, Bush Boys, KKK, Black Braziers, Icelanders and a raft of other so-called cults. At present, according to some sources, there are over 50 operating military camps in the creeks (*This Day*, 23 March 2007). With good reason the MEND spokesperson Jomo could boast in March 2007 that he has ‘the oil industry by the balls’ (*Economist*, 17 March 2007, p.52).

This profusion is inextricably wrapped up with the intersection of generational politics, a corrupt and violent petro-state, irresponsible and short sighted oil company practice, and the existence of a vast oil bunkering network. As Kalyvas (2001:113) suggests, viewed from the micro-level these sorts of insurgencies – an oil insurgency in this case – resemble ‘welters of complex struggles’ in which the notion that the rebels are criminals who operate against law abiding states fails to capture the dynamics at work. Group interests are often ‘localistic and region-specific’ (Kalyvas 2001:112) yet, as I have tried to argue, their specificity emerges from the structured totality of the national and regional oil complex. It all makes for an enormously unstable and volatile mix of political, economic, political and social forces, now located on a larger, and more intimidating, canvas of global oil instability and the ‘global war on terror’.

## **A New Dispensation?**

And what of the future? The April 2007 elections were widely held to involve massive electoral fraud and ballot rigging – almost certainly worse than in the notorious 2003 electoral process. As a friend in Port Harcourt put it recently, 2003 was ‘child’s play’ compared to 2007. Nowhere were the fraud and intimidation more pronounced than in the Delta. Nonetheless, the elections have produced an Ijaw Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan, from Bayelsa State, with strong connections to a younger generation of activists and civic groups. This is potentially a step forward. Yar’Adua, the new Nigerian president, is a machine politician from an influential Katsina political family in northern Nigeria; but he has clearly put some stock in his Delta running mate’s capacity to address the insurgency. Whether the

President can sell the northern powerbrokers on increased 'derivation', that is, allocating additional oil revenues to states of origin in order to appease the angry citizens of the Delta, is another matter. There are some positive signs: talk of a Niger Delta summit, the release from detention on 14 June of Asari Dokubo, and the 27 July freeing of Chief Alamieyeseigha met key demands of many of the militants. Despite their dubious political records, both are held in esteem in some quarters of the Ijaw community as freedom fighters. The possibility of a Marshall Plan for the Delta, first voiced in March 2007 by President Olusegun Obasanjo, Yar Adua's predecessor, as the 'Niger Delta Master Plan' can also be read as a measure of the centrality of the Niger Delta in current Nigerian politics. However, the sordid history of large state interventions in the Delta, with their heavy focus on force and repression, would hardly lead one to be optimistic about the consequences of pouring vast petrodollars into special development agencies. A one-month truce was declared by MEND and the Joint Revolutionary Council, a group that purportedly speaks for all militant groups, on 15 June. Within days, however, there were a number of occupations of flow stations and a spike in hostage taking. In the last two months, the Soku-Buguma pipeline alone has been attacked on 16 occasions.

That said, the presence of Goodluck at the centre of power in Abuja, together with the depth of the crisis, have pushed the new government into negotiations with the insurgents – that is to say groups who have a political project, often embracing a panoply of local, regional and national grievances. These in turn have persuaded a number of key actors to come together under the umbrella of MEND. The Grand Commander of MEND, Tompolo, garners enormous respect and authority across the creeks and across virtually all of the militant organisations and networks. Several all night meetings were held in July and August 2007 in the creeks. Senator David Brigidi and other representatives of the oil states' Peace and Rehabilitation Committees were present; the Vice President himself met with a number of key actors in the Warri creeks in June. While the government has in principle agreed to the insurgents' preconditions for negotiations – including not only the release of Alamieyeseigha, but also the rebuilding of Odi and Odiana, two towns destroyed by federal forces, as well as the demilitarisation of the Delta on the part of federal forces – one has to say that the prospects for some sort of resolution remain unclear at best. In the last few weeks, we have witnessed the spectacle of the Rivers State Peace and Rehabilitation Committee doling out one million Naira to anyone who professes to be a 'cultist', a term which covers a multitude of sins but implies gang membership, and rejects the life of the 'cultism'. Gang leaders and thugs were subsequently reported in the local press as parading in the Government House chapel clutching bibles and preaching redemption. The gravity and depth of their new-found religiosity is a rather large question.

The descent of the region into its current state of violence, and pent up political rage in the region, mean that radical changes will be required if there is to be lasting peace. Some of these, such as large-scale training programmes and mass employment schemes, major infrastructure projects, and environmental rehabilitation, will take many years, perhaps even generations. To confront resource control – not as a matter of money or percentage of revenues but as a legal and political project – will require a radical rethinking, and perhaps a restructuring, of both the constitution and institutions of governance. This effort will of course need to address questions like corruption, the reform of the electoral commission, and transparency within a notoriously ineffective and pathologically unaccountable system of local government, which in the oil producing states is awash with federally allocated monies.

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## Endnotes

1. Youth is a 'complex, fluid and permeable category which is historically and socially situated' (Gore & Pratten, 2003:215) shaped of course in the Niger Delta by the political economy of oil and the cultural economy of chieftainship and customary rule – themselves shaped by long waves of accumulation extending from slavery through palm oil to the discovery and petroleum and natural gas.
2. Egbesu refers to a local diety within the 40 or so Ijaw clans associated with warfare but it has, as one might expect (and here a parallel with *jihad* is instructive), a complex set of shifting meanings (including a sense of personal or interior truth or purity); *agabas* are urban dance societies (see Pratten, 2006).
3. For what it is worth the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC in a briefing in April 2007 refer to a five-fold increase in Kalashnikovs in the past 30 months and the profusion of RPGs, night vision equipment and anti-aircraft missiles; the 'five best armed' militias have 10,000 combatants and 25,000 weapons. The weapons vary from AK47s to M-16s purportedly smuggled from Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Cameroon but also acquired from Nigerian soldiers (Wellington, 2007; Best and Kemedi, 2005; Kemedi, 2003).
4. A Federal High Court sitting in Port Harcourt in February 2006 ordered SPDC to pay \$1.5 billion to 'Ijaw Aborigines of Bayelsa State'. Justice Okeke rejected a stay of execution by Shell and ordered the company to pay the Central bank of Nigeria the full amount no later than 22 May 2006.
5. The companies and government have typically denied the payments of ransoms to militants but there have been reports in the press, by activists and others, of payments in excess of \$250,000. For example, the release of a group of Korean hostages in June 2007, mediated by Asari while still in detention (!), produced a payment of N120 million covered by the company and by River State government (interview with Nigerian mediator, San Francisco, 26 June 2007). On 29 June, a ransom of \$102,000 was paid for the release of the three year old son of a politician; the Niger Delta Militant Force Squad (NDMFS) demanded \$417,000 for six kidnapped Russians. In fact, the decline in oil bunkering since 2004 has seen militias turning to kidnapping and extortion as sources of revenues as bunkering income has fallen. The ransoms are paid from the so-called state 'security' budgets which are vast and largely unaccountable; it is widely reported that government officials cream a significant proportion (up to 50 per cent) of paid ransoms (Briggs, 2007). MEND seems to hold hostages longer than other groups (two Italian hostages were held for 99 days).
6. Parenthetically, this approach is related to Michael Ross's (1999) claim about another aspect of the oil-politics, namely that it hinders democracy through rents (no taxation=no representation), militarisation (oil-funded securitisation), and service employment (as a way of purchasing ideological consent).
7. From this the fact it is claimed, as we shall see, that rebels cannot loot oil and must turn to extortion and through this extortion it is the figure of the warlord ('the rebel leader') who appears as the new predator associated with the notion of the 'end of politics' in the post-Cold War era.

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# South Africa: The End of Apartheid & the Emergence of the 'BEE Elite'

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*Bill Freund*

**Recent South African policy making at the highest level has used the language of the *developmental state*. It has been used as a means of understanding and defining the purpose of ANC government. This article interrogates that concept, especially using the formation of an elite transcending the public-private sector divide and considering the concept of an 'embedded elite'. In this light, the evolution of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policies are drawn out and specific comparisons made between South Africa and Malaysia. While creating an elite may involve enriching a small number of black ANC supporters, it is probably a necessity given the propensities of what remains of the established 'embedded elites' of the past. It is questionable however, whether this new elite has the sense of direction in pursuit of an industrialising economic model or a broad social model to carry through envisioned changes. Nor are its instincts necessarily democratic. While under the direction of the ANC the South African social structure is shifting in important ways and different sectors of the black population clearly benefit, the majority are not actively involved in a process of transformation that would offer the possibility of radical improvements.**

## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

In the last two years, some writers have suggested that South Africa has made something of an about-turn. From being a neo-liberal lapdog, based on the adoption of the GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) strategy in 1996 characterised by tight monetary regulation, privatisation and enthusiastic promotion of international investment and trade as the locomotive to take the country out of poverty, President Thabo Mbeki has shifted instead towards visualising the country as a developmental state (Bond, 2000; Marais, 1998; Padayachee & Valodia, 2001). This has meant courting other so-called giants in the developing world, notably India, China and Brazil, a marked policy of looking out towards Africa, the abandonment of privatisation and a willingness to use fiscal benefits to engage in more far-reaching social change and more generous budgets to attack the massive problems of poverty in the country. It also suggests the need to revive thinking about comparisons with the different layers of so-called newly industrialised countries in eastern, southern and south-eastern Asia.

I am not swept up by this new discourse into enthusiastic endorsement. While I think that developmental state thinking is held by some parts of the state apparatus, that it is more acceptable within general discourse than earlier in the new era, it does

not qualify as much of a success story. Neither do I see 'developmentalism' as solving the country's problems. Successful developmental states have usually been authoritarian, at least for significant phases, and usually have historically and recently displayed intolerance towards minorities as well as repressive attitudes towards other substantial social problems. Yet in some measure, South Africa has elements of a developmental state that have a significant bearing on understanding the society as a whole. Measuring it against other developmental states is a very useful heuristic device. In particular, I think that it has considerable advantages in enriching our understanding rather than simply looking at the present as apartheid *manqué* – as a country where a whole range of well-known, essentially negative, social elements remain somewhat vaguely but incorrigibly in place – because there is *still* racism or whites are *still* relatively wealthy or most blacks are *still* poor or excluded in some sense. Of course, these features are true but as merely a part of a negative drawing, they lack the capacity to be the building blocks of a comprehension of what is in some respects a significantly changing society. The developmental state paradigm offers the possibility of a somewhat different way of thinking.

One aspect of the developmental state is its dirigisme: direct state involvement in economic policy and in social policy with key economic implications. This may include state ownership of major industrial, infrastructural and financial structures and it certainly will include institutional formation and intervention. There is the assumption, however, of a vibrant continuous private sector; dirigisme is not the same as complete state ownership or an orientation towards complete socialist transformation. Dirigisme is a word most frequently associated with the post-war French state committed to modernisation, defined in terms of contemporary social and economic competitive goals (Lane, 1995). However, the developmental state is more frequently applied as a term to poorer countries with a far greater initial sense of international impotence; here 'development' is assumed by all to be the *raison d'être* of the national government. In the words of Adrian Leftwich,

*the distinguishing characteristic of developmental states is that their political purposes and institutional structures (especially their bureaucracies) have been developmentally driven, while their developmental objectives have been politically driven* (Leftwich, 2005:154).

The appearance of the developmental state came to seem starkly apparent – in the distance – in the age of Thatcher and Reagan where anti-government ideology ran rampant; it becomes much vaguer in more centrist times where the dirigiste element of any modern state is rather more obvious. Indeed Leftwich associates its direct analytical emergence with the work of Chalmers Johnson on East Asia published just at the beginning of the 1980s as the terrible two were settling into power. For Chang, the developmental state idea is used as the foundation of a critique of a free-market Friedman type economic policy particularly for countries that aspire to development within an essentially capitalist framework; market-based strategies are pilloried as more or less hidden ideological struts aimed at perpetuating the dominance of their builders (Chang, 2000).

Best-known for his studies of development in Brazil Peter Evans (1995) argued that the question to ask about state intervention in economic and specifically industrial evolution is not 'how much' state involvement but 'what kind'? The predatory state for Evans is one where there is plenty of involvement of the wrong kind, where private interests systematically loot a state that has ability to extract wealth from natural resources. The opposite to this would be one, such as Korea, where a smooth

integrated path was followed in private and public sectors (Amsden, 1989). The model developmental state is one where

*bureaucratic apparatuses ... are embedded in a series of social ties that bind the state to society and provides institutionalised channels for the negotiation and renegotiation of goals and policies (Evans, 1995:12).*

Obviously this implies an interpenetration and/or functional division of relatively like-minded elites.

Thus a second aspect to the developmental state is the typical dominance of an elite that has internalised developmental goals. This elite will straddle the boundaries between the management ranks in the private sector, the established bureaucracy and politicians. It will by and large be the product of a common socialisation process through educational formation and through common social interaction, sometimes very obvious in the symbolic participation in particular institutions or leisure sites. Such an elite is not necessarily in agreement on all points but it shares a discourse about the needs and orientation of society that can allow for continuity and change.

Third, the classic developmental states have concerned themselves with establishing the foundations, usually out of rickety or one-sided beginnings, of wide-ranging economies. They have focused on projects of industrialisation in particular and of course industrialisation activities in the sense of factory industries dominated economic growth discourse in the twentieth century. Finally, developmental states have been associated – when successful – with wide-ranging social intervention in such areas as electrification, housing, urbanisation and education at all levels.

Much of the literature that uses the idea of a developmental state is unfortunately inclined to see such a model as inevitably a total success story. However, the reality is rarely so positive. First of all, it is notable that the classic catch-up models of the past which used dirigiste elements to compete on the world stage, especially Germany and Japan, acquired a nationalist and militarist cast so virulent as to threaten to dominate the entire world through conquest. Second, less virulent models have also varied enormously in their ability to overcome problems. Within South-east Asia, for instance, it is clear that Indonesia and Thailand are not straightforwardly emulating the success of Korea and Taiwan. Burma and the Philippines are still less successful. At the bottom end of the spectrum lie African countries which have had important elements of developmentalism as governing factors since independence but where development has largely failed to happen, certainly as desired or predicted. Third, so-called globalisation has changed the nature of capitalism in important ways: industrial infrastructure (steel mills, textile plants) able to employ very large numbers of men and women with limited 'modern' skills can no longer be the touchstone of economic growth as it was in the past. Can a dirigisme be adapted to the age of financial dominance and economic networking?

Questions about the state and its capacity to lead the modernisation of African societies and promote economic growth loomed very large in the early years of this journal. Most important perhaps were those articles that took up the so-called Kenya debate; although the evaluation of Nigeria by Turner and Beckman, as well as other countries, was also very significant (Beckman, 1982; Turner, 1976). This was a debate in which the question of neo-colonialism, of enduring imperialist control of the main forces pushing change loomed the largest. However, as it developed, analysis of internal social forces broadened and deepened; the necessity for

assessing those forces with some acumen was stressed. In a convincing late assessment with regard to Kenya, Colin Leys expressed the view that further development of capitalism in Kenya was certainly conceivable despite its limited success through the 1980s; the view that international constraints hold Africa in an immutable vice is no longer so widely held.<sup>2</sup> The failures of developmentalism in Africa have constrained use of the concept of the developmental state. Where it has remained a fertile source of ideas in Asia, it is because, following Leftwich, this kind of project remains thought to be able to achieve remarkable success (Harris, 1986).

Afropessimism was an inevitable accompaniment to the severe economic downturn closely linked to broader international change in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The present environment, if far from ideal, is however somewhat different. Natural resource prices, especially for minerals and energy related commodities, have boomed again and money has again begun to flow into Africa. The possibilities for building state capacity as well as intensifying growth and promoting social change have been increasing compared to the heyday of structural adjustment. In this spirit, it is suggested that a return to some of the burning questions of the 1960s and 1970s is far from irrelevant for many countries on the African continent; *they are back on the agenda*. This is the spirit in which this article addresses the question of whether the *new* South Africa is Africa's newest giant, to steal a phrase from Alice Amsden's paradigmatic study of South Korea: does it fulfil in reality the role of a developmental state. There will be some direct comparison with Malaysia which has clearly interested the ANC leadership as an Asian developmental model in which social change has had strong undertones of ethnic engineering. Malaysia at first ranked as an important economic investor in South Africa due to its interest in TELKOM, the national telephone service provider, and the Durban docklands area, in the first years after 1994 when little foreign investment was flowing into the country.

## **The New Elite**

Certainly the strongest element in South Africa being labelled a developmental state lie in the effort being made to create a new elite, able to navigate the waters of corporate South Africa but fundamentally loyal to the ruling African National Congress and tied to its hegemonic political control of the country.

How might this parallel Malaysia? British Malaya had been a very wealthy and an economically successful colony.<sup>3</sup> Its chief exports were rubber, mainly grown on British-owned rubber plantations and tin mines owned by British and, sometimes, ethnic Chinese, business, in a location that stood astride the main sea-route between South and East Asia. A lightly peopled territory, it attracted few British settlers but large numbers of Indian, Indonesian and, particularly, Chinese immigrants. Indeed, at the time of independence if one included the Straits Settlements, notably Singapore, with Malaya, the Chinese formed the largest element in the population, an unacceptable political fact for Malays. Thus Malaysia had been structured after independence through the extrusion of Singapore and the inclusion of the British territories on the northern and western coast of the island of Borneo, where the Chinese minority was smaller and the Indian minority very small, so as to have a Muslim Malay majority population.

But the large Chinese minority continued to appear dominant in business and the urban environment generally. Discourse about the nation oscillated between

colonially-derived concepts of an ethnically-defined plural society with little but the market holding ethnic groups together and the championing of the formation of a Malay/Muslim dominated national state (Wah, 2002:23ff). 'Both Malaysia and South Africa share a potential for racial violence and strife that is Bosnian in complexity and ugliness' to use the words of a Eurasian Malaysian businessman very familiar with South Africa, himself a family beneficiary of Malaysian state policies.<sup>4</sup> Urban 'race' riots largely aimed at the Chinese in Malaysian cities on the part of 'indigenous' Malays in 1969 revealed the depth of tensions in this former British colony.

In response, the state adopted the New Economic Policy (NEP) deliberately aimed at uplifting Malays – characterised as the *bumiputera*, the sons of the soil – and disrupting the ethnic-economic order that had characterised colonial development. Malays were favoured to various degrees in terms of state procurement, tendering processes and the licensing of businesses and targets were set in terms of the Malay share of ownership on the Stock Exchange. There were many aspects of policy-making that were intended to privilege Malays, some of them not really traceable in hard figures. Thus the state-influenced and controlled financial sector was able to give preference and direct loans to Malay-run businesses (Chin & Jomo, 2000). While Malays had long become established in the state bureaucracy, the result of NEP was the creation of a very wealthy ethnic Malay business elite. In this sense, the closeness of the model to the aspirations of the ANC and the policies it has pursued is remarkable. Jomo K.S., the well-known radical Malaysian critic, has called this 'crony rentierism', most strikingly manifest in the way the Malaysian state made life easy for close friends in the private sector during the 1998 crisis (Jomo, 1998).

The South African equivalent of the New Economic Policy is known as BEE – Black Economic Empowerment. It is the subject of daily attention in the South African press and virtually dominates the financial pages but thus far it has only begun to receive scholarly attention (Hirsch, 2005; Southall, 2004, 2005a). The beginnings of this story came from the initiatives not of the ANC but from established corporate business where the once Afrikaner insurance giant SANLAM and Anglo-American hived off space specifically designed to cater to a new class of black businessmen and women.<sup>5</sup> It is an interesting and cautionary tale that these early projects (New Africa Investments Limited (NAIL) and Johnnic Communications (JOHNNIC)), ultimately proved to be failures. NAIL faltered as the executive directors appropriated its assets for their personal fortunes. By 2004, NAIL was 'limping along the path to dissolution' (Hirsch, 2005:218) while JOHNNIC, which had largely shifted into the media business, came under the dominant control of white ex-trade unionist John Copelyn in early 2006. Model BEE ex-politico and tycoon Cyril Ramaphosa was effectively forced to abandon his leading interest in the company. Copelyn, however, leads an international firm, HCI, built on union pension funds and thus with empowerment credentials of its own, if virtually independent from the new state-generated elite.

Reports of the continued small percentage of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange shares held by firms owned by blacks, especially after the mini-crash of 1998-99 which ruined NAIL, clothed early BEE in the cloak of imputed failure. The early form of black corporate empowerment was considered to be unsuccessful. In 1998, a body known as the Black Business Council was appointed to formulate BEE legislation and the state instituted a Black Economic Empowerment Commission to get policies on track. The commission reported in 2001 and in 2003 BEE legislation was

promulgated in the form of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment law (Hirsch, 2005:221). This is now the legislative basis of BEE.

Prior to 2001 emphasis has been laid first and foremost on targets for particular sectors of the economy. The first such set of targets was established for the liquid fuels industry in 2000 (Hirsch, 2005:223). The Mining Charter, watered down from initially quite extravagant demands for change, eventually required that companies be under black ownership to the extent of 26 per cent in ten years, to be financed by the industry<sup>6</sup> (Gumede, 2005:226; Southall, 2004:323-24). Non-compliant sectors cannot be criminalised but the pressure to BEE oneself is clearly intense and the targets are very likely to be filled at least nominally. A myriad of 'empowerment' companies have emerged in order to attract the kind of business that will fulfil targets and please the state; at the same time, the state has effectively itself been prepared to make the introductions and initiate company formation to this end. It has also to some extent turned the very important parastatals (at first considered scheduled for privatisation but in fact always with a strong element of state financial ownership and now defended as economically essential in present form) into BEE state corporations (often with 'strategic partners' involved). Tendering and large-scale projects involving mineral extraction and construction particularly is a major part of the BEE process: 'The annual R120b.state procurement budget is an important tool in the quest to establish a black bourgeoisie' (Gumede, 2005:227). By the late 1990s, apparently black companies were receiving the majority of national and provincial tendering contracts although the genuineness of their blackness was not easy to ascertain.

A new set of alliances is particularly evident. A contemporary example is that a huge contract currently going forward will serve the Gautrain, a new express train service to be created between Johannesburg and Pretoria at the behest of the Gauteng provincial government at very high cost. The contract has gone to a company with the fetchingly African name of Bombela but which consists of a major established South African multinational, a British branch of a Canadian company and a previously completely inexperienced black empowerment company called Loliwe, created for the purpose. A French company (RAPT, Transports en Île-de-France) will manage the service (*Sunday Independent*, 30 October 2005). It seems very likely that the state has played a role in these partners meeting one another; it has become ever more involved in informal midwifing of such partnerships and increasingly enamoured with very large government-generated projects of this nature.

The pressure to change the face of South African capitalism is not easy to squeeze into juridically defined categories. In practice, the state has done everything to make it clear that it prefers to do business with firms that fall in line with empowerment. In my view, Seekings & Natrass (2005) are correct in seeing state legislation rather as constantly mounting pressure on substantial existing business entities to conform rather than in enacting definitive punitive measures. On the one hand, there continue to be questions about how successfully BEE is actually transforming ownership of wealth in South Africa. The more optimistic figures are those that count pension funds and the like within the BEE camp. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the state is doing much to create a class of closely aligned capitalists. This includes share-holding members of government, former politicians who have become wealthy and successful as members of corporate boards and those closely related to top figures in government.

Increasingly the emphasis has shifted from the role of financial vehicles that involved indebting new entrepreneurs to existing sources of finance from the banks, insurance companies and mining/industrial firms to outright state creation of black capitalists. Probably the three wealthiest figures in Johannesburg financial circles of this type are 'Tokyo' Sexwale, the former premier of Gauteng Province (which includes Pretoria and Johannesburg), and now in the race for State President, Cyril Ramaphosa – once Thabo Mbeki's principal rival for the succession to Nelson Mandela, and Patrice Motsepe, brother-in-law both to Ramaphosa and related to more than one Mbeki cabinet minister. Sexwale arrived in business via the Thebe Investment Corporation, founded in the transition years to provide a funding source for the newly legal African National Congress, which still survives as a business (Southall, 2005a:317). Motsepe has perhaps had the most of this trio to do with the building of his own fortune through successful financial manoeuvres (Southall, 2005a:324). It can be taken for granted that resignations from top civil service or cabinet positions are followed by individuals being taken up in the BEE world but today the deed is done before and without resignation.

*Features of deals announced this week include a growing list of government officials who are major beneficiaries, continuing generous share allocations to members of the African National Congress's national executive committee and highly unequal allocations between leading and ordinary members of BEE consortia (Kevin Davie in Weekly Mail & Guardian, 11-17 November 2005).*

A striking feature of the ANC political constellation, particularly in the Mbeki administration, has been the prominence of women in plum political jobs. The husbands and wives of ANC cabinet members and top bureaucrats are frequently important figures in the business world. Light on this was shed recently when Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, who once proposed that becoming 'filthy rich' was a desirable goal for the new elite amongst former struggle activists, was caught having used an official plane to make a supposed holiday trip to Dubai. Her husband, Bulelani Ngcuka, a prominent former exile and then State Prosecutor who is now a major business figure, was present. Mlambo-Ngcuka was also accompanied by Thuthukile Mazibuko-Skweyiya, a member of a number of corporate boards and involved in deals with Brett Kebble to be mentioned below. Her husband is the Minister of Social Development. Mazibuko-Skweyiya and Ngcuka 'both were part of separate consortiums included in the same empowerment deals' (*Business Day*, 19 January 2006). The seams are hardly visible.

One can perhaps categorise the new world of top black business figures into four categories with varying degrees of relationship to the BEE legal framework.

*First*, there are firms established by blacks, frequently recently created ones that are aimed at attracting the attention of anyone wishing to meet the wishes of the state. Often, however, the state and/or existing business has directly and purposively generated their existence. Sometimes however they do represent extant independent and genuinely entrepreneurial activities.

*Second* are firms which represent partnerships between whites and blacks but are sufficiently black in ownership to qualify as BEE. Firms such as these are certainly desired by the government as partners but they have not been so easy to structure as pure empowerment firms. Still, there have been remarkable instances where white entrepreneurs, typically new entrepreneurs such as John Copelyn, formerly a trade unionist, have been able to insert themselves very successfully into this world. This

of course can shade into varieties of fronting which goes against the wishes of the state but is difficult to control. The violent death of Brett Kebble in 2005, a youthful mining finance magnate who had his hands in many pies, unveiled this world to some extent.<sup>7</sup> Kebble had learnt to cultivate many ambitious and greedy figures in the ANC, of which he was a prime financial backer (*Weekly Mail and Guardian*, 4 August 2006), and in particular had become a partner and mentor figure to members of the ANC Youth League, helping them to set up BEE vehicles from which he of course benefited very largely. Two young and ambitious Youth League political activists, Lunga Lcwana and Andile Nkhulu were for instance made the heads of Itsuseng, one of his many companies accused today of fraudulent operations. Another remarkable wheeler-dealer in the BEE world, sometimes indeed called 'Mr. BEE' is Martin Kingston, a British banker, now linked to Deutsche Bank. When the broad indebtedness of the black executives are toted up, perhaps it will eventually even seem, as black nationalist lawyer and journalist Christine Qunta has suggested, that 'the major beneficiaries of BEE deals are likely to be white' (cited in Southall, 2004:178).<sup>8</sup>

Some of the partnerships are due to the limited capacity and experience of companies in the first category. Existing white generated corporations also remain important as parents of black empowerment companies. Wiphold is dominated by several well-known black women, notably Wendy Luhabe, the wife of an ex-trade union leader currently premier of Gauteng Province. As its CEO, Gloria Serobe, recently informed the public, Wiphold is 'the BEE partner to Old Mutual, Nedbank and Mutual & Federal', a set of major powers in the world of finance and insurance (*Weekly Mail & Guardian*, 17-23 March 2006). Who has set up whom? And the big corporate players serve as the models for smaller and more variegated forms of business. Thus a major law firm announced in March 2006 that 'our target is to have 25 per cent of the economic benefit and control of the firm in black hands by late 2007. We are well on our way to achieving that' (cited in an article by Sanchia Temkin, *Business Day*, 20 March 2006). A poll of 300 owners of medium sized businesses showed an increase from 51 per cent to 70 per cent between 2003 and 2005 in those who felt empowerment status would be a powerful factor in their finding new clients.

*Third* comes the BEE-related world of the parastatals, almost all led by black ANC appointees on very large salaries.<sup>9</sup> Parastatals have been partially turned into 'partnerships'. Thus the telecommunications monopoly TELKOM has been partially sold both to foreign investors and to black empowerment owners. The monopoly was breached in 2005 but again the chief beneficiaries will certainly have a big black empowerment stake and this is true very significantly for the owners of the three cell phone companies, an immensely profitable undertaking (which also involves interlocking TELKOM!) as well as the state franchised system of gambling casinos which exist nationwide.

A *fourth* category would be black managers and executives in the big industrial, commercial and financial companies, some of them nurtured since well before 1990. It is obviously particularly difficult to identify whether or not they are becoming effective generators of policy in economically important activities; some do not have strong ANC backgrounds. They would in any event be to some extent intermediaries between white businessmen and the state/BEE world rather than directly of it.<sup>10</sup>

Evidence does indicate that there are certainly some successful black business figures who emerged before 1990 in interstices allowed by the reforming apartheid

state. The corporate sector began to head-hunt and identify future black executives in this era, often via the medium of creating management positions in the personnel and later sales sections of their organisations. A second point is that while prominent BEE beneficiaries do include individuals such as the former ambassador to Britain Cheryl Carolus or the Minister of Environmental Affairs Valli Moosa, respectively considered to be Coloured and Indian. But the real BEE world is overwhelmingly a black African one despite what one might expect from the higher educational qualifications and stronger business traditions amongst Coloured and especially Indian South Africans. The signs are that the private sector in South Africa, if it wishes to have a serious engagement with the state, must show a black face, ideally from top to bottom but especially at the top. This is not the case with regard to foreign capital. Foreign investment is in part being excused from BEE rules.<sup>11</sup> The desire rather would be to bring international capital in as a distinct, autonomous partner. In this sense, Evans' notion of a changing set of alliances in response to globalisation is in large part beginning to be carried out in South Africa.

Assessing BEE requires more than detailing the clearly extensive intermeshing of the private-state based elite of common origins and common political affiliation. First of all, it remains true that actual black influence as directors and as owners of South African companies remains very modest. For instance, black 'tycoons' and company directors are often dependent on large loans from the existing sources of finance which will not be repaid quickly or easily, as we have seen. Most of the black directors of listed companies are in fact non-executive. The disjuncture between public power and private weakness that so troubles the ANC and its supporters has been bridged to some extent but remains very substantial. In 2003, only 1.6 per cent of JSE ownership was held by definably black companies according to one estimate<sup>12</sup> (Hirsch, 2005; Balshaw & Goldberg, 2005). The proportion in listed firms of black executive directors was well under 10 per cent<sup>13</sup> (Hirsch, 2005:230). The state has by contrast proposed a 2014 target of 25 per cent ownership.

Second, while one can certainly find energetic and intelligent black capitalists in South Africa, and firms that are very independent of state links, the extent of corruption, the speed of class creation, makes it imperative to ask to what extent this is a class that is essentially parasitic, equivalent to what Jomo has called crony rentiers with reference to Malaysia. Thus far some kind of nationalist patriotism remains more a feature of Thabo Mbeki's wish-list than any kind of reality. According to the best-informed of writers on the subject, William Gumede, this is a deep source of frustration to the president. Gumede believes that the kind of alliance Mbeki stands for is intended as well as a model for African development continent-wide; South Africa stands or falls on the premise of BEE (Gumede, 2005:224-25, 230). Mbeki's commitment to regulated governance and clean hands, moreover, goes directly against the strong pressure to empower and enrich black people quickly which he equally demands; the tension between these two tendencies are a regular manifestation of South African life as witnessed in the media. Whether or not BEE is creating a class of capitalists with no cleaner hands than elsewhere or a class of parasites dependent on an older class with only uneasy linkages to the regime is still far from certain.

## **Other Capacities**

It is also less clear whether or not the BEE elite has wider capacities, or could develop wider capacities in terms of economic and social transformation. The radical and

populist roots of the liberation movement that brought the ANC to power have continually sprouted a repeated critique difficult for the government to thrust aside. As Seekings and Nattrass point out, there is no reason to think that the emergence of a small class of rich business people either increases the number of small business opportunities or has any effect on unemployment (2005:344-45). Southall has argued that they preside over firm structures dominated by managers with essentially narrow financial ambitions only, whatever their colour (Southall, 2004:183-84). Gumede notes,

*Very few of the new rich put their money into bricks and mortar; they much prefer to simply acquire more money!*<sup>14</sup> (Gumede, 2004:215).

This criticism has struck home and is seen to have potentially an effect on the party's core constituency. Therefore, policy has shifted officially towards the institution of what is called Broad-Based BEE. Broad-Based BEE has recently achieved official status through scorecards of indicative targets devised by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Codes of Good Practice) which are intended (with reference for instance to the issuance of tenders) to supersede simply the question of black ownership. This system was released to the public in November, 2005. Instead a whole host of categories are evaluated on scorecards: the presence of black management, skills and training, the status of companies used by the applicant company as offering services and products, benefits to micro and small enterprises and to the social wage of black employees are all worth points (Balshaw & Goldberg, 2005). This system envisions a phalanx of independent BEE evaluators emerging to gauge the honesty of replies and certify compliance; these will grant Verification Certificates of appropriate conduct. It is certainly questionable at this stage whether the massive costs involved in such an evaluation process will be undertaken or whether this process cannot itself be corrupted. Certainly the temptation to evade the whole process by fronting, more or less legally, all black firms intended to catch business, is likely to be great. However, the pressure for compliance is also important and some argue leads to change in advance of any formal pressure (Vuyo Jack, *Business Day*, 12 March 2006).

Taking this further, it remains much less clear that the new class of black businessmen and women have any kind of broader project relating to South African economic development.

Most of the critique of BEE in South Africa is essentially moralistic as we shall argue below. This is insufficient. The ANC, if it is to have an embedded elite, needs something like BEE. In the case of South Africa, the new elite does not inhabit a country with no history of industrialisation or predecessor. Indeed, a rich, crowded and contentious literature, some of it produced for this journal, has explored the history through the 20th century of relations between the state and capital, or fractions of capital defining in ethnic or functional terms.<sup>15</sup> On the one hand, this does mean that a pool of corporate knowledge and sense of direction which can potentially be deracialised exists in the country. With some justification, the ANC considers that it has created a national economic system that is highly business-friendly although rewards for this in terms of growth have been slow in coming.

However, this is a world which is characterised by habits – such as intimate relations to the London financial world, strengths lying in large materials production, lack of experience with democratic work practices or thick layers of skill

embedded in civil society – not easily changed. This is a mature capitalist class, inclined to invest in speculative and leisure activity, new technology and property, very unlike Evans' type of potential industrial investors. There is a mistrust of black politicians and a shared discourse of what might politely be called Afro-pessimism. Disinvestment and emigration (particularly of the families of top figures in business) are very typical; only a small proportion of the established capitalists in South Africa vigorously engage in the new business environment (Gumede, 2005:215).

The limitations of the previously established elite have created problems for the ANC. Its focus is now on the creation of a *new* national elite intended to be the bearers of the new regulatory system that is being put into place. This is not merely a question of racial preference or nationalist ideology. On the contrary, the new regime has permitted (and perhaps encouraged) the shifting of headquarters of some of the big corporate empires in South Africa – Old Mutual, South African Breweries, Rembrandt and, above all, Anglo-American to stock exchanges in the North, especially London (Southall, 2005:182). The negative perceptions about South African prospects are occasionally aired openly, to the anger of the South African government whose relationship to Anglo-American, for instance, has not been very warm.

Superficially up to the time of writing, there seems little if any absolute clash between the rise of the BEE elite and successful economic strategy in South Africa. At the end of 2006, the economy appeared to be growing at a rate of 6 per cent p.a., the Holy Grail figure held out for decades and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange was booming. However, the relationships of the new black empowered to the established business elites even as they unbundle the oligopolies of the past and restructure their interests, still remains questionable. Is this potentially a stable or effective set of partners? How will the growing impact of foreign investors impinge? At a journalistic level for instance, a short report included the view of the executive director of the Japanese External Trade Organisation in South Africa that BEE codes are an 'African cost', a 'hurdle' which is part of what is involved in doing business in South Africa; the implications of these terms are not exactly positive. However, the article suggests that opinion amongst foreign investors on this varies considerably (*Weekly Mail & Guardian*, 20-26 January 2006). And what about white corporate and managerial representation? There is a lack of clear positive signals as to where its place is in Mbeki's real vision and the message is often one of grudging exploitation of superior skills and resources filled with resentment about the past rather than a genuine partnership. Whites speaking frankly generally have a pessimistic outlook.

Beyond this, there is the question of structural transformation. Can the new embedded elite and its partners shift the basis of growth away from the sale of natural resources, even efficiently gathered and sold (Fine & Rustomjee, 1996)? South Africa remains a country powered by the demand for its basket of resources. In the early twenty-first century, this remains an effective strategy financially given the immense demands placed by the growth of the Chinese and Indian economies especially. However, prosperity continues, as in the past, to depend on easy credit and translates into balance of payments problems given the public tendency to buy foreign finished and intermediate goods. Nor does it form the foundation of a more broad-based improvement in the standard of living. Government proclamations indicate that there is a slow and difficult understanding emerging of this reality. The thrust of the business world, however, is to seek wealth in familiar ways with the new elite in a weak position to promote fundamental institutional changes.

The contrast with Malaysia in this regard is enlightening. The adoption of NEP in Malaysia went together with a shift in overall economic strategy: the typical Import Substitution Industrialisation model buttressed by large traditional exports, notably tin and rubber, diminished in importance. Economic emphasis shifted to the courting of new foreign investment emphasising export-orientated industrialisation. This policy has been marked by dramatic success (punctuated with downturns in the mid-1980s and 1990s) especially with regard to investment from East Asia. At least in some sectors, where established British capital was unwilling to adjust to new conditions and disinvested, new foreign partners needed to, and did, effectively emerge.<sup>16</sup> Stock market expansion has included recent massive foreign portfolio investment. This feature has been a major part of overall investment figures far higher than in South Africa<sup>17</sup> and also contributed to consistently high economic growth figures, rapid urbanisation, an expansion of wage employment and a remarkable decline in poverty indicators.

In popular South African discourse, criticism of BEE is not primarily structural but made in class terms. Again and again, the problem with BEE is defined as its narrow base and its tendency to reward (if extremely generously) only a tiny number of select beneficiaries. At present, the spectacular benefits accruing to a few hundred black families at the top largely linked to the ruling party but unconnected to the broader issues of equality and opportunity in South African society leave BEE as a policy attracting very limited enthusiasm from the bulk of the ANC's supporters. The moral element here frequently tends to be quite dominant in the available literature (Hirsch, 2005; Southall, 2004, 2007). The heart of the story is that the masses have been left behind while the leaders fatten themselves with new wealth. GEAR, taken as a charter for the policies in which BEE is entwined, is invariably contrasted with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) adopted in 1994. The RDP highlighted the social and economic conditions in which poor people were living in South Africa and pledged to put dramatic improvement in these conditions at the forefront of policy. The RDP was made the basis of a ministry by Nelson Mandela but after two years lost all structural identity. Radicals connect this with the shunting aside in influence of COSATU, the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party.

### **Social Stratification in the New South Africa**

Social analysis of the new South Africa suggests that critiques of the ANC as merely presiding over the continuance of older social patterns is too crude to indicate current realities.<sup>18</sup> South Africa's emerging social structure indicates that at the top of the pyramid are small numbers of people including a few black people generally with close links to the state. Second there is a varied middle class which includes more or less disgruntled whites but also a dramatically increased black middle class. For African people whose command of the discourse and skills needed to function in a business environment is reasonable, the heavens have really opened up. This particularly can be equated with access to tertiary education and could amount to 1/10 of the African population as well as much larger percentages of Indians and Coloureds. This perspective is shared with the recent assessment of Roger Southall (2007:81-82).

We need to also note the stably employed working class. A striking change since 1990 has been the transformation of the trade union movement, especially COSATU, from one overwhelmingly organising workers in the private sector to the growing proportion of state employees (Webster & von Holdt, 2003). In COSATU today,

teachers, health workers, government clerks, etc. form by general estimates at least one-third of membership. All unionised workers benefit from the labour conditions hammered out legislatively by the ANC although they are a varied bunch and continue to include some poorly-paid workers. However, a large section of the African population (and far smaller sections of the other groups defined racially), fall outside this loop. This includes a huge part of the rural population, locked in by access to secure homesteads to impoverished areas with no hope of alternative economic activity. It includes the so-called informal sector which in South Africa includes a big criminal element and relatively little productive activity; it is mostly 'survivalist'. It also sociologically is characterised by very high levels of serious illness, threats of violence and instability. The channels for mobility opened by the state have not been of use to the great majority of the poor whose access to work has generally diminished. Moreover, in the first years of the 21st century, the largest growth in census figures has belonged not to the unemployed but to the most poorly paid category of (non-unionised) employees.<sup>19</sup>

If we look at BEE and indeed the ANC led government era as a whole, there is very limited structural change in the lives of the poorer part of the population. Unemployment remains a massive feature in a context where only very limited peasant self-sufficiency survives. Dismissals of miners and agricultural workers have been more important here than shifts in industrial employment. The historically deeply etched division in rewards between unskilled or semi-skilled labour and skilled and technically proficient labour remains extreme, even though those on the right side of the line are no longer exclusively racially definable. Yet the survival of mass poverty has not so far been very destabilising for the ANC for lack of any plausible alternative despite outbreaks of resistance, sometimes violent, against the contradictory and frustrating policies in place, or perhaps more accurately, the ways in which these are implemented.

In addition, however, the ANC party-state (with 70 per cent of the popular vote in national elections) has held itself out as a potential and actual patron able to offer a range of life-saving hand-out payments and services. As a class, the new elite may be kicking away the social ladder (a topic that has not really been seriously researched) but the state remains committed to means of reaching out to its impoverished electorate. In the form of progressive direct taxation, in offering transfer payments via pensions, child support grants and disability grants, which for instance affect those stricken with HIV/AIDS, in the laying on of electricity, water reticulation, improvements to township amenities and the construction of between one and two million free houses (so far); it has used its patrimonial power considerably in this regard. A recent article insists on this point for Lula's Brazil and suggests that strategies for countries with a social base not unlike that in South Africa aiming at structural reform under contemporary conditions are very difficult to achieve (de Oliveira, 2006).

Yet as with Brazil, significant transfer payments are not a substitute for structural change. In a recent and harshly critical article on the current Brazilian leadership, Chico de Oliveira has made this comparison quite explicit. He sees the Bolsa Familia, a grant made available to the poor on a means-tested basis, as the foundation for depoliticising

*The question of poverty, turning inequality into an administrative problem, while closing off the possibility of a nationalist-developmental project or totalised transfer of social relations*

*... the dominated realise the 'moral revolution' – defeat of apartheid in South Africa, election of the Workers Party in Brazil – which is then transformed and deformed through capitulation to unfettered exploitation (de Oliveira, 2006:22).*

In Malaysia, the development state has had certain features which make it quite unlike South African circumstances. In fact, these are precisely the features which are the most important in binding Malaysia to an Asian developmental state story beyond the parallel in bourgeois class formation. This involves the role of the Malaysian state in promoting agrarian reform, urbanisation and institutional educational reform. The NEP was always intended to attack poverty in Malaysia (Wah, 2002:25). According to official national definitions, 49 per cent of the population was considered poor in the 1970 census; this figure had fallen by 1995 to just above 11 per cent (Wah, 2002:41). Outside the plantation sector, there remains in Malaysia a significant and viable small farmer sector. The state has poured money into credit and input facilities to support this sector. Large-scale demand for industrial labour once foreign investment in factories became very considerable enabled the incorporation of Malay workers on acceptable terms of employment. Urbanisation too has been far easier a process than in South Africa; Malaysian cities are not characterised by massive shantytowns lacking in basic amenities despite rapid growth. These have been pillars on which to build substantial opportunities for social mobility. Not only does Malaysia support education generously but it promotes technical education strongly. It has also imposed Malay as a national language, compulsory in the university system. In striking contrast to South Africa, state education policies in Malaysia are considered to have produced high material returns (Emsley, 2005:45). Health indicators are even more positive. One can raise questions about the promotion of the Malay tycoons to wealth and influence but the NEP has certainly been a broadly empowering strategy. The NEP has stood effectively for the creation of a large Malay middle class of civil servants, business cadres and professionals, the backbone of the regime. Despite the favouring of Malays, this has created an environment which has offered enough opportunity for ethnic Indians (at least those who are not part of the traditional plantation workforce) and especially Chinese to prosper although the extent to which they are integrated into a common Malaysian identity is very questionable.<sup>20</sup> On this basis, BEE equivalent requirements have tended to weaken in recent years and the state has increasingly shifted its discourse to one of promoting 'Asian values' which can include ethnic Chinese and Indians rather than simply favouring Malays<sup>21</sup> (Teik, 2002). The relative success of Malaysia has depended, however, not so much on its promotion of one ethnic group as on the relative success of its economic policies that have advantaged different classes and ethnic groups, albeit differentially; it is here that the limits of the South African comparison can be laid bare.

Not only has the Malaysian experience been far more broad-based but it has also seemed to lay the foundations for social stability more surely. There is no question that a tightly-knit elite of black businessmen, ex-politicians and public servants, bureaucrats and ANC leaders has formed over the past decade in South Africa. The social structure is altering in ways that offer substantial opportunities to various strata in the black population. However, the new elite remains limited in capacity, fragile and very dependent on the ANC remaining in power. A split in the ruling party, for instance, might have quite serious consequences. The Mbeki project may come unstuck; the business elite are not easily accepted or liked by the ANC membership as a whole, amongst whom trade union members and Communist Party cadres are important elements, more generally. At the moment, the ANC is

increasingly paralysed by the emergence of a succession question on the horizon (2008) and strong populist elements manifest themselves so these questions are increasingly salient. If one wishes a familiar African parallel, the chances for rapid capitalist development under the presidency of Jomo Kenyatta, dramatically changed when he was succeeded as president of Kenya by Daniel arap Moi, whose political base was so different. South Africa is not immune to a comparable shift of some sort.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we can evaluate South Africa as having some aspects of a classic developmental state. In particular, the ANC is nurturing the rapid creation of a new class that will have an embedded relationship in Evans' sense to development in the country. It is also using economic growth to finance large infrastructural projects such as the Gautrain and various construction jobs linked to the 2012 soccer world cup in a way familiar to developmentalism. However, the picture is very much murkier when one questions the capacity of this class to take South Africa forward to a more successful set of niches in the globalised world. Even more serious is the failure thus far to transform the lives of the masses through the set of deep institutional and social interventions that can be associated with the most successful Asian developmental states. Some of this failure must lie in the uncomfortable relationship of the new elite to its predecessors, now confined to the private sector and their practices. In the late apartheid years, Saul and Gelb suggested that South Africa was increasingly the prey of an organic crisis which involved both the processes of accumulation by capital and the thwarted lives of the masses, particularly in the cities (Saul & Gelb, 1981). Despite some continuing long-term problems, the former aspect of the crisis can be said to have been largely solved, for the time being, by the 1994 arrangements made in negotiations. But the latter aspect has in some respects become more flagrant. Politics here has turned the crisis back towards civil society and away from the state but this is a more superficial and fragile solution that could lead eventually to instability and a change of direction. Intensive study of social conditions in post-apartheid conditions and with regard to the post-apartheid state are needed to understand this situation more deeply.

Socialists may feel frustrated at developmentalist discourses which seem to push aside, or marginalise as secondary, concerns with poverty and miserable living conditions (or, for instance, inequities with respect to gender) in favour of debates about state macro-projects and capacities. It is true that proponents of the developmental state believe, I think with strong evidence, that it is possible to create far more egalitarian and welfare-promoting (and thus empowering) societies under capitalism than the classic marxist critical tradition allowed for. Moreover, there is also the potential for marginalising discussions of democracy, of organisation and consequent empowerment from below, which has little if any place in such discourses.

However, it would be wrong to dismiss the development state idea as reactionary with regard to improving the lives of the majority of the population and 'merely' nationalist in scope. It is clear that the most successful developmentalist projects, particularly in Asian countries, have involved deep interventions in areas such as labour regulation, family welfare, land reform, etc. They have led to large-scale improvements as measured in human development index indicators. It is certainly possible to argue that the relationship of socio-economic conditions of the mass of

the population to macro-economic policies are intimate; without the harnessing of developmentalist strategies by effective states, it is not clear how fundamental social and political conditions can change.

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## Endnotes

1. This essay is related to ideas expressed in Freund, 2004, 2005 and particularly at length in Freund, forthcoming. Some of the material here is taken literally from this latter essay. For a related but somewhat different approach to these issues, see Southall, 2005b, 2007.
2. In considering one of the most economically developed African countries, Colin Leys (1996) applied this sort of approach to Kenya. In practice, the state has largely behaved in a predatory manner but Leys believed that this was not structurally inherent or unalterable. Kenya can be evaluated in this sense in the same light as Brazil.
3. For a classic radical analysis, see the contributions in Amin & Caldwell (1977).
4. From the introduction to Emsley (1996:1).
5. Although the parastatal Industrial Development Corporation was involved with the Sanlam deal (Hirsch, 2005: 213).
6. The commercial property sector is the latest to enter the lists as of early 2006.
7. For Kebble's amazing empire, see Sam Sole in the *Weekly Mail & Guardian*, 3-9 March 2006.
8. Thus the Department of Minerals and Energy deputy director-general 'said the department had seen an increase in fronting by some mining houses and a systematic dilution of BEE shareholdings once mineral rights had been granted', Mzwandile Jack in *Business Day*, 7 May 2006.
9. Thus electricity giant ESKOM has a black CEO trained as a town planner; from a list of published names, nine out of ten major division executives are now African; see also Southall, 2007:71-73.
10. Southall, 2004, provides a table where the *Financial Mail* claims to assess the twenty most important individuals in 2003 in South African business. Of these no less than nine were black: apart from Sexwale, Ramaphosa and Motsepe, three came from the parastatal sector, one from Anglo American and one from one of the cell phone giants. The remaining individual, Saki Macozoma, became notorious in the struggle over the succession to Mbeki when it was revealed that state intelligence was illegally monitoring his telephone in the interests, most likely, of one faction. Thebe Mabanga's list of 100 most important South Africans of the future – the 'hot 100' – at the start of 2006 included 28 business figures of whom no less than 22 had names suggesting black African backgrounds, *Mail & Guardian*, 23 December 2005 -5 January 2006, 15.
11. See *Business Day*, 21 December 2005.
12. However, this figure rises to over 15% when various types of institutional investors with predominant black clientele are added. Moreover, there are obviously many shares held by individual blacks in companies which are not predominantly owned by blacks. For a short guide to controversial figures, see Southall, 2004a:318-19.
13. By contrast the directors on state-owned enterprise boards were more than 60% black.
14. In an interview taken from research on the local scene in Durban, a prominent independent black businessman who exhibited a real interest in 'bricks and mortar' expressed disappointment that it was so difficult to make money from manufacturing compared to financial speculation. Of course, it can be argued that this is the situation prevailing in the business world internationally today.

15. Some of the most remarkable and representative contributions would be Fine & Rustomjee, 1996, Gelb, 1991; Legassick, 1974; Lipton, 1986; Marks & Trapido, 1981; Morrell, 1986; O'Meara, 1996; Yudelman, 1984
16. This is the conclusion of Susan Martin with regard to the expanding palm oil sector, 'European Plantation Firms and Malaysian NEP since 1970', unpublished paper, International Economic History Conference, Helsinki, 2006.
17. Emsley (1996:73) refers to more than a 27% investment rate over 'the NEP period' where post-apartheid South Africa's figure has barely crept up to 17% at peak so far.
18. For a recent parallel view see Southall (2007:67): '... while there is a strong case for arguing that BEE (or some similar programme to correct racial imbalances) is a political necessity, the ANC needs to do more to combine the 'empowerment strategies' with a better life for all.'
19. For a thought provoking and wide-ranging assessment of South African social structure, see Seekings & Nattrass (2005).
20. In addition as Ong (2006) points out, Malaysian policies towards non-Malay aborigines and to immigrant workers, especially those not easily assimilable as Malays, are very questionable.
21. Nonetheless radical critics such as Ong and Jomo K. have emphasised the racialised nature of affirmative action in Malaysia and the consequent failure of state policies genuinely to transform the 'plural society' of colonial times.

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# Between Socialism & Neo-Liberalism: Mafia Island, Tanzania, 1965-2004

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*Pat Caplan*

**This article considers local perceptions of changes which have taken place on Mafia Island, Coast Region, Tanzania over a period of 40 years during which the state has moved from a policy of socialism to one of neo-liberalism. It begins by examining the apparent paradox that, while Tanzania has won plaudits from multilateral agencies for its economic policies, many ordinary people on Mafia consider that their well-being has actually worsened. The paper examines people's perceptions of equality, inequality and poverty, with particular emphasis on the comparisons made between previous eras and the present, and between themselves and various others, as well as their views of their entitlements both as citizens and human beings.**

Tanzania is one of the few African countries to have gone through a socialist period, and thus the impact of recent globalisation and neo-liberal policies raises particularly interesting issues as well as providing material for important ideological debates. The country today is often praised by economists and multilateral agencies as a model African state. It has increased its per capita GNP and GDP, liberalised its economy, become a multiparty democracy in which presidents have served their terms and left office peacefully, welcomed foreign investment, and sought to tackle poverty through aid programmes. Such a representation of Tanzania and its recent history is also not uncommonly voiced by government officials in the country and even by some academics, both local and foreign, and is often contrasted with the earlier socialist period under Julius Nyerere. Such a version of recent history goes something like this: Tanzania went through a socialist period which did not work, and neo-liberal economic policies are now the only way forward. This view of the socialist past does not seek to understand why some things failed, while others succeeded,<sup>1</sup> but is often followed by the frequently reiterated view that in recent years, as a result of the aforesaid liberalisation policies, Tanzania's re-structured economy has grown well and poverty has been reduced.<sup>2</sup>

For example, a recent communication to the 'Tanzlist' mail-based discussion group (affiliated to the US African Studies Association), was headed 'Tanzania's current self-presentation' and its author, Joel Samoff, quotes a special advertising supplement in the *New York Times* magazine:

*Since its nearly two-decade-long social experiment ended with the resignation of the country's first independent government in 1985 ... [progress has been made] ...with one official reporting that there were people in his village who had tasted sugar for the first time since independence. Although reversing the tide of nearly two decades takes time.*

In other words, part of the justification for the policies of today is a vilification of earlier ones.

The architect of Tanzania's socialist policies of the 1960s and 1970s, President Julius Nyerere, responded robustly to such views when, in 1998, he had the following conversation with the head of the World Bank and his staff in Washington.

*'Why have you (Tanzanians) made such a mess of things?' he was asked by the Bank's experts who were alluding to the economic situation in Tanzania. Nyerere replied: 'The British Empire left us a country with 85% illiteracy, two engineers and twelve doctors. When I left government, we had 9% illiteracy, and thousands of engineers and doctors. I left government 13 years ago. At that time our per capita income was double what it is today. [Now] We have a third of children who lack schooling, while health and public services are in ruins. During those 13 years, Tanzania did everything that World Bank and the IMF demanded of it.' And Nyerere returned the question to the experts: 'Why have you made such a mess of things?'*<sup>3</sup>

Yet consideration of whether life was indeed better during the socialist or the neo-liberal eras is far from simple.<sup>4</sup> While there appears to be a sharp divide between the two periods, there are actually some important continuities. Furthermore, in talk about equality, social justice, rights and development (all of which are often elided), much depends upon who is speaking, and when.

As in many other parts of the world, the discourse of rights has become increasingly significant in Tanzania. It has largely replaced a socialist imaginary centred on terms such as 'interest', 'exploitation' and 'redistribution', all of which were highly developed in Tanzania in the 1960s and 1970s, notably in the writings of Julius Nyerere (e.g. 1966, 1968). Today, rather, we have an official discourse of 'empowerment', 'development', and 'lifting people out of poverty'.

While people in poor rural areas have long utilised terms like 'rights' and 'justice' (synonymous in the Swahili term *haki*) and 'development' (*maendeleo*), in many other respects, their discourse is very different from the official one and it is the concern of this paper to examine how ordinary people in a rural and marginal area of Tanzania perceive the changes which have taken place, and their reasons for so doing. The view from Mafia Island in southern Tanzania, where I have been carrying out anthropological research since the 1960s,<sup>5</sup> is that in the last decade or so, life has become increasingly difficult (*maisha magumu* is an oft-repeated phrase – see also Walley, 2004b). Another phrase heard frequently in discussions about recent changes is *wengine wanapata, wengine hawapati* (some get, others don't), suggesting that there are those who profit from the current situation, while others do not.

At the village level on Mafia, people make comparisons between themselves and selected others. They utilise a wide range of discourses, ranging from socialist to neo-liberal. But they also invoke notions of entitlement, implicitly or explicitly, to make judgements on both the past and the present, and as a way of articulating ideas about social justice and social differentiation – equality and inequality. They claim their status as citizens to criticise the government policies which many believe are responsible for their present plight. Some of these ways of talking may even be viewed as a form of resistance to a dominant discourse, such as the one currently articulated by the government in Tanzania.

This article, then, provides a largely historical and ethnographic account of developments in one area of Tanzania over the forty years I have worked there. It is a case study of how people make sense of the transition from an avowedly socialist society to one which is neo-liberal. Inevitably, how they view this depends on who they are and in this paper it is shown that there is a wide gap between the views of people at the bottom of the socio-economic heap – in this case villagers on Mafia Island Tanzania<sup>6</sup> who by and large ‘do not get’ – and other people such as government officials who talk about the lives of the former or make policies for them.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, all of these people utilise memories of the past as a resource with which to compare the present – but which past and whose past? History is, needless to say, constantly re-written.

In the second section of the paper, there is a brief discussion of the socialist and post-socialist periods in Tanzania as a whole, while the third section focuses on what has happened on Mafia Island over the past 40 years. Section Four considers the uneven impact of various developments upon different categories of people, considering in particular older and younger people, and women and men. Section Five analyses local discourses about recent changes, and especially the way in which villagers on Mafia make use of comparisons to understand their own situation and to state the possibility that things could be different.

## **Socialism & Post-socialism in Tanzania**

There were indeed important achievements in Tanzania during the socialist period, notably in education and health: 99 per cent of primary school age children were in school under UPE (Universal Primary Education) and there was a successful adult literacy campaign. There was also an increase in health facilities, especially in primary care such as the MCH (Mother and Child Health) clinics and in vaccination programmes, with a consequent decrease in infant mortality. Clinics and schools were built in many villages, and education and healthcare were free to users. Salary differentials in the public sector moved from a high of 1::71 immediately after independence to as low as 1::9 after the Arusha Declaration.

Nonetheless, many people at the time, including myself, were critical of the ways in which some of the government’s policies were implemented (see for example Cliffe, 1969; Coulson, 1979, 1982; Hyden, 1980; Resnick, 1981; Rweyemamu, 1973; Shivji, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1986; Tandon, 1973; Von Freyhold, 1977; Caplan, 1992). The growth of the ‘bureaucratic bourgeoisie’ and the *wabenzi* (those who drive around in Mercedes-Benz cars), the neglect of the peasantry (no wonder they were resistant or, as Goran Hyden put it in 1980, ‘uncaptured’) and the imposition of forced villagisation were widely decried both in Tanzania and more widely as sitting ill with the rhetoric of ‘African socialism’ and undermining both the government’s legitimacy and productive forces. Some have argued that in any case, Tanzania was only socialist in any sense for a short period before it moved to place an emphasis on ‘progressive farmers’ (Von Freyhold, 1979), others that it was never very socialist anyway, given that foreign investment was encouraged, World Bank advice followed, and the American consultants McKinsey brought in for advice (Resnick, 1981). In the 1970s and 1980s, Tanzania came to rely increasingly on foreign (particularly Scandinavian) donor aid, much of which was inappropriate: too capital-intensive and dependent on imports, too expensive. Yeager called Tanzanian socialism an ‘impossible dream’ (1989:99).

Yet when we discuss equality and inequality, we need to be aware of their manifestations in many ways, contexts and persons. Thus, for example, the Tanzanian ideology around *ujamaa* had little to say about equality in gender relations. Furthermore, in its romanticised view of a traditional African past, *ujamaa* failed to take account of important and long-standing forms of hierarchy, such as that based on ethnicity on the coast and islands, which still remains salient. As will be seen, the effects of post-socialism have been similarly contradictory.

For if the socialist era was deemed to have had its shortcomings, the post-socialist period in Tanzania, which took off in the mid-1980s, has certainly not strengthened social justice (see Chachage & Mbilinyi, 2003). Accommodation with the IMF meant massive increases in food prices, and user charges for health care and school fees,<sup>8</sup> indeed, the state has largely withdrawn from large areas of social services, especially health, which is now stitched together by a plethora of donor agencies. Economic liberalisation and structural adjustment policies have led to privatisation on a grand scale ('selling the country' as it is often termed). In parallel with this there has been the collapse of markets for important cash crops, starting with sisal, then coffee and coconuts. Income differentials have sky-rocketed and there appears to have been a huge increase in corruption.

Further, the switch to a multiparty politics has been purely nominal (see Kelsall, 2003). Although there is supposed to be separation between party and government, in effect, certainly at the village level, they are more or less one and the same. Furthermore, top-down policies remain, even though the official rhetoric is that they are now supposed to go from the bottom upwards. There is still a wide gap between political theory and practice, and in the extent to which people can actually obtain their legal rights. Interestingly, even though everything is supposed to have changed, there remains a great continuity of rhetoric about 'self-help' as the answer to problems.

## **Mafia Island 1965-2004**

### **The 1960s: Independence & Optimism**

Tanzania in 1965 was newly independent, and had achieved this status without the conflict and bloodshed which marked other nationalist struggles. Yet there was little unanimity about the way forward.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, it was undoubtedly the era of TANU (Tanganyika African National Union), which on the whole commanded great political legitimacy – *TANU TANU yajenga nchi* (TANU builds the country) was a song heard on every conceivable occasion.

This was a period of considerable optimism and excitement over independence, when people expected that life would improve: children would be educated and health facilities would be extended. *Kujitegemea* (self-reliance) and *kujitolea* (doing things for oneself) were the methods by which development was to be achieved and people were urged to participate in communal labour to build classrooms, clinics and houses for medics and teachers.

On Mafia Island, as had been the case since German times, coconut trees were the main form of wealth, although a few men owned other forms of capital such as fishing boats. Here, as elsewhere, it was also the era of state-run cooperatives, and on the island people turned their main cash crop – coconuts – into copra which was sold through the state-run coops, rather than, as previously, to Indian traders. Mafia

was then a part cash, part subsistence economy. In the north of the island, people grew enough food to feed themselves for about half of the year, while using their cash crops to purchase food for the remainder. In the south, where there was less cultivable land and more coconut trees, people were more dependent on the sale of crops to buy food.

There were, of course, some 'rich people' (*matajiri*), and at that time on Mafia they were mainly Indian traders in the district capital, Kilindoni, a handful of European and Indian plantation owners, as well as a few Arab shopkeepers in the villages. The socio-economic hierarchy of the colonial period, particularly salient on the coast, was still relevant: Europeans (*Wazungu*) at the top, followed by Indians (*Wahindi*), then Arabs (*Waarabu*), freeborn Africans (*waungwana*), and lastly descendants of slaves (*watumwa*) – but this hierarchy was not uncontested as had already become clear in the bloody Revolution and its aftermath in Zanzibar in 1964.<sup>10</sup>

### **The 1970s: Villagisation & Bitterness**

By the middle of 1976, the whole country had just gone through the upheaval of villagisation<sup>11</sup> and, at village meetings, people berated visiting government officials about their forced move, and complained about the distance of their new house sites from their fields and plantations. In private people were even more bitter about what had happened, especially those who had lost their houses.

There were also complaints about price rises and shortages of basic foods like sugar. Locals also disliked the fact that in order to export their coconuts to the mainland (by this time the coops had more or less collapsed), they needed a permit. They were also under pressure to clear the land around their coconut trees, and to cultivate cassava. In many respects, then, the colonial tradition of decrees and threats continued in what some commentators have termed 'socialism from above' (Boesen, Madsen & Moody, 1977; Havenick, 1993; Caplan, 1992). On the positive side, however, many more children were in school by then, and the Adult Literacy Campaign had clearly been extremely successful.

### **The 1980s: Economic Crisis – What Crisis?**

In the 1980s, there was an economic crisis in Tanzania which had been induced by a number of factors, including the rise in oil prices, increasingly unequal exchange relations, drought and the war with Uganda.<sup>12</sup> Most of what was available in shops in Dar es Salaam was in the form of plastic 'luxury' goods imported from the Gulf, while more basic urban 'necessities', like packets of soup or light bulbs, were prohibitively expensive. Senior civil servants and academics in Dar started 'projects' (*miradi*) to make ends meet as the value of their salaries plummeted: setting up a farm on the outskirts of the city, keeping cattle or chickens in the backyards of their houses to be able to sell milk or eggs. Paradoxically, it was this period of economic difficulty in the late 1970s and early 1980s which allowed some women new opportunities, as wages in the formal sector declined in real value and households had to engage in projects to obtain second incomes (Swantz & Tripp, 1996; Tripp, 1997).

Nonetheless, people had benefited from the previous decades of state investment in primary schools and primary health care. In the village where I did much of my work, people were happy that the primary school now offered up to Standard 7,

instead of being restricted to only four standards, and virtually all the children of school age were attending, including the girls. The village clinic now had a staff of two midwives and two paramedics. In effect, this was the period in which state intervention in education and health had made a considerable difference to people's lives.

Furthermore, contrary to the situation in Dar, many people in northern Mafia in the mid-1980s were doing rather well economically, because the shortage of foreign exchange had precluded the import of cooking oil into the country; as a result, the price of coconuts had gone up dramatically as city-dwellers turned to them to obtain oil for cooking. Men spent more time planting coconut trees and much less time on food crops, which had important implications for the extent to which households were self-sufficient in food. Where they could afford to do so, they employed immigrant labourers to assist in their task, and some men married additional wives.

Paradoxically, then, even as most of Tanzania suffered from the economic situation, Mafians were relatively well off economically as their main product (coconuts) was in demand. People in the village where I resided were raising funds to buy their own bus or lorry. Considering the sums which men contributed in public meetings, the extent to which the economy had become monetised was clearly evident, even if this process had not benefited all Mafians equally. Thus women were suffering from increased workloads, as men spent more time on cash crops than food crops, and they themselves received less food to eat, as the increased cash income (mainly in the hands of men) was not necessarily used to buy staples (Caplan, 1989a, b).

### **The 1990s: Life Gets Harder**

In the Dar es Salaam of the mid-1990s, one could not help but be struck by the visible evidence of increasing social differentiation. This was perhaps scarcely surprising, given that once Nyerere had left office, his successor had lost no time in signing a deal with the IMF for a structural adjustment programme, while privatisation and cuts in social welfare were in full swing. On the outskirts of the city were huge villas, protected by high walls, while in the centre were street children and beggars. Tanzania was gearing up for the introduction of a multi-party system, about which there was considerable lack of enthusiasm among Mafians.

The economy on Mafia had slumped back, as economic liberalisation meant that cooking oil was being imported again, and there was less demand for coconuts for cooking. However, fishing had continued to expand, particularly for lobsters, which young men (who were capable of the deep diving required) could sell for relatively high prices to middlemen who took them for sale to Dar es Salaam and beyond.

There were clear signs that the state's input into health and education had declined. In one village, the primary school had fallen down and a new one was being built, as usual with 'voluntary' labour, with sanctions of large fines for men who did not attend for the regulation three-day stretches. The village clinic lacked sufficient medicines, and the district hospital, built in the 1970s, was beginning to be very run-down. Mafia had however finally acquired a secondary school, although it only had room for a small proportion of the primary school leavers on the island.

## **2002 & 2004: New Enterprises but Few Local Benefits**

Eight years later, Dar es Salaam had the appearance of booming – new buildings going up (including more huge villas), a vast increase in traffic, and new supermarkets and shopping malls offering every kind of item for those who had the money. At the same time the streets were filled with unemployed young men hawking a few shirts or other goods to passers-by.

On Mafia most people were struggling even more than before with rising food prices and declining commodity prices. Three major innovations which were supposed to bring development to the island were producing very uneven results (Caplan, 2003). First of all, the southern part of the island had been designated a Marine Park with funding from the WWF (formerly World Wildlife Fund), NORAD (The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation), DFID (Department for International Development) and others (see Walley, 2004a, b). Although this was supposed to be a participatory venture with local communities, there had been conflict over restrictions on fishing in the name of conservation. There was also considerable resentment that most of the jobs generated by the creation of the Park had gone to non-Mafians.

Second, the small Greek-owned fish-processing factory in Kilindoni had been taken over by a large Kenyan Asian company, and was being rebuilt to process not only finfish, but also the prawns which were expected to come from their newly planned prawn farm in northern Mafia. Local people resented the land which had been taken for this and worried about the effects of prawn farming on their environment. While the processing factory offered some employment, it was poorly paid and people were only hired when needed.

Third, the tourist sector in Utende in the south-east corner of the island had increased from a single, government-owned hotel to four small but up-market hotels, all foreign-owned. Although these also offered some employment, with between 25 and 30 staff in each, local people usually only obtained low-ranking jobs such as gardeners.<sup>13</sup> A similar situation obtained in government offices in the District Capital: most of the civil servants there, as well as teachers and health workers in the villages came from other parts of Tanzania.

In some of the villages, the land abutting beaches had been sold to foreign developers for hotels. Many people had only agreed to sell because they were desperate for cash as the price of coconuts had dropped still further. However, they feared the consequences of a tourist industry in their midst, not least the prospect of losing access to the beaches ('our workshops' – *viwanda vyetu*) and the undesirable influence of tourists behaving or dressing badly (*ovyoy*). A few thought that hotels might bring work, but most were pessimistic: 'They will want educated people, not people like us'.

In other words, the new economic enterprises had given little opportunity to locals to improve their economic position and there was little optimism that they would do so, particularly as long as education on Mafia continues to remain a problem. While the island now has some 24 primary schools, there is an acute shortage of teachers, classrooms and basic equipment. Scarcely surprising then that the drop-out rate is high, indeed in an interview with the District Education Officer in 2002, he gave a figure of 38 per cent in 2000-2001, but thought it had improved somewhat to 27 per cent a year later. Although only a small minority of children who complete Standard

7 passes well enough to go to the single secondary school, here too the drop out rate is high, especially for girls, who are already outnumbered by boys.<sup>14</sup>

Local people constantly complain that there is no work available locally (*kazi hakuna*) and that there is also very little money circulating because there is no market for coconuts (*soko hakuna*). Whereas in the 1960s through the 1980s, villagers obtained cash through the sale of coconuts, today their incomes have shrunk, with two major results. One is that there is little work available locally – people do not hire others to help them with jobs. The other is that food security has become an increasingly serious problem, with steep rises in the price of bought food on which villagers depend to supplement what they can grow for themselves (Caplan, 2006).

### Differential Effects: Old & Young, Women & Men

So who has benefited from the social changes which have taken place during this 40-year period, and who has lost out? In this section I consider briefly the shifts which have taken place in relations between first of all, older and younger people and then between women and men.

In the newly independent period of the 1960s, older people on Mafia tended to have more wealth than younger ones – they had inherited coconut trees or planted them, and they could command the labour of younger people. In the recent past, such a situation has changed, or at least is seen to be different (Caplan, 1998). For example, young men not only have the option of leaving the village and going to Dar (which they have done for a long time) but there are new local economic activities such as lobster fishing which command relatively high incomes. There are also new forms of consumption on which such income can be spent: bicycles, watches, radios, video shows and clothes which are more attractive than giving money to one's parents for household expenses. The change in the distribution of assets has led, according to older people, to the lack of respect they now receive from the young, who are seen to be 'going with the times' (*kwenda na wakati* – see Saleh, 2004). For some young men,<sup>15</sup> then, there are increased (albeit limited) opportunities for making a living through fishing, while for older people, economic opportunities for acquiring wealth through coconuts has decreased.

Turning to gender, during the 1960s and 1970s gender relations on Mafia could be characterised as being based on relative equality, with women having a good deal of sexual autonomy and playing a major role in production and in certain rituals (Caplan, 1976, 1982). The sphere of *mila* (custom) gave women significant roles and social importance. Even so, because of Islamic inheritance laws, women owned much less property than men, and had fewer rights in relation to divorce. Furthermore, no women held public office in any of the villages in which I conducted research, although this was the period when the *Ummoja wa Wanawake wa Tanzania* (The Women's Union – UWT) was active on Mafia.<sup>16</sup>

Gender relations on Mafia changed somewhat in the 1980s.<sup>17</sup> While there had long been a pattern of girls' and women's entitlement to food being less than that of men, this factor was of relatively little importance when food was plentiful, but had become more significant with increased food insecurity in the 1980s (Caplan, 1999). This was an important reason why female children died in larger numbers than male. Even positive steps were sometimes limited: for example, while contraception had been introduced, women did not have access to it at village, only at district level,

involving a long and expensive journey, and they had to have written permission from their husbands first (Caplan, 1995).

By 1994 women were playing a greater role in public life, a trend which continued. In the village I know best, for example, five out of 18 councillors were women by 2002. Women felt that life for them had improved in some respects: more girls were at school, including secondary school, women had a clinic in which to give birth, contraception was now available at the village clinics, more husbands were likely to agree to their wives playing public roles and attending training courses.

Nonetheless, in other respects, women argued, they still remained worse off than men: they worked much harder; many girls married too early, sometimes to men not of their choosing, and so their education was cut short; some girls who had passed the examination to go to secondary school were refused permission to do so by their parents; many husbands still preferred their wives not to get involved in public activities. Finally, because economic circumstances had worsened, few men could support their wives even to the minimum extent that had been the norm in the 1960s – women had to rely increasingly on themselves to obtain clothes, and often had to contribute cash to the household for the purchase of food and other necessities, thus adding to their already considerable workloads (Caplan, 1995a). Increasing numbers of divorced or widowed women were choosing to remain unmarried (Caplan, 1995b).

### **Talking about Inequality & Social Justice: Memories, Comparisons & Entitlements**

On Mafia today, government officials, few of whom are local or even coastal people, often argue that 'Formerly people were just receivers of hand-outs, now they have to rely on themselves', phrases often repeated by officers from the ruling CCM party (*Chama cha Mapinduzi* – 'Party of the Revolution'). A senior government official on Mafia (a Christian mainlander) told me '[Local] culture is a real problem. It's *ya Kiarabu* (Arab-style), *Inshallah* (God willing)'. Another, from a similar background, who was head of a department, said 'People here are ignorant, uneducated, they just wait for the government or the NGOs to do things'.

But villagers see things differently: neo-liberalisation, with its *sokio huria* (free market), *wawekezaji* (investors), and *ubinafsaji* (privatisation) has affected all aspects of their lives, including food, health, education, and land rights. For many people, these changes have not been for the better. They say things like:

*Government policies keep changing;*

*No one explains things properly to us and we are not consulted;*

*The government is just for the people at the top (watu wa juu juu);*

*There is no work or market for our goods;*

*The government and civil servants only look after themselves;*

*The government is selling the country.*

They see this situation as unfair and talk of both justice and rights (*haki zetu*).

Nor do they consider that the plethora of NGOs and *wafadhili* (donors) can replace the role of the state in its responsibility for the welfare of citizens. In one interview after another with villagers in 2002 and 2004, the importance of the role of government was stressed:

**Extract 1 from interview with a woman in her thirties**

*You see the state of things here. There is no one who has even a couple of lakhs in their house. Poverty has really entered [our lives] ...*

Q. And whose responsibility is that?

*The main responsibility is that of the government.*

Q. So how do you think your taxes are spent?

*We are told it is spent on the villages! But we only get bits and pieces!*

Q. Do leaders come here to the village?

*Yes, they do and they see what's going on but they don't actually DO anything.*

**Extract 2 from interview with a middle-aged woman**

Q. And how does the government come in to all of this (development)?

*The government has to come in. For example people were having to pay T.Sh. 2,000 fees p.a. for primary school, now they've stopped the payment of fees (as a result of protests, the drop in numbers of children in school and the debt relief granted to Tanzania), so that shows the government can act.*

**Extract 3 from interview with middle-aged man**

Q. What do you think of free market policies?

*The government should be like a kind of father who has to feel pity for his children [and look after them]. If you just leave it to others, they'll do whatever they like. So I don't like the current policies.*

As was seen from the exchange between Nyerere and the World Bank cited earlier, one of the ways in which people everywhere make sense of the world is in terms of comparison and Mafians are no exception. People on Mafia Island contrast the lives they lead with those they hoped to lead, especially in the euphoric period after independence; they contrast their own lives with those of which they catch glimpses in tourist hotels and on TV when they visit the city. They argue that recent developments on the island such as the establishment of a Marine Park, prawn farming and tourism will only result in greater inequalities in their lives, as they lose former entitlements to land and access to areas of the sea, beaches and other resources, while the poor educational facilities on the island mean that they are unable to compete for jobs in these new sectors. They also bemoan the decrease in moral values which they perceive in political life and in the role of the state, even among kin and neighbours.

They compare their lot to that of mainlanders and their island to places which they have visited, particularly Dar es Salaam. They see Mafia as backward, remote, and

underdeveloped.<sup>18</sup> Many Mafians have also visited Zanzibar, indeed, in the 1960s, it was common for young men to migrate to Zanzibar (Unguja and Pemba) for the clove-picking season. A number of Mafians settled in Zanzibar Town, especially in Ng'ambo, although visits to Zanzibar became less common in the years immediately after the 1964 Revolution there. For Mafians, as for other coastal and Muslim Tanzanians, Zanzibar constitutes an important reference point, a centre of *ustaarabu* (civilisation). They are aware that in Zanzibar, people have electricity and have long had television, that there are motorable roads and plenty of secondary schools, unlike Mafia.

People in the villages of Mafia also make comparisons between their life and that available in the District Capital, Kilindoni. Here there are thought to be more rich people (*matajiri*) and there are such facilities as electricity, a bank, post office, shops, secondary school and government offices, all conspicuously lacking elsewhere on the island.

A second reference point is memory of the past. Most people on Mafia old enough to do so view the present more negatively than the past. They tend to be highly critical of the present regime and blame government policies for their present plight. Some of their complaints are about mundane matters which affect their daily lives: why is cooking oil being imported and competing with their coconuts? Why do they have to pay dues when they take their coconuts to market in Dar es Salaam? Why do they have to pay for medical treatment, when this is supposed to be covered by taxes? But other complaints relate to the differences they perceive between people at the top (*watu wa juu*) and themselves: how come MPs get such high salaries and pensions? How could Tanzania, which often vaunts itself as being a poor country, afford an air defence system or a second presidential plane?<sup>19</sup>

In such conversations, especially with older people, there is a nostalgia for the past when politicians were viewed as being more honest, there was less corruption, food was cheaper, life was more manageable. In short, then, Mafians feel that they are now less equal than they were, less equal than they were promised, and less equal than they want to be. People practise resistance to the way things are and the harshness of their lives by complaining, by remembering how it used to be, by talking about how it should be, in other words, they say that things are different elsewhere and could and should be different on Mafia.

Many people look to the future with fear. 'We will eat grass' is how one man (actually a civil servant) put it, after lamenting the sale of national assets to foreigners. I asked many people what they thought the lives of their grandchildren would be like: 'Perhaps good, but more likely harder. They will have to scabble for a living' and 'We are finished, we will die' (*Tumekwisha, mama, tutakufa*) were fairly typical replies. In short, the past was better, the present is worse, and the future will be worse still. This is not just a romanticisation of the past as a golden age, rather it is a view of the present and future which sees people like themselves as having been consigned to the scrap-heap. In this respect, they articulate a view not dissimilar to those scholar-activists such as Chachage and Mbilinyi who have also been highly critical of the move to neo-liberalism (Chachage and Mbilinyi, 2003).

Many of them can articulate a very clear analysis of what is happening and why, and who is benefiting. But such knowledge is of little use, given their constraints of poverty and powerlessness.

## Conclusion

So what is the meaning of 'equality' or social justice in this complex scenario? In Tanzania there have been obvious changes which have resulted from the transition from a socialist to a post-socialist economy, and these have had major impacts on villagers on Mafia Island. Most notable are changes wrought by national policies such as the rising price of bought food and the need to find money for medical treatment and schooling. Other changes have emerged from transformations in the global economy: the decline in the demand for and price of coconuts and the acquisition of land and other rights by foreign companies such as tourist hotels or prawn farms. Overall on Mafia, life has become harder. This suggests that the kind of national statistics frequently used to measure development often hide as much as they reveal and may camouflage differences between and within localities, so it is important to focus on the local as well as the national. Further, the presentation of statistics may not always be very accurate and may even be 'massaged' to present a particular view.

Globalisation and liberalisation present both threats and opportunities, and their effects are extremely uneven in terms of locality and even within small areas. First, some local impacts may differ substantially from those of the wider society, as happened in the 1980s when Mafia enjoyed a coconut boom. For this reason, local specificities must always be considered. Second, wider developments do not impact uniformly on the elderly, or young people, or women. Some young men have benefited economically from the increased fishing opportunities, while older ones have lost out because their main capital asset – coconut trees – is worth much less than before. While women still carry much heavier workloads than men, are less likely to have attended secondary school, own less property, and enjoy fewer economic opportunities, at the same time they have benefited from great access to contraception, more education (at least at primary level) and entry into the political arena. Nonetheless, as shown above, existing social relations are being changed and challenged in various ways in different contexts.

This article also shows that there can be an important disjuncture between the dominant and official discourses (the 'view from above'), which are primarily positive, and local ones (the 'view from below'), which tend to be much more negative. But we also need to consider how positionality, memory and sense of entitlement determine what is said. Along with changes in the national political economy, we find that certain official discourses also change. An emphasis on equality is replaced by 'empowerment' and 'lifting people out of poverty, 'self-reliance' becomes less a community than an individual value, and the state withdraws from certain responsibilities in favour of private enterprise, investors, donors and NGOs. Ordinary people, however, like those on Mafia, persist in perceiving their rights vis a vis government in the same way as before and expect it to be responsible for their well-being. They contrast their lot unfavourably with that of others, with the past as they remember it, and with their expectations. Scarcely surprising then that their evaluation of changes in their lives is so different from that of the dominant discourse.

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books on the area include *Choice and Constraint in a Swahili Community* (IAI/OUP 1975), *African Voices, African Lives* (Routledge, 1997) and *Swahili Modernities: Culture, Politics and Identity on the East Coast of Africa* (edited with Farouk Topan; Africa World Press 2004). Her other recent books include *The Ethics of Anthropology: Debates and Dilemmas* (Routledge, 2003) and *Risk Revisited* (Pluto Press, 2000). She has also worked for many years in Chennai-Madras, south India on issues of gender and food and has done research in Britain, again on food and health. She is currently writing on local concepts of modernity on Mafia Island and food changes in India.

## Endnotes

1. For a more nuanced view see Heggenhougen et al. 1987; Kahama, Malyamkono and Wells 1986; Mwansasu and Pratt 1979; Othman 1980; Resnick 1981; Ruhumbika 1974; Uchendu and Anthony 1974. See also Swantz and Tripp, 1996.
2. A good example is the speech given by James Adams, Vice-President of the World Bank, on his departure from Tanzania. See BTS Newsletter 4, 2:1, 'The Mkapa legacy: economic reform, growth and poverty reduction.' See also [www.youngafrican.com/oldforum/topic.asp?ARCHIVE=true&TOPIC\\_ID=1438](http://www.youngafrican.com/oldforum/topic.asp?ARCHIVE=true&TOPIC_ID=1438) and Kilasara 2006.
3. Quoted in Odile Racine-Issa 2000, p. 37 from a communication of ATTAC (Association pour une taxation des transactions financiers pour l'aide aux citoyens). There were many academic defenders of *ujamaa* (African socialism): see for example Saul, 1979; Tandon, 1982; Von Freyhold, 1979; Rweyemamu 1973.
4. This paper was originally written for the conference on 'Equality and Inequality in Tanzania', June 2006, Cambridge. It was also presented at the University of Stockholm, 22 May 2006. I am grateful to participants in both events for their comments and questions and also to Lionel Caplan, Janet Bujra and two anonymous ROAPE referees for reading this paper and making useful suggestions.
5. I arrived on Mafia Island in September 1965 as a young Ph.D. student and stayed there for 18 months, conducting fieldwork in three northern and one of the central villages of the island. My major interests were kinship and descent, including land tenure, and spirit possession. I have returned once each decade (for several months in 1976, 1985 and 1994) to focus largely on issues of gender, including food, health and fertility issues, and have been twice in the new millennium (in 2002, 2004) to study local perceptions of modernity.
6. For more information on Mafia, see BBC 1977, Caplan 1978, and the website [www.mafia-island-tanzania.gold.ac.uk](http://www.mafia-island-tanzania.gold.ac.uk)
7. Even President Mkapa, quoted in the aforementioned *New York Times* article as having led the country into post-socialist, economic progress, stated: 'We are caught between a rock and a hard place in terms of managing IMF requirements and then dealing with the demands of our electorate'. Cited in Hertz, 2004, p. 131
8. Primary school fees were abolished again in 2002 and the school population rose rapidly, but with no concomitant rise in teachers or classrooms. Re health fees, see article 'Killer Bills' in *BTS Newsletter* 4, 4, Jan. 2006 based on a report by Save the Children.
9. For example, the students at the new University of Dar es Salaam went on strike because they were told that they would have to perform some kind of national service after their studies. Nyerere was furious and closed the university temporarily (see Shivji 1993).
10. On 12 January 1964 a rebellion overthrew the Sultan and led to the proclamation of Zanzibar as a republic. Three months later Zanzibar united with Tanganyika to form Tanzania.
11. Government policy was that all Tanzanians should live in nucleated villages so that they could more easily be provided with services such as schools and clinics. *Kusogeza* ('Moving over') which took place in 1976, resulted in millions of people moving to new house sites. On Mafia, and other areas of the coast where villages had traditionally been centralised, people were bitter when they

were forced to move in an apparently arbitrary way and their houses were demolished (see Coulson, 1979).

12. The Ugandan President Idi Amin invaded Tanzanian territory and formally annexed a section across the Kagera River boundary on 1 November 1978. In 1979, Tanzania declared war on Uganda and not only expelled Ugandan forces from Tanzania, but also invaded Uganda itself. On 11 April 1979, Idi Amin was forced to quit the capital, Kampala. The Tanzanian army took the city with the help of the Ugandan and Rwandan guerrillas and Amin fled into exile. Although the war was short, it was estimated to have cost the Tanzanian economy one million dollars a day.

13. One hotel on Chole Island made a point of employing local people.

14. In 2002, the secondary school had 242 boys and 173 girls. At this level, proportionately more girls drop out of school, either because they are pregnant, or to get married or because parents are less willing to pay the fees than they are for boys, whereas at primary levels, more girls complete than boys, who are also much more likely to truant than girls.

15. It might be expected that younger people would view developments more optimistically, but in fact, in the interviews carried out with young people, this was rarely the case.

16. Women played an important role in the nationalist struggle for independence (see Geiger, 1997), and there were a few important women in the post-independence government (e.g. Bibi Titi Mohamed). Furthermore, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere was among the first to recognise the oppression of women, especially rural women, in Tanzania. Nonetheless gender relations and the position of women were not allocated high priority in political planning, either by TANU or the CCM.

17. In 1985, I went to carry out research on food, health and fertility. This involved not only interviews and participant observation, but also surveys at the MCH clinic to collect pregnancy histories and data on children's well-being, as well as statistics on morbidity.

18. One of the very few educated north Mafians told me: 'A few of us Mafians got together in Dar – we knew that things didn't have to be the way they are. We have seen developments in other parts of the country, so we formed an association to fight for Mafia's development.' But this local NGO had no resources and was forced to apply to foreign donors for funding, which meant that, depending on the agenda of the donors, they constantly shifted projects (from environment, to income generation to HIV/AIDs training).

19. In 2002, Tanzania bought a multi-million pound air defence system from Britain. This was opposed by the then Secretary for International Development, Clare Short, and much criticised in the media. The same year, the President, Benjamin Mkapa, requested the purchase of a second presidential plane.

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# Filling in the Blanks: The Potency of Fragmented Imageries of the State

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Morten Nielsen

**Recent neo-patrimonial approaches to the state see the sub-Saharan state as a façade that serves – with different degrees of effectiveness – to disguise the play of clientalistic relations and the interests of kin and kith. Drawing on an analysis of how ideas are reproduced in peri-urban areas of Maputo, Mozambique, this article argues that no pre-given causality exists between encounters with a dysfunctional state apparatus and subjectively held understandings of ordinary people. We cannot a priori determine that incoherent and partial state practices necessarily lead individuals to perceive the state as devoid of legitimate moral value. On the contrary, locally situated individuals use ideas associated with the state to define entitlements and create standards for evaluating state-defined programmes or international donor-driven initiatives. Ideas of the state can thus be a basis for social action; even when the reality of state dysfunction is widely accepted, ‘ordinary people’ continue to invest themselves in these ideas.**

When referring to the state, scholars increasingly acknowledge that it comprises much more than political or administrative structures. Fundamentally it is also an *idea*, manifest perhaps most saliently in the widely held equation of state and nation<sup>1</sup> (Connor, 1994:92). I follow Young’s description of the ideational aspects of the state as the ‘ensemble of affective orientations, images and expectations imprinted in the mind of its subjects’ (Young, 1994:33) and analyse how such ideas are produced in the context of contemporary Mozambique. I argue that even though the production of local ideas of the state occurs through what state officials perceive as informal and frequently illegal practices, the ideational constructs in question often end up buttressing state-derived objectives. Thus, in order to understand the functioning and reproduction of the state in African political economies, ideational aspects of the state need to be addressed.

To examine how ideas of the state are reproduced and transformed I focus on the everyday practices of people as highlighted by recent approaches to the analysis of the state (Gupta, 1995, 2005; Ferguson & Gupta, 2002; Hansen & Stepputat, 2001; Herzfeld, 1992; Ferguson, 1998; Taussig, 1992, 1997; Hansen, 2001). Where I depart from these writers is that when they explore ‘discourses of stateness’.<sup>2</sup> they usually focus on the reproduction of the state through encounters between state and citizen. My research, however, has shown that local understandings of the state are produced and acted upon *even in the relative absence of the state*, a condition which affects much of contemporary Africa. Moreover, I argue that the discourses of stateness that circulate among, and become transmuted by, local citizens are

generally heterogeneous and fragmented. And it is their fluid meaning and interpretation that enables local agents to incorporate discourses of stateness within their individual worldviews. People immerse themselves by way of 'blank spaces' immanent to the discourses which arise because of the state's failure to produce transcendent ideas functioning equally well throughout its territory. Blank spaces are thus a metaphor for discursive inconsistencies and absences which inhere in ideational constructs. They are filled by the everyday experiences of individuals, including their hopes and fears, but also rumours and gossip regarding practices and personalities of state officials. I will show that locally produced discourses of stateness might ultimately serve as catalysts for the pursuit of individual strategies that can actually be beneficial to and strengthen state-promoted projects. Consequently, I propose that when exploring African political economies, we need to analytically capture the socio-cultural dynamics through which ideas of the state are reproduced and given impetus.

I start by giving a brief introduction to the Weberian roots of widely held analytical approaches to sub-Saharan African states. Using empirical case studies on land conflicts in peri-urban areas of Maputo I proceed to argue that current understandings fail to capture how ideas of the state are reproduced locally. Subsequently, I contrast these analyses with a reading of normative understandings of current governance reform processes in Mozambique. I argue that these reform programmes are marked by a *discursive closure*<sup>3</sup> promoting a decisive moral stance. However, all external phenomena (including normative understandings of development programmes) undergo radical transformations when inserted locally where everyday pragmatic considerations take priority. Consequently, it is unlikely that adherence to a clear-cut moral framework can be achieved. I conclude by broadening the scope of the debate by relating the discussion to the emergence of global norms such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

## Defining the State

With the current development focus on 'good governance', bureaucratic transparency and heightened public ethics, the state again emerges as a pivotal figure. As argued by Sampson, such foci come and go in waves, and we are currently in a conjuncture of 'doing good' (2002:6), which necessitates the stable functioning of the state. According to Max Weber's classic definition, the state can be seen as a 'human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory*' (1958:78, his emphasis). Not surprisingly, the World Bank mirrors Weber's characterisation in describing the state as 'a set of institutions that possess the means of legitimate coercion, exercised over a defined territory and its population, referred to as society' (World Bank, 1997:20). In both versions, the constitutive elements entail a human community, a government/military, and a territory. At the outset, then, development programmes which follow the World Bank's conceptual framework can be said to conceptualise the state as 'a system of structures' (Easton, 1957) or even a supra-local political entity mastering 'a set of functional imperatives of regulation' (Hansen & Stepputat, 2001:1). It is important to note, however, that the Weberian conceptualisation of the state is a creation of a specific Western cultural cosmology which dates back to the Westphalian peace treaty in 1648, whereby an interstate system constituted by sovereign states was established, each covering a population of citizens with obligations and rights defined by citizenship and allegiance to the state (Lundin, 2001:26-27).

When analysing states in sub-Saharan Africa, the above definition encounters several conceptual dilemmas. African states generally fail to meet Weber's criteria given their heterogeneous ethnic structures, often predatory governments and inefficient claims to force (Englebert 2004:74). As a further elaboration of two of Weber's dominance typologies (patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic), *neo-patrimonialism* has consequently been introduced as an analytical tool to capture the complexities of African states (Bayart, Ellis et al. 1999; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Bayart, 1993; Chabal, 1992, 2005; Erdmann & Engel, 2003; Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994). Although the expanding literature on neo-patrimonialism lacks consensus, recent contributions agree that it interweaves two types of domination, namely patrimonial and bureaucratic (Erdmann & Engel, 2003:12-13). Under patrimonialism all power relations are personalised: no distinction between public and private spheres exists. Neo-patrimonialism, however, emphasises at least a formal divide between the public and private and so reference to legal-rational bureaucratic realms can be made. The fact that two systems of rule constantly permeate each other means that preserving a public domain unaffected by private interests is impossible and leads several scholars to argue that the African state is 'no more than a décor, a pseudo-Western façade masking the realities of deeply personalised political relations' (Chabal & Daloz, 1999:16).

Neo-patrimonialism is thus a derivative from the Weberian conceptualisation of the state. Through its emphasis on the personalisations of power relations, it emphasises that the state is more than 'functional imperatives' used to govern citizens and things; it is also a mental construct or an *idea* (Englebert, 2004:74) with morally laden state institutions.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, ideas of the state might provide flexible cognitive frames which, to some extent, shape everyday practices in accordance with particular sets of norms and for a variety of ends (Dean, 1999:10; Foucault, 1991). What is important, though, are the analytical presuppositions inherent in this line of thinking which take the dysfunctionality of the state as a premise. I argue that this Weberian-inspired approach hinders a thorough understanding of the ways that locally produced ideas of the state ultimately buttress the workings of the latter even in its relative absence.

According to the neo-patrimonial line of argumentation, sub-Saharan states are somewhat different from Western manifestations given the inefficient and clientelistic dynamics of the former. It is argued that instead of serving as a normative anchor point, the neo-patrimonial state is a 'vacuous' medium, merely functioning for the interests of kin and kith (Chabal & Daloz, 1999:14); an amoral domain based on material returns, where public officials seek to gain without reciprocating (Ekeh, 1975:107).

One might, however, question certain premises of the neo-patrimonial line of argument. I argue that there is no pre-given causality between encounters with a dysfunctional state apparatus and peoples ideas and beliefs. Thus, we cannot *a priori* determine that because of incoherent and partial state practices, individuals necessarily perceive it as a 'cadaver' (Mbembe, 2001:241) devoid of legitimate moral values. These complex interrelations between the ideational and practical aspects of 'stateness' are what Blom Hansen defines as the difference between its sacred and sublime dimensions (2001:225-226, *passim*). It is consequently through mundane practices of interacting with state institutions and officials that its sublime character as a 'higher form of rationality' is sustained and reproduced (Hansen, 2001:226; Hansen & Stepputat, 2001:21; see also Herzfeld, 1992). What happens, then, where

such everyday interactions do not occur? Where the state is weak and only emerges through fragmented representations? Does this *of necessity* lead to the production of local ideas of the state as amoral and vacuous?

I argue, using data from the peri-urban areas of Maputo that even where the state is weak and relatively absent, people reproduce mythological discourses of the state which are often laden with positive moral value. Second, because of the state's overall weaknesses, such ideas are fragmented, displaying apparent 'blanks' which people fill up drawing on their everyday experiences in order to make what is essentially a heterogeneous construct appear homogeneous. And it is *because* of these blank spaces that people manage to reproduce discourses of stateness even in the relative absence of the state given their personal investment in the process. Third, I note that it is this lack of closure that sets local discourses apart from official political discourses. Consequently, in order for programmes of decentralisation and democratisation to gain a foothold in local socio-cultural universes, they have to take into account how discourses cannot be anything but products of local practices.

### **Mozambique: The Fragmented State**

Mozambique has all the traits of a neo-patrimonial state with a chaotic bureaucracy and high levels of corruption. This, however, says little of how ideas of the state are produced and to what extent these, in fact, reflect deeply felt desires among individuals at the periphery of the state to participate as full-fledged citizens.

Mozambique is a land of stark contrasts. The political period following the 1975 liberation was marked by a strong rhetorical adherence to marxist ideological thinking, which was hampered by the innumerable party cadres and bureaucrats taking advantage of the fragile administrative system in their quest to acquire private gains (Abrahamsson & Nilsson, 1995; Harrison, 1999; Sahn & Desai, 1995). By the mid-1980s, it became increasingly clear that external aid was needed in order to prevent an economic crisis. This led to the 1987 adoption of the World Bank/IMF-initiated structural adjustment programme, known as PRE (*Programme for Economic Rehabilitation*) (Hanlon, 1991; Abrahamsson & Nilsson, 1995). In a short period of time, centralised planning gave way to market-driven thinking emphasising a gradual pull-back of the state (República de Mocambique, 2001). Since then, there has been a continuing espousal of the market economy.

Macroeconomic indicators have been favourable, showing rapid growth, averaging 8.1 per cent per annum since 1993, resulting mainly from foreign investments. However, the socio-economic impacts have been very variable. Many formal sector jobs have been lost and few new ones created. In the urban areas in particular, there has been a rapid informalisation of the economy. According to a 1997 survey, approximately 50 per cent of the active workforce in Maputo was employed in the informal sector. Thus, with only a minority benefiting from the economic growth, there are growing differentials between the rich and poor. Wealth is increasingly concentrated in Maputo and neighbouring areas in the extreme south of the country, which are favourably located on the transport corridor from South Africa to the coast. It is also here that the state's presence is most pronounced through relatively well-functioning infrastructure, healthcare, policing, and judicial structures.

Irrespective of the state's stronger foothold in the capital, its weaknesses are also felt in Maputo's public sectors, such as urban management, land distribution, health

and policing which are all notorious for incessant red-tape and bribery (Scanteam, 2004; Danida, 2003; Mosse, 2005). In fact, since liberation in 1975, Mozambique has been afflicted by several corruption scandals and examples of political misconduct; the worst of which was the bank scandal in the mid-1990s, when more than \$400 million went missing from the Mozambican banking system. Subsequently, journalist Carlos Cardoso and lawyer Siba-Siba Macuácuá were assassinated, allegedly because of their investigations into this case which, among other things, revealed that former president Joaquim Chissano's son, Nyimpine Chissano, might be involved (Hanlon, 2001).

Since the introduction of PRE, Mozambique has been seen by donors as a success story given, first, the government's acceptance of structural demands formulated by the Bretton Woods institutions (Hanlon, 2002) and, second, a concomitant annual growth at approximately 8 per cent. According to OECD-DAC data, development assistance to Mozambique in 2004 amounted to approximately \$1.2 billion or 23 per cent of the national income making it the eighth most aid dependent country in the world. Thus, external actors, whose involvement continues to be extensive, do not seem to be deterred by the fact that Mozambique seems to fit the description of a 'criminalised state' (Bayart, Ellis et al. 1999). Herein lies an important paradox: increased donor support and structural adjustment programmes have been followed by parallel increases in illegal appropriations of state-owned assets and overall corrupt behaviour (Harrison, 1999). First, with the introduction of PRE, several radical adjustment initiatives were implemented, such as a 50 per cent cut of public salaries (Renzio & Hanlon, 2007:8) which ultimately caused many officials to accept bribes in order to maintain a reasonable subsistence level. Second, the overall privatisation process turned out to be beneficial to elite groups who bought up privatised companies through 'family and friends' within the ruling circles (Hanlon, 2002:7). Rather than eliminating illegal activities, the last two decades of donor involvement and structural adjustment programmes have created new forms of corruption through a process of 'pathological equilibrium' (Renzio & Hanlon, 2007:7) where donors accept a certain degree of individual enrichment and corruption in return of economic stability and frictionless implementation of reform initiatives.

In sum, Mozambique appears to be an apt illustration of a weak sub-Saharan state pervaded with a ubiquitous neo-patrimonial logic. I will explore below whether weak state practices at a national level do in fact also produce fundamental dispositions for self-interest at a local level as the neo-patrimonial approach claims (Therkildsen, 2005:49). I shall argue that this is not always the case. It will become apparent that discourses of stateness are reproduced *even in the relative absence of the state*.

## **Producing Local Discourses of Stateness**

Located in an area hitherto inhabited by small-scale farmers and *nativos* (natives) on the outskirts of Maputo, Mulwene was probably the neighbourhood most seriously affected by the serious floodings in 2000. Large numbers of homeless families from other parts of peri-urban Maputo, which were literally washed away, were resettled here in the wake of the floods. And, as transportation links, electricity and water were slowly restored, more people moved to the area, prompting the municipality not only to redefine neighbourhood borders but also to reconfigure the administrative structure. Thus, instead of having only a handful of *quarteirões* (quarters), 56 new

*quarteirões* were constituted (comprising approximately 150-200 households each), which required the nomination of 56 *chefes de quarteirões* (quarter chiefs). The intention was to regularise the allocation/occupation of plots in the different quarters, install electricity and provide street lighting.

However, inadequate funding for, and the illegal diversion of available resources by, municipal and state bureaucracies have limited progress in service delivery of this kind, and resulted in strong dissatisfaction among residents in the most deprived quarters. Thus, although most quarter chiefs had little actual say in how available resources were spent, they soon became scapegoats, and had to bear the brunt of popular disaffection. In one neighbourhood, the chief, who was accused of corruption and inefficiency, tried to single out and publicly denounce the residents who had made the allegations but to no avail. In the event, a small group of residents succeeded in forcing new elections to be held, during which the chief in question was voted out of office.

Two points are important here. First, the neighbourhood leadership and municipal district authorities were opposed to the idea of holding elections. Thus, although the neighbourhood chief was unable to actually prevent the process, he used all the means at his disposal to disrupt election arrangements. For example, while scheduled public meetings were normally held irrespective of the size of the turnout, during the run-up to the elections, he cancelled several such meetings on the grounds of low turnout. Second, what had ignited public protest in the first place was a widespread perception that the chief was corrupt and incapable of protecting local interests in the face of continued neglect by the relevant municipal authorities. In reality, of course, the chief's mandate was so circumscribed, that he had little or no influence over decision-making at the municipal level. Thus, what precipitated the political change were rumours of corruption uttered in a context from which the state was relatively absent.

After the floods, municipal surveyors drew partial plans for an expanding Mulwene. These maps outlined various industrial reserves which residents could not inhabit. However, as pressure on land increased, natives and neighbourhood leaders distributed plots in these reserves to needy families. In surrounding areas which had already been parcelled out, individual plots were organised into blocks separated by 15 meter wide sandy roads. The *quarteirão* were thus made up of squares of different sizes. Within the industrial reserves, which were deliberately not parcelled out in this way by municipal authorities, residents took it upon themselves to parcel out the area using state-defined norms of 15 meter wide roads and 15x30 m<sup>2</sup> plots. Headed by a former quarter chief who still enjoyed local legitimacy, an informal commission was set up and charged with responsibility for applying municipal regulations locally and thereby ensure physical access to all houses. While the initiative was not devoid of problems (the informally designed roads encroached on several plots, for example), and bearing in mind that all settlements in the reserves are technically illegal, residents have had to resolve problems themselves, itself an ongoing process involving *chefes de quarteirões*, informal leaders, *nativos* and residents.

In sum, these two cases originating from the same overall processes of population resettlement and neighbourhood growth reveal how, in the relative absence of the state, individuals and groups act upon fragmented knowledge of the political processes which cause social/physical infrastructure to function poorly or not at

all. A lack of greater insights notwithstanding, local residents appear to be succeeding in the pursuit of their aspirations. In this process, distinctions between public/private and legal/illegal appear to be of little importance; what matters is that the meaningful discourses of stateness are reproduced so as to facilitate individual and collective strategies. I now go on to discuss this important aspect of how 'discursive blanks' can be understood analytically, by arguing that development projects need to reconsider whether clear-cut unequivocal moral frameworks are, in fact, beneficial to attaining their desired objectives.

## Blank Figures

When playing cards, the joker holds a certain privileged position as the *underdetermined* wildcard that either buttresses or overturns an established or expected order (Hetherington & Lee, 1999). We have a similar situation in dominoes, where the double blank can be used in place of any number of white dots. Thus, in both games, the underdetermined blank figure 'provides a foothold for the conditions of possibility for both stasis [...] and change' (Hetherington & Lee, 1999:170); order and chaos. At a functional level, blank figures, such as the joker, operate by tacking together what is otherwise a set of heterogeneous elements so as to produce an arrangement that passes for homogeneity, as when a series of clubs lacking a crucial card is temporarily completed by the addition of the joker. Hence, blank figures are, in a sense, what makes increased coordination possible by bracketing incommensurabilities between the elements involved; e.g. when the joker manages to connect hitherto unconnected cards. Needless to say, this aspect gives to the process a certain degree of ambiguity and motility.

I propose that we tentatively see the lacunae inherent in discourses of stateness as blank figures. Particularly in states where the functional capabilities of the public administration are limited, local perceptions of state practices are often based on scarce information. Thus, in the deprived quarters of Mulwene, people had no clear knowledge as to why electricity and water facilities were still not provided, and so circulating fragments of information were tacked together by rumour and gossip.

As argued by Stewart and Strathern, rumours and gossip have certain crucial social qualities (2004; see also West & Sanders, 2003). Through reciprocal transactions of gossiping, community norms of acceptable behaviour are continually reproduced (Gluckman, 1963). Locally, we might therefore see rumour and gossip as constitutive of, rather than simply reflecting, social realities (Stewart & Strathern, 2004:56). Consequently, rumours do not constitute deviations from the truth *per se*, but should rather be seen as efforts to arrive at a temporary consensus of what is the truth.

In sum, people are exposed to circulating information regarding state activities. Even in regions marked by a relative absence of the state, people tack these heterogeneous fragments together using experiences from their daily lives which, in the cases described above, entail rumours and gossip on corruption. Through these interweavings are produced relatively stable and apparently homogeneous discourses of stateness, which people use as flexible catalysts in their endeavours to reach whatever objective they might be striving towards.

## Normative Closure vs. Blank Figures

The current process of reforming the public sector in Mozambique is closely interlinked with parallel initiatives, such as combating corruption, reducing poverty and decentralising sectors of municipal and state sectors (Negrão, 2002; CIRESP, 2004; Helgason, 2002; Republic of Mozambique, 2005a). Let me briefly mention a few examples of normative understandings regarding corruption at play in the reform process and subsequently contrast these with the everyday reproductions of stateness described above. My argument will be that *normative closures* implicit in the ongoing political reform process will have little success in local contexts where the state's reach is weak and information is scarce. Hence, rather than perceiving citizens as passive relays for political-cum-ideological projects, a reformed perspective which sees local transformations and adaptations as beneficial to the process must be formulated.<sup>5</sup>

In most public institutions, an overall 'zero-tolerance' approach to corruption is made apparent; if not in practice then at least in principle. Hence, in a direct appeal to all national citizens, the following announcement is displayed in A4 posters at public counters:

*Report all illegal payments that you have been forced to pay directly to the Director. We guarantee absolute anonymity and all possible support for the resolution of your personal problem. [...] The public workers thank you in the name of dignity. [...] Do not attempt to exhibit or offer money in return for favours. You will be retained immediately and held in custody until charges can be elaborated by competent authorities.*

A similar recurrent credo for the anti-corruption strategy is the explicit statement: 'Against corruption: do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep quiet' (Republic of Mozambique, 2005a). Such proclamations should be read as direct manifestations of the political-cum-ideological understanding rooting the reform process, where an explicit objective is to create 'conditions for the change of attitudes, values and behaviours, in order to foster greater integrity, transparency, fairness, accountability and professionalism; and, thus, contribute towards the establishment and consolidation of a culture of excellence within Public Service' (Republic of Mozambique, 2005b:7). However, procedures for the establishment of such radical transformations should be implemented only on an individual level, as structural factors allegedly do not cause corrupt practices (Ibid. p. 4). Rather, 'the promotion of acts of corruption is the purview of some public officials who know the norms, the laws and are privy to information but who, motivated by the desire to live in luxury, use their power and knowledge to extort the citizens and deplete the coffers of the state' (Ibid. p. 4). Interestingly, this last argument is directly rejected by a consultancy report from 2004 which concluded that overall structural transformations are crucial if public sector reform shall meet its objectives (UTRESP, 2004). At the same time, *Ética Mocambique*, a local anti-corruption organisation funded by USAID, has set up 'whistleblower hotlines' in all national regions but with only limited success: the national director told me in August 2005 that they had registered less than ten denunciations in total. While the reasons for this lack of success are varied, the director highlighted people's fear of the repercussions of reporting illegal behaviour as a particular deterrent.

In sum, at a political discursive level, we detect the emergence of unequivocal normative codes of conduct allegedly aiming to alter individual perceptions regarding the public sector, what I define as *normative closures*. I now wish to

problematise such approaches in light of the analysis of local reproductions of stateness described above.

### **Moralities in Practices**

I agree with Alexander (1997) that the problem with Mozambican reform processes is that democratic aspirations are assumed rather than investigated. Hence, the public/private distinction is rarely debated and so all individual practices not corresponding to public norms are rejected as informal predatory attacks on the national corpus. Following this line of thinking, local agents, either public officials or stakeholders involved in public projects, ought to *transmit* rather than *transform* officially sanctioned norms so that, ultimately, personal choices are aligned with government objectives (Rose & Miller, 1992).

I am sceptical regarding the usefulness of such assumptions to ongoing reform processes. No agent acts simply as a relay station for the transmission of external information. Rather, all parties involved participate in the constant reshaping of circulating phenomena according to different life projects, constraints and needs (Latour, 1986). Thus, a central feature of most social dynamics is *transformation* rather than *transmission*, given the tendency for individuals to engage in struggles that take place over the attribution of social meanings to particular ideas and events (Long, 1992:24). As this is a constant process, state-driven projects and implicit norms will everywhere be modelled according to local socio-cultural contexts which give new meaning and impetus to external phenomena.

My argument is that 'blank figures' immanent to all social orders have a decisive role to play. By facilitating a particular tacking together of heterogeneous elements, they enable local individuals to acquire a sense of agency as it is the creative potentials inherent in their individual lifeworld that guide the production of meaning and not, say, global norms regarding anti-corruption. Even in situations where the presence of the state is relatively weak and fragmented, blank figures enable the illusion of homogeneity. What is important, however, is that local productions of meaning do not correspond to state-sanctioned norms as all parties involved participate in the constant negotiations over its 'truth condensate'. At the local level in Mulwene, this occurred through incessant rumours and gossiping. I argue therefore that in order for reform projects to succeed, it is important to adapt political initiatives to these social dynamics, rather than vice-versa.

### **Normative Closures & Beyond**

Analytically and politically, a tendency has been to understand social change as having a source external to social orders (Hetherington & Lee, 1999:172), which, by the way, is why international development workers remain important to reform processes.<sup>6</sup> However, as described above, transformations from within occur constantly. They are partly caused by the ubiquity of blank figures which local agents fill up with experiences from their daily life in order to win the struggle over meaning and consequently facilitate individual strategies towards desired objectives. What should be acknowledged is the potential value to political reforms of these social processes. Thus, because of the constant transformations, local discourses of stateness might be beneficial to state-driven initiatives, even in the relative absence of the state, given the tendency of individuals to invest personally in the meaning-making process. In Mulwene, land in municipal reserves was

distributed so that squatters acquired plots and, in so doing, the possibility of public legitimisation of their tenure rights. In the other case, although based on wrong accusations, residents of a needy quarter managed to elect a new chief and, in the process, create a space favourable to the reopening of unresolved land disputes and the local installation of electricity.

Needless to say, similar processes occur at the national level. Thus, prior to the already mentioned bank scandal, all banks were nationalised by the Frelimo party with the result that there emerged a total overlap between treasury and the banking system. Thus, whenever president Machel was travelling, someone from his office would phone the bank and ask for thousands of dollars (Hanlon, 2001). And still the banking procedures continued to function 'because of the honesty, integrity, and good will of most of the people in the banking system' (Ibid.). In other words, irrespective of a fragmented and inefficient system, the practices of agents gain impetus from ideational constructs.

## Conclusion

This discussion takes us back to my starting point. I hold that the widely held neo-patrimonial argument is too rigid if we are to understand current social processes at the local level in weak states. As argued by Therkildsen, other motivations besides predatory self-interest drive local agents involved in state-promoted projects (Therkildsen, 2005:49). Neo-patrimonialism therefore cannot serve as an analytical premise, only as a derivatory argument; other tools must be applied in the analytical exploration of local social dynamics in weak states. I have thus proposed that we analyse how fragmented discourses of stateness are integrated within local socio-cultural universes in order to understand how national citizens in fact react to the circulation and localisation of state-promoted ideas.

Let me finally broaden out the implications of the above-mentioned analytical arguments and briefly discuss ongoing political processes in sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, new waves of donor discourses are sweeping sub-Saharan Africa with a recurrent credo on the importance of national adherence to global norms such, as the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in order to secure continued flows of aid (Addison, Mavrotas et al. 2005). This 'new, New Poverty Agenda' (Maxwell, 2003) promoted through the MDGs signifies an important step towards establishing international consensus on poverty reduction measures which, needless to say, can have important consequences for sub-Saharan African political economies, not least due to the ambitious goal of halving the proportion of people living in absolute poverty. As argued by Cornwall and Brock, MDGs 'are a normative framework backed with a normative imperative' which ultimately defines 'international development [as] a measurable moral goal that the governments of all countries should strive towards' (2005:1049). In other words, development measures and objectives as stipulated by the MDGs should be accepted by national governments of aid dependent countries. However, as pointed out by Maxwell, 'it would be naïve to expect a national consensus on poverty reduction policy: the poor are not a homogeneous group, and will not have identical interests' (2003:21). Consequently, it is crucial to recognise national ownership rights of the process. One needs to ask, however, how international norms are translated down through the myriad of political levels so that inherent norms can be understood and acted upon as intended. In light of the discussion above on 'blank figures', the answer is most likely that they are not. Although this is most often perceived as a crucial obstacle to

the proper realisation of development initiatives, my argument is the opposite: political discourses intending to create socio-political transformations only succeed when they fail. In order for locally situated individuals to respond actively to externally derived phenomena, such as state-defined programs or international donor-driven initiatives based on MDGs, the discourses must be sufficiently open and flexible for people to invest in. Thus, as described through the empirical cases, practices initiated in the grey zone between formal and informal might end up buttressing state-defined objectives.

This line of argument might be taken as an implicit defence of the 'criminalisation of the state' (Bayart, Ellis et al. 1999) by accepting public misconduct at local levels. This is not my intention. However, it is important to understand that weak and inefficient state administrations do not of necessity cause a total rejection of the state as a productive ideational construct serving both local citizens in their daily lives and broader political goals. The moral status of local discourses of stateness depends on their ability to become integrated within local socio-cultural universes and thereby serve as catalysts for different aspirations. Consequently, political projects promoting *discursive closure* through unequivocal normative codes of conduct are likely to fail as local receptions will probably be marked more by transformations and reformulations than transmissions. As depicted through the empirical cases, such transformatory processes are not destructive to overall political initiatives *per se* given the tendency of individuals to invest in the process when beneficial to own needs. An imminent analytical and political task is therefore to acknowledge the legitimacy of and subsequent adaptation to these local social dynamics.

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## Endnotes

1. Following Connor, I define a state functionally as a political subdivision of the globe (1994:92). However, as with most political phenomena, a functional definition says little of its ideational connotations.
2. Hansen and Stepputat see 'languages of stateness' as the 'widespread and globalised registers of governance and authority' invoked in the continuous process of construction of the state (2001:5). In order to avoid defining clear-cut registers, I take 'discourses of stateness' to encompass simply the meaning-making processes through which ideas of the state are (re)produced and their temporary fixations in time.
3. 'Discursive closure' designates the attempt to fixate meaning among an ensemble of signifying elements. As indicated by discourse analytics, closure is rendered impossible by the lack of a fixed center (Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999; Laclau & Mouffe, 1998; Torfing, 1998). Thus, the 'West' or 'Democracy' are frequently displayed as occupying discursive centers with fixed meanings although they are constantly inserted in different discursive strategies serving often oppositional objectives.
4. For a thorough analysis of the ways that ideas of the state interact with deep-rooted local cultural understandings, see Herzfeld (1992).
5. On heterogeneous networks of power see Burchell (1996) and Rose & Miller (1992).
6. I am well aware of current trends of giving 'ownership rights' to local stakeholders in order for them to regain authority over the process. However, taken as a whole, I still argue that the development world is marked by a strong emphasis on development workers as agents of change.

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## Debates

*The following remarks were delivered at a plenary session on 19 October 2007 in New York City at the 50<sup>th</sup> meeting of the African Studies Association. This was, for an ASA, an extremely animated plenary attended by over 400. The question and answer session that followed indicated the huge concern of all those present.*

*For instance, one suggested that the 'US is not interested in development or democracy; it is focused only on the "war on terror" and placing the Bureau of Homeland Security into as many states in Africa as possible'.*

*Another suggested that 'the trend in Africa is militarising the continent, creating terror in order to have a "war on terror" and suggested that the US was establishing military bases across the continent – a discussion we've had here in the pages of ROAPE about the use of language, i.e. when is a base not a base? when it's a facility run by privatised military or Bureau of Homeland Security.*

*ROAPE asked the plenary participants to rise to the challenge once again and put pen to paper; they were given a very short time to do this. Mahmood Mamdani was not well afterwards and wasn't able to contribute in time and the US Ambassador to the AU, Cindy Courville, had at first agreed but then withdrew at the last moment.*

### **African Perspectives on US Policy Toward the Continent**

*James H. Mittelman*

It is a privilege to chair the 2007 Current Issues Council plenary session at the fiftieth anniversary annual meeting of the African Studies Association (ASA).

Thanks to the ASA Board of Directors for making possible this opportunity for a frank and open discussion of US policy toward Africa. For many of us at this session, the ASA has been an intellectual home and venue where friendships are formed and deepened. Assembled here are different constituencies and generations of Africanists. I represent a generation that has participated in ASA annual meetings for decades. For me, the first one was the turbulent meeting in Montreal in 1969.<sup>1</sup>

Special thanks, too, to the ASA Current Issues Council, especially its chair, Elizabeth (Betsy) Schmidt, and US Ambassador Dane Smith. A new member of this council, I was asked to help organize a plenary session on US policy toward Africa. I replied that inasmuch as the ASA had vetted this topic year in and year out, why do it over again? Better not to rehearse the same kind of performance. I proposed instead 'African Perspectives on US Policy toward the Continent.' After all, sober evaluation can provide feedback and perhaps correct Washington's course.

We were on. I invited colleagues whom I had known for a very long time to come aboard. Unfortunately, George Obiozor, Nigeria's ambassador to the United States, also a professor who earned a Ph.D. in political science at Columbia University, was recalled to Nigeria shortly before our plenary and is unable to be present. The other speakers are: **Akwe Amosu**, a senior policy analyst at the Open Society Institute in Washington, DC; **Mahmood Mamdani**, a professor at Columbia University, founding director of the Centre for Basic Research in Kampala, and a former president of CODESRIA; **Mvuselelo Ngcoya**, a Ph.D. candidate in the School of International Service at American University, Washington, DC, and recipient of degrees in political science and African studies from the University of South Africa; and **Abdi Samatar**, a professor of geography and global studies at the University of Minnesota as well as a public intellectual who provides media commentary on African affairs and the diaspora. The respondent to these perspectives, **Cindy Courville**, is US ambassador to the African Union. She served as special assistant to the president of the United States and as senior director of African Affairs in the National Security Council, having earned a Ph.D. at the Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver, and having taught at colleges in the United States.

As moderator, my role is to be moderate. Nonetheless, although I write about democracy, I do not practice it at plenary sessions and will show my authoritarian streak in enforcing a time limit on speakers who undoubtedly have a lot to say about US policy. Next, I want to pose critical issues for consideration. Here is what I hope to learn about from my colleagues:

- Although the flashpoints of conflict in Africa have changed since the founding of the ASA 50 years ago, to what extent has US policy

toward the continent really shifted? The narratives today differ from the ones constructed during the Cold War, but are the structural forces and US policy objectives actually departures from the business of the Cold War? Is the historical footprint heavier than it ought to be?

- To what degree is knowledge about Africa implicated in the exercise of US power? Which knowledge set? And whose? In trying to understand generative forces on the continent, whom do policymakers in Washington talk to and draw on?
- Is current US policy, especially in its identification of friends and enemies, Selves and Others, directed by the Bush administration's stance on terrorism?
- In light of the aforementioned considerations, what correctives in US policy are in order?
- Although big, powerful structures constrain policymakers, there are also opportunities and policy space: a mix of limitations and possibilities. The call for action and engagement with globalizing forces opens the questions, On what terms? And whose terms?

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### Endnote

1. At the opening of the 1969 joint meeting with the Canadian Association of African Studies, someone seized the microphone and declared this conference over /'terminated' amid allegations of racism in the academic establishment, divisions within African studies, and demands for restructuring the ASA. Several resolutions to resolve these vexing issues were

debated. In this charged atmosphere, the Canadian Association of African Studies withdrew from the cosponsored meeting.

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## Dangerous Times for Africa

*Akwe Amosu*

These are dangerous times for Africa. Competition between the US and emergent powers like China is being played out around African resources and strategic zones. Most African countries' governance structures are inadequate to cope with either the resulting rocketing incomes or hegemon's demands. Further, the pursuit by the US and its allies of the highly ideological 'war on terror' alienates African adherents of Islam, thus polarising societies, and undermines the rule of law and human rights. Both these factors are causing US policy makers to prioritise security with the consequence that autocratic forces on the continent are being strengthened.

### Africa's 'Thaw' in the 1990s

The last time that Africa was the site of such intense external interest was during the Cold War. The Superpowers' contest froze and deferred political development in Africa entrenching autocracy. But as the world's two superpowers lost interest, a rising number of states became functional democracies. The birth and extraordinary growth of civil society was a major dividend; the emergence of citizen activists, professionals and others keen to organise themselves has galvanised African society and governance. The revamp and expansion of Pan African institutions and standards followed. The lesson of the 1990s is that African states and populations make progress when they are allowed to do so and get the right foreign support. How-

ever, in the few short years since September 2001, powerful foreign players have begun once again to view Africa's strategic and resource assets as justifying intensive engagement.

### US Policy Goals

Formally stated, US policy seeks to strengthen and defend good governance and associated transparent and accountable institutions under the rule of law, free and fair election processes, robust civil society and independent media; it has sought to advance those goals in diverse locations from Zimbabwe to Sierra Leone. Significant funds have been made available to support NGOs in many countries promoting free and fair elections, inclusive policies and more effective justice. Development assistance for education and health, such as the anti-HIV programme, PEPFAR (The US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief), have also grown greatly (albeit accompanied by pressure to conform to the Bush administration's ideological preferences). However where and when the US sees itself as being in competition with other powers, or is pursuing military and strategic objectives, these goals may take a back seat. This can be seen in two particular settings – in the competition for access to petroleum, and in the context of the 'war on terror'.

### Competition for Oil

The Gulf of Guinea is a critically important alternative zone from which the US intends to source some 25% of its needs by 2020. The need to secure oil supplies, particularly in the light of China's competing interest, causes Washington to avoid criticising or even acknowledging governance deficits and repression. Equatorial Guinea has long been associated with some of the worst human rights and corruption abuses in Africa. Yet in 2006 Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice welcomed President Obiang to Washington telling him 'You are a good friend.' In

other instances, US criticism of wholly rigged elections in Nigeria or Angola's serious governance failures and much delayed electoral process has been muted. Apparently the more strategic its oil supplies, the safer a country is from pressure.

### **Fighting the 'Global War on Terror'**

In framing the US response to the September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, the Bush administration has declared a 'long war' against the terrorists, in which both diplomacy and exceptional security imperatives must somehow co-exist. The results are contradictory. In Africa, prosecution of the 'war on terror' is fuelling the use of interstate violence to solve disputes, undermining sovereignty, eroding the rule of law and due process, and giving comfort to authoritarian regimes. It may also be creating enemies for the US where they did not previously exist. These trends are most evident in the Horn region. The US government has simultaneously pursued contradictory military and diplomatic policies in Somalia, and has reportedly attempted to pressure the Sudanese government on Darfur at the same time as seeking Khartoum's cooperation in intelligence gathering. Washington failed to make strong criticism of gross human rights abuse in Ethiopia while supporting Addis Ababa's invasion of Somalia; Kenyan and Somali citizens have been secretly rendered to Ethiopia for interrogation by US personnel. Perceptions of US anti-Islamic bias has in turn triggered intense indignation and anger among Muslims in the region.

### **Viewing Africa Through the Security Lens**

The competition for oil and the prosecution of the War on Terror seem to be driving a third policy reflex – the 'securitisation' of Africa policy. This is most easily perceived in the framing of

AFRICOM, the new US military command that will become fully operational in October 2008. There are practical reasons for creating the new unified command, but AFRICOM appears to be about much more than streamlining bureaucracy. The new Command will integrate into its hierarchy civilians from the State Department and USAID and will not only address security issues and military cooperation but help to establish human security and social stability, build investor confidence and promote development. It is not explained why such non-military objectives should be advanced through a military command. There is concern that US security interests will come to be 'mainstreamed' in all US Africa policy since AFRICOM will boast the most resources and the most clout of all government agencies focused on Africa.

### **Future Approaches**

If policy is to be set on a better footing, the following points are key:

- The US' long term interests lie in supporting the development of open societies in Africa; it is counterproductive to allow short term security and resource interests to consolidate autocratic governments.
- The more loudly the US proclaims its commitment to democracy and human rights, the more potential there is for damage when its actions and alliances contradict that commitment. Washington should speak out firmly on poor practice and sustain a consistent position on key issues, even when its allies are the culprit.
- The US should reverse the trend of using military approaches and institutions to deliver civilian objectives and restore the primary of diplomacy in relations with African governments.

- The post-Cold War history shows that buttressing serious African efforts to address African problems yields results. US aid should reinforce and strengthen such efforts rather than imposing external solutions and conditions. If conditionality is to be used, it should be in support of the local advocates of good practice, rather than to advance US interests.

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## The Great Continental Divide: US-Africa Relations

*Mvuselelo Ngcoya*

When Professor Mittelman asked me to participate on this panel I immediately said 'yes' as I was sure it was your run-of-the mill academic *snoreposium*. A week later, I received an email with more details. And, there was my name comfortably tugged between Professor Mamdani and Professor Samatar. I was sure this was a huge misunderstanding. For your sake, I hope Professor Mittelman did not make a mistake.

It would seem to me there is a great continental divide between US and African expectations of their complicated relationship. Contrary to some advocates of US policy toward Africa, I would argue that this gulf has been in existence since the first slave ship crossed the Atlantic in 1619. A recent report by the Congressional Research Service makes my case. Entitled 'Africa Command: US Strategic Interests and the Role of the US Military in Africa', it offers a pithy summary of US interest in Africa.

*... US policymakers have noted Africa's growing strategic importance to US interests. Among those interests are Africa's role in the Global War on Terror and the potential threats posed by ungoverned spaces; the growing importance of Africa's natural resources, particularly energy resources; and ongoing concern for the continent's many humanitarian crises, armed conflicts, and more general challenges, such as the devastating effect of HIV/AIDS.*

It is not that these issues are insignificant. It is the order that I find curious: 1) the so-called 'war on terror'; 2) energy resources (also abbreviated OIL); 3) humanitarian crises; and 4) general challenges. General challenges? This arrangement of priorities, I submit, drives US policy toward Africa. Major policy decisions have ensued, key among which is the intensification of US military presence on the continent.

In early October 2007, a press release from the Pentagon announced that the US Africa Command 'officially stood up today when the organization reached its initial operating capability to start functioning as the US military's newest regionally-focused headquarters.' Now when an organization with an active staff of 1.4 million, and another 1 million or so part-timers, and a budget of over \$480 billion expresses interest in your neighborhood you grin. But when you discover that the organization is the Pentagon your grin turns into fear.

Why this intensification of militarization of US presence in Africa? In addition to the so-called 'war on terror', oil is a major motivation. As early as the fall of 2002, none other than the last bastion of African interest, Britain's *Economist* magazine, charged that oil 'is the only American interest in Africa'. Indeed, imports of African oil are projected to grow from their current 15% of the US total to 25% by 2015.

From an African perspective, what are the potential dangers of this intensified militarization of US-Africa relations? First, as the organization Africa Action has argued, it puts the limelight back on African militaries as *the* most important institution – especially on security (and that narrowly defined in military terms). Just the other day I was bragging to an American friend that I didn't know the names of the military generals of South Africa, my home country. I might now have to look them up!

Second, it takes the limelight away *from* African intergovernmental security institutions. Small wonder, then, that the African Union peacekeeping force in Sudan, for example, is crippled by insufficient funding and equipment shortages. Third, AFRICOM, and I quote its official statement, 'will also seek to incorporate partner nations and humanitarian organizations, from Africa and elsewhere, to work alongside the US staff on common approaches to shared interests.' Soliciting African civil society organizations to do the bidding of the US alongside the US military will not enhance the effectiveness and image of civil society organizations on the continent.

Finally, and perhaps more importantly, the increased militarization of US-Africa relations re-enacts familiar Cold War arrangements wherein all issues were deemed secondary to so-called geostrategic concerns. In the same way that the Cold War sustained despotic regimes, I fear that the 'war on terror' will do the same. Authoritarian regimes will invent terrorists if it serves the purposes of power consolidation.

In the year when we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ghana's hard-won independence, it is fitting to end with the words of Kwame Nkrumah:

*Africa has failed to make much headway on the road to purposeful development be-*

*cause her natural resources have not been employed for that end but have been used for the great development of the western world.*

He was saying this in 1965. Sadly, almost over half a century later, these words are just as apt. The continental divide widens.

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## **Continuity in US Foreign Policy in Africa: Antithesis of Freedom & Democracy**

*Abdi Ismail Samatar*

Bluntly, I do not foresee any meaningful and positive change in US policy towards Africa in the near future. Let me use recent events in Somalia and Ethiopia as a point of departure in this presentation. In the mid-1990s, the leader of the Ethiopian regime, Meles Zenawi, was considered one of a new generation of Africa leaders who were embarking on a new trajectory of governance and development. Consequently, the regime received substantial economic and military assistance from the US and EU. The most recent signal of this support is the \$91 million which was granted to Ethiopia due to its 'strategic importance' to America.

America's and the European Union's stance towards the regime in Addis Ababa has been in contradiction to what the Ethiopian population by and large thinks of the TPLF-led government. The regime's near defeat in the parliamentary election of summer 2005 indicated the depth of the people's resentment of the regime, ignored by the US and EU.

Second, the Ethiopian occupation of Somalia, with America's unqualified support, demonstrates the latter country's imperial dismissiveness and opportunism. For example, the Assistant Secretary of State, Dr. Jendayi Frazer, went to Baidoa in southern Somalia when the Ethiopian killing machine was massacring people in Mogadishu and forced 500,000 residents to flee the onslaught. She did not even mention the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe there in her press statement. More recently, she paid a quick visit to the Somali Region of Ethiopia to 'look into' the accusation that the regime in Addis was punishing the entire population of the region because of the fierce resistance mounted by some members of this community against the regime's tyrannical rule. Major humanitarian agencies such as the Red Cross, Doctors without Borders, Human Rights Watch, and others such as *the New York Times* have all reported this punishment. Instead, the Assistant Secretary flew in and out and noted that 'she did not encounter any serious violations of the population's rights by the government.'

I will come back to these, but let me first talk briefly about America's strategic policy towards Africa which the two instances represent; I will confine my remarks as this relates to the following matters: freedom, democracy & development; initiatives by the local population; and terror. There has been a long established understanding in politics that self-interest shapes foreign policy regardless of what the consequences are for the countries on the continent. As many scholars have shown, US policy towards Africa has been a by-product of America's global projects; that is, the cold war or the 'war on terror' has singularly determined America's policy towards Africa.

## The Cold War & African Governance

**Ethiopia:** The majority of the population in Ethiopia were subjects rather than citizens of the imperial system, to use Mamdani's apt term. For instance, the Oromos, who constitute at least 40% of the population and whose land was rich in natural resources, were called *Gala* which was akin to being called *nigger* in America. Like many others, they were forbidden to celebrate their culture and were banned from ever uttering a word of their language in the presence of state authority. Despite such a subjugation of the population and absence of democratic practice, the US administrations (Democrats or Republicans) supported materially and militarily that regime until it collapsed in 1974. The imperial regime used famine as a weapon in the 1960s and the 1970s to kill off resistance to its fascistic rule. America shifted its alliance, after the demise of the imperial government, once it became clear that the Mengistu regime became a Soviet client, and adopted the military dictatorship in Somalia as its new client and supported the latter until it imploded in 1991.

These countries paid the heaviest price of America's wrong-headed policy, but they were by no means alone. Have things changed with the demise of the Soviet Union, the rise of a lone superpower in the era of terror wars? The blunt answer is no and I would add that things would have been the same even if September 11 did not happen, as matters would simply have taken another hue. Let us briefly look at how things looked like before 9/11.

The dominance of structural adjustment policies and a neo-liberal political agenda since the early 1980s meant that African countries were asked to give up their right to self-govern and submit to the demons of the Washington consensus.

This wholesale shift in the development regime destined that decision making got farther away from the population despite the fact that electoral politics were reintroduced to many countries which were previously governed by single party or military regimes. It is the height of irony that multiparty elections went hand in hand with political disenfranchisement of the population in terms of economic and social policy. Such a project was already in high gear when the events of September 11 'changed the world'. For Africans, the old order of policy-making remained and a new one was laid over it. The new one was to support the 'war on terror'. This project had two implications for Africa.

Africans were asked to support America in its war (whether they thought the war was legitimate or not). To their credit some African governments rejected such blanket endorsement which the Bush Administration sought while many others joined the terror course.

Many dictatorial regimes jumped onto 'the war on terror' bandwagon to take cover and conceal their illegitimacy. Consequently, America's fundamentalist ideology lent credence to these regimes and the latter got quite a bit of support for their loyalty rather than serving and being accountable to their people. Thus, the combination of a disenfranchising economic doctrine and the terror agenda which provides political cover to unlawful governments who demonize those who oppose their misrule have had disabling effecting on African democracy and development.

Further, on the political front, the regime spends more resources on security than even the old military regime did. Again, the US through its 'strategic partnerships' (see Volman in this issue) has rewarded the regime by training its forces and supporting it materially. I will never forget what one American senior

officer told me after he came back from his tour of duty in the Horn: 'the Ethiopian soldiers were *fascist* and Somalis in the region would not approach us when they were with us, but we had no problem mingling with the villagers when we were alone.' America's support for the regime means diminution of civil rights and the survival of a regime of terror.

**Somalia:** The US paid little attention to the terror visited on the Somali people by warlords since 1995 and Somalia was not to be heard in America's halls of power since Blackhawk Down. But events in 1998 (the bombing of our embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam) and certainly 9/11 changed all of this. First, the American security agencies covertly supported Somali warlords who were involved in snatch operations to hunt down suspected 'terrorists'. It is ironic that those who have terrorized the Somali people have become our allies in the 'war on terror'. Second, when the snatch operations failed to yield the desired results, the CIA began to fund the warlords to openly strike at what the former considered to be Islamic fundamentalist who were accused of providing refuge to three suspected terrorists. The CIA warlord strategy endangered many Islamic individuals who were managing local *Sharia* courts in Mogadishu. Further, the city's population was offended by the CIA/warlord agenda and this ultimately led to the birth of a popular movement led by Islamic leaders. Once the warlords were defeated in June 2007, Mogadishu became peaceful for the first time in 16 years. This Islamic-led movement swiftly spread into regions adjacent to Mogadishu and brought stability to the region. Although the vast majority of Somalis welcomed this peaceful development, the US government saw it as an 'Islamic Terrorist' menace and Ethiopia fed this paranoia by providing cocked-up intelligence that the Union of Islamic Courts was a terrorist front. The US immediate

moved in and began to provide logistical and strategic support for the Ethiopian invasion. A few months after the courts came to power, the US, using African regimes as a front, sponsored the UN Security Council Resolution 1725 which prohibited Somalia's neighbours from sending troops to the country. Despite this resolution, the Ethiopian regime was given the green light to invade Somali and dislodge the courts. This took place in January 2007 and new militant national resistance was formed after Ethiopian troops illegally occupied the country. Violence has returned to the city and the country which has displaced nearly half a million residents. US officials continue to demonise the resistance as terrorists and spoilers and refuse to heed and respect the Somali people's wish for freedom and self-determination. Instead, the US continues to support the illegitimate TFG despite the fact that its own professional diplomats have described it as illegitimate, incompetent and corrupt. America's stand on this is akin to its old tradition of calling African freedom fighter 'terrorists'.

## Conclusion

These examples are part of a historical record which demonstrates that US policy towards Africa continues to be driven by self-interests, regardless of the period. This has meant support for dictatorships and disregard for the African people's wish for democracy and autonomy to set their own economic and social priorities. Such evidence testifies to the incontrovertible record which has ill-served the African people. Some commentators have noted that the increasing involvement of China in Africa affairs might provide a counterweight to America – a theoretical possibility although recent developments in Sudan and Ethiopia suggest caution.

All of this is to say that Africans can NOT count on some other country to

'save' them. It is clear that most of the countries on the continent are too small and weak to challenge global behemoths such as US, EU, and China. Nkrumah's call was spot on, and it is imperative, more than ever before, that regional economic and political blocks are the only ways out of the indignity of the past. *Africa must develop its own hegemonic project.*

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### **From Bagdadji to Abu Hashim: New Approaches to Combat Female Circumcision**

*Asma Mohamed Abdel Halim*

Is female circumcision a vicious act of mutilation and injury or a virtuous act of purity and rectitude? Two opposing views dominate current debates, one authorising cultural accommodation and the other advocating the observance of universal standards of human rights. The former view has been widely vilified for sanctioning violence under the guise of culture, and the latter has been re-proved for its ethnocentric stance toward cultural rights. The fundamental ideas embedded in these divergent viewpoints toward the practice deserve consideration.

The last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a rapid growth in human rights activism in general and women's rights in particular. One of the issues that caught the attention of activists and scholars was female circumcision (FC). African activists and scholars and their counterparts around the world, are now evaluating their work and getting ready to embark on the next phase. Aided by first hand knowledge of multiple issues that complicate life for the poverty-stricken African nations, African activism succeeded in achieving some culturally sensitive approaches for the eradication of FC. When the discourse amongst scholars and activists took a leap towards understanding FC rather than condemning it, change in programmes and services was easy to come

by and the African grassroots responded positively. The practice of FC has decreased remarkably in some African communities; success stories are being reported from Senegal to Egypt.

I will continue to argue that FC is a form of violence against women and girls. However, an understanding of certain premises and approaches is indispensable for activists and scholars advocating women's rights; remaining sensitive to the views of the communities in which FC is practiced is imperative for the success of any intervention. Sensitivity advocated here is not one that further cements traditional beliefs but rather one that brings in a sense of temporality to those very traditional beliefs. The involvement of grassroots is one way to destabilise inherited beliefs and expose them as human-made rules rather than fixed immutable norms.

One of the issues that took prominence among Western scholars and activists is using law to stop FC. There is no doubt that the law is a good tool to employ provided that it is part of a comprehensive educational programme. While women are not reluctant to use available laws to avoid other practices such as forced marriage, there is little indication that the same women would use law to avoid FC. Despite the internationally commended law of Burkina Faso, some Burkinabes are still practicing and educational programmes are still necessary, responding better to the educational programmes than they do harsh laws. After the campaigns of Tostan, a Senegalese organisation, in some of the areas around the capital Dakar, the government wanted to stipulate criminal laws against FC. The Senegalese women in-

volved in the campaign against FC petitioned the legislature to delay promulgation of such laws. They knew from their own experience that women have to be convinced that FC is a practice that they want to avoid before using the law to avoid it. Indeed, the persistence of FC in many societies today calls for new strategies and tactics and decisions on the normative content of the campaigns against FC.

So far three factors have contributed greatly to the relative success of activism around FC. These factors are: (1) acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge and its value in solving local problems. Much of the resistance of the grassroots seems to wane when they take the lead and sit in control of their lives; (2) a growing number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are active on other issues that are of concern to communities; and (3) paying attention to the rapid cultural change that is taking place without programmed intervention, i.e. effect of education and exposure to other cultures. In this briefing I would like to present two experiences that managed to have the local communities directly participate in the campaigns. Of course there are other successful programmes, but I will not be able to explore them here.

### **A Senegalese Experience**

In 1999 I participated in the celebrations of one of the Senegalese communities that took place a few kilometres outside Dakar. The Senegalese women are benefiting from the world-renowned programme that has been designed and implemented by Tostan.<sup>1</sup> The women who were involved in the programmes expressed themselves in clear terms with a clear vision. Clearly they admitted the pains of FC they suffered to achieve an acceptable status in the community. However, after going through Tostan's programme they were able to express their real feelings towards FC. They talked

about their own lives and how they viewed themselves within the community rather than how they should look in the eyes of others. They regarded their community with respect and with a deep conviction; their changed attitude was not alienating them from their community. While we gathered around a feast of fish, the translator conveyed to me one woman's words:

*The better I feel the better my community gets. We [women] are not in a competition with our men or the government or anyone else. This is about our life and our children's life. We had knowledge before, but now we added something new. The new does not invalidate all of the old, only what we decide is harmful to us. Our culture stays, because if our culture is gone we are gone.*

Women's ability to use their new knowledge to change their lives was evident in how they made changes in their income generation activities such as applying simple health-improving touches, e.g. cleaning the streets and covering food on sale in those streets and doing simple feasibility studies to see if the business they were planning was worth the effort. Amazingly enough their discussions around health improving information have unexpectedly revolutionised their views on some of the cultural issues that directly affected their status and health; FC was such an issue. To change a revered custom, women had to gain the status necessary to raise their voices. They gained that status by feeling their weight as community members. As one woman put it:

*Difference around FC did occur with men in the village, but we did not fight with our husbands or call for a mutiny. We exerted our weight as important members of the community. It is not difficult to do that; you know why? Because men already know that we are important.*

The dominance of culture has been turned to serve the community and protect the good life rather than spoil it. Confronting the myths in the culture revealed that sometimes 'a vague notion of culture' (Uma Narayan, 1997), is used to justify breach of women's rights. Furthermore, this situation is complicated by the notion that culture is immutable. A group of Sudanese women put me on the right track when I blindly followed the statement that FC is a culture in its own right. One of them simply told me that:

*FC is but a process within the culture, a process that may be done away with without losing sight of the culture. The culture is mainly to abstain till marriage, ya'ani (meaning) - no sexual freedom; the process to achieve that was thought by older generations to be FC. So far we are not proponents of sexual freedom; we are fighting to prove that our culture can stand without FC.*

What the Senegalese women are doing with and within that culture is a matter that I thought would take a lifetime to achieve, but I was witnessing it happen within a short time. The attributes people assign to culture do change when the community realises that its well-being will be served by certain actions. Culture has been changing to suit people's desire to change gender and generational relations. Change comes about when people are empowered to act on their new beliefs rather than just carry a theoretical knowledge around without any actions. Discovering and using inherent mechanisms found in the culture can be an exciting process that enable and support change without any dramatic loss of the validity of that culture, and that is what happened in some of the Senegalese villages. FC was not singled out for discussion in any separate class within the Tostan programme. Women did not really think of FC as a harmful practice, but once they joined literacy classes, they never stopped

thinking of how to make their 'lives' better. Tostan reports that:

*No one could have been more surprised upon first learning about their [women's] decision than Tostan, since ending Female Genital Cutting in communities practicing this tradition had not been one of the specific objectives of the education program. Yet this same decision quickly spread from Malicounda, to Nguerigne Bambara, to Keur Simbara, to 10 more villages in the region of Thiès and then to 18 villages in the region of Kolda (www.Tostan.org)*

Within the grassroots movements one finds an answer to the simple question: 'why is stopping FC beneficial to the community?' I was both humbled and delighted with the answer. One woman said that there was something for her personally in ending FC and that she found it necessary for her community to respond favourably to her quest to stop FC. She added, 'I told my community that it was good for me. As a valuable member of the community I expect my community to support what is good for me and for other women.' There was a realisation that their lives can be better. The fact that FC was a group practice was not lost. The community has a huge stake in the good of its individual members. The happiness of the community is in the hands of its members. The community and the individual mutually benefit from each other.

A valid question may arise here: the above theory is not a new statement or discovery but why didn't individuals and communities listen to it before? Why are they listening now? The difference between now and then is clear: women and other members of the community may have known many ways to better their lives but did not act on that knowledge. The recognition that as women they have the power to act and use their knowledge to their benefit made a sig-

nificant difference. The change was not merely a change of attitudes towards FC, but a shift towards achieving a better life. A life that does not paralyse the individual's potential for progress. It was this thinking that brought about the conviction that FC does not fit in the future of women who are longing for gender equity and equal benefits in their communities.

A great deal of the positive change of attitudes towards what women want and how they should achieve it may be credited to the change in the discourse about FC. Debate over FC has evolved during the past decade from being a gruesome account by disgusted and/or horrified people, from non-practicing cultures,<sup>2</sup> into one that goes on between the community members and openly discusses the rights of women and their bodily integrity. I did not have to go far to find out whether men are of the same view. Under the huge neem trees in the village of Keur Simbara, a short distance out of Dakar, I met with Dimba Diwara, whose quest to end FC was reported by the international media<sup>3</sup> and other men from the village. Diwara is a renowned religious figure of the village and a respected one among his ethnic group. He did not mince words when he talked about how wrong it was to attach FC to Islam. He made himself available to go, by himself or with Tostan, to other villages to explain why they in Keur Simbara had given up FC. Dimba Diwara took me by the hand and pointed to his two wives and proceeded to explain:

We keep doing things most of the time without thinking about them. I say, this is what my grandfather left for my father and I ended up trusted to keep what my father did. But I do not keep everything they left me, do I? I am dressed differently; I travel on cars and trains and sometimes airplanes that they never saw. If they were here they would tell me to be a good man and a good Muslim and that is what I am being right now. Our little

girls deserve better and we the men deserve healthy children and wives.

### **Khira's Choice: The Positive Deviance Approach in Egypt**

For the first time they are not cowed into silence for fear of society's reaction to their opposition of FGM. For the first time people (who are typically the least empowered members of the community) from closed and traditional communities are standing up and speaking their mind.

The Positive Deviance Approach (PDA) or Inquiry (PDI) was pioneered by Jerry and Monique Sternin in nutrition projects in Vietnam.<sup>4</sup> This approach is defined as an approach rather than a solution. PDA identifies those who already have found a solution to what has been identified as a problem as opposed to the traditional methods of looking for the causes of the problem (CEDPA, 1999:9). It is an approach that can be carried out only by the community and for the community. The first step is to identify 'positive deviants', i.e. individuals who chose not to circumcise their daughters and get those daughters and their families to hold an open discussion with members of the community. However, the definition of a positive deviant has been extended, in FC programmes to include anyone who may stand against the practice. This definition made it easy to include men and circumcised women in the efforts.

A workshop designed to provide training for community members who agreed to participate in a PDA programme, to be implemented in their neighborhoods, was held in Boulaq El-Dakroor, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Cairo, at the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA). Azza Suliman, an Egyptian lawyer and CEWLA's director, talked passionately about CEWLA and its location. She talked about how Boulaq

El-Dakroor was not even on the map as a residential area, yet it was the home of thousands of people. CEWLA helped the members of that community get identification cards (I.D. cards were not available to people living in unplanned areas) and provided legal assistance to women. Such efforts to get governmental recognition and make the legal system accessible to those women, brought trust in the Center and attracted the community to its activities.

The women who were being trained were of different levels of education, however they all had an input on how to word the questions in a questionnaire being prepared for the community. One of the questions to be asked of the women was whether their daughters would like to undergo FC. One participant noted:

*I do not expect any of my neighbors to tell me whether her daughter would not like circumcision. First, we usually do not ask daughters that question, so mothers do not know the answer. Secondly, girls know little about FC and thirdly, mothers tell them it is a good thing to have it done. End result: mothers would answer this question by saying yes. I think we should ask mothers about their own circumcision rather than what their daughters might think of FC.*

Another participant was ready to critique the way the questions were drafted: 'There is a better question to be asked, why ask vague questions?' Almost all participants were graduates of adult literacy programmes. They were proud to show their literacy and leadership abilities. I asked a woman who introduced herself as a leader in her neighbourhood, about what made her a leader. She answered:

*If I see two people quarrelling on the street, I will tell them to disengage and move away from each other, they listen to me. When you are given the gift of being listened to it is a shame (haram) to waste*

*this ability and not use it to benefit the community.*

Availability of funds, albeit meager, provided a chance for reporting and evaluations. PDA became an exciting approach and an innovation that various communities found empowering and easy to implement.

As someone who is a witness to the persistence of FC, I doubted that PDA would be effective as an empowering process for women. Such doubts were cleared when I met Khaira and her friends. Khaira was a 19 years old Egyptian residing in the predominantly Christian village of Abu Hashim, a few kilometres from Bani Swaif south of Cairo. The Coptic church of Bani Swaif had already formed a working relationship with Khaira. Sister Yoannah of the Coptic Organization for Services and Training (COST) had provided Khaira with a first aid kit as a service to the community. Khaira was already a caregiver involved in providing a daily service of first aid in her village. Khaira enthusiastically explained what the programme had done for her. She and her colleagues in the programme started by locating families who had uncircumcised daughters. Khaira explained:

It was not easy for a woman to admit that she was uncircumcised. There were incidents of marriage arrangements being cancelled because it was found out that the bride-to-be was not circumcised. But we kept talking to them. Once we got together and talked about our experience with circumcision, they started to feel easy and agreed to talk to us. The more we talked about our bad experiences as circumcised women and our feelings against FC, the more the uncircumcised women felt privileged. The feeling of being subordinate left them and they participated in our daily talks wherever there is a gathering of women. They started to tell us about others who were not circumcised.

Khaira's efforts against FC were consistent and systematic. She talked about the practice wherever she went and to everyone including her father, uncle and the male youth in the village. Khaira noted that COST and the Western funders of the programme were alarmed by her enthusiasm, but she was unbowed: 'I told them, COST and others, it was none of their business. They showed me the way and I am grateful, but they cannot limit my success with their fears.' Khaira's example demonstrates that the participants not only implemented the programme but also progressed to build their own strategies without feeling a need to check with the organisations that designed the programme. The young women did not want to stop their campaigns with the end of the programme, nor were they content that reports by the implementing organisation should be the end of their efforts.

The young ladies of Abuhashim had a personal battle against FC. It was not an organisation's objective to be attained through certain rules. It was a battle to be won. Khaira said, 'we are doing it for our younger sisters and for those ashamed of being uncircumcised, for everyone to think about FC and other issues that are holding us down.' At first some of the neighbours told Khaira and friends to stop talking about FC, she recalled:

*One woman said to me your face is the same, your eyes are the same but your tongue has changed. I told her that it was not my tongue that had changed it was up here [pointing to her head] that had changed.*

Khaira admitted that not everyone had given up FC, but she testified to an overall attitudinal shift in the village, and how FC had become a public debate rather than a taboo. She added:

*The change is obvious, these days it is those who circumcise their daughters who have to hide, they go to other places to do it*

*and will not admit to it. That is how far along we are in Abu Hashim.*

The idea of leaving the matter in the hands of members of the community after the training, with no supervision from anyone, was in itself an empowering experience. There were no special sessions and no planned gatherings for the purpose of discussing FC. As Khaira pointed out:

*we women do not need someone to ring a bell to gather us. We are fetching water in groups, gathering at weddings, funerals, baby naming, you name it we are there in groups.*

Women gathering places especially at water pumps, were the best location to start a debate on FC. Women talk to each other about different subjects in their daily lives at these gatherings. In addition to insightful debates at gathering places, Khaira held her own one-to-one meetings. She admitted that she would never let anyone who came to her for first aid go without discussing FC. Khaira herself achieved success in her family by stopping the circumcision of her younger sister. Decisions against FC in her own family enhanced Khaira's credibility as an advocate. Not surprisingly, questioning the cultural basis for FC has led to questioning everything around them. Having the courage to discuss FC led to challenging other cultural issues such as early marriages.

The work of the positive deviants was supported by other forces in the community. The advocates and implementers of PDA found allies in the leadership of the community. Religious leaders, Muslims and Christians, came together to condemn the practice as not being part of their faith. The young men admitted for the first time that they would rather marry an uncircumcised woman.

## What Is Next?

Short programmes that address FC as an isolated problem are destined to have little effect if any. As the experiences described here demonstrate, long term comprehensive programmes, that span a wide area within a certain country or a group of countries, are needed to successfully decrease the incidence of FC and to end it once and for all. Governments will have to be involved in more than legislating laws. If governments are not catering for and answering the needs of people in other vital issues, why should they expect people to listen to them when it comes to FC? Actually history tells us of how FC was used as a weapon to defy and defeat the colonisers in Africa. African communities must be trusted to be more than recipients of instructions, who should be subjected to severe laws that ensure that they follow instructions. Laws are useful to protect those who opt out of FC regardless of what the community thinks, however, there is a huge pool of knowledge and culture that may be utilised by all activists who are looking forward to reducing the incidence of FC. Laws will be more effective when the majority of people opt to follow them. If disregarded by the majority, then their implementation becomes a humanitarian and a political problem.

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## Endnotes

1. Tostan is an international organisation situated in Senegal. 'Tostan's mission is to empower African communities to bring about sustainable development and positive social transformation based on respect for human rights. Since 1991 Tostan has brought its holistic 30-month education program to thousands of communities in nine African countries. We have been recognized by the international community for our groundbreaking work with villagers living

in extreme poverty in remote areas. Tostan means "breakthrough" in the West African language of Wolof.'

2. I choose the term non-practicing cultures because some Africans who do not practice view FC with the same degree of disgust and condemnation as Westerners do.

3. See the *Washington Post's* article in the Outlook section, 'Village by village, circumcising a ritual', 7 June 1998.

4. See Centre for Development and Population Activities, *Positive Deviance: an Introduction to FGM Eradication*, Egypt 1999.

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## Peace & Development in Africa

*Henning Melber*

During a visit to India in early February 1956, Dag Hammarskjöld presented one of the very rare impromptu speeches of his career as second Secretary General to the United Nations (1953 to 1961) when addressing the Indian Council of World Affairs. Prompted by a moving encounter with local culture performed in his honour earlier, his mainly extemporaneous speech explored the dimensions of human universalism. A commonality beyond Western – or, as a matter of fact, any other culturally, religiously or geographically limited – ideology or conviction.

*It is no news to anybody, but we sense it in different degrees, that our world of today is more than ever before one world. The weakness of one is the weakness of all, and the strength of one – not the military strength, but the real strength, the economic and social strength, the happiness of people – is indirectly the strength of all. Through various developments which are familiar to all, world solidarity has, so to say, been forced upon us. This is no longer a choice of enlightened spirits; it is something which those whose temperament leads them in the direction of isolationism have also to accept (Hammarskjöld, 1972:661).*

Isolationism is a phenomenon guided by a lack of reality or selective perceptions, found often by leaders and their followers. It is a universal feature and not confined to any particular society or group. By no coincidence it has been the British Lord Acton, who stated within the society considered to be one of the cradles of the modern day political system called democracy, that power corrupts, and that absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Former liberation movements, who after long and painful sacrifices by the oppressed people fighting against colonial occupation ultimately secured the fundamental right of self-determination and seized the legitimate political power based on popular vote, are not protected from these temptations. As a result of such 'limits to liberation' (Melber, 2003), Zimbabwe is in the midst of an ongoing crisis. The 'political economy of decline' (Dansereau/Zamponi, 2005) can hardly be ignored by anyone living in or having insights into the social and political realities. Even though Zimbabwe has in many cases recently denied the freedom of movement and the freedom of expression to those seeking to form or to articulate a view on the ground (Melber, 2004) – just as the apartheid settler colonial regimes of Rhodesia, South West Africa and South Africa had done so during earlier (and definitely not so good old) days.

Notwithstanding such disturbing features of limiting the freedom of individuals, to which numerous (and much more serious) incidences against its own people over the years since the *Gukurahundi* of the mid-1980s in Matabeleland have alerted, some maintain the impression as if there would exist 'business as usual' (and maybe it does?). There remain 'professional denialists', who continue to dismiss any such notion – even if the authorities of a state without any serious crisis of legitimacy could afford to allow visitors to enter their country freely. Zimbabwe's ambassador to neighbouring Namibia (where an increasing number of Zimbabweans are seeking refuge and thereby testify to the ongoing crisis at home) stated in an interview to the state-owned daily newspaper as late as mid-September 2007 that, 'Zimbabwe [...] is a peaceful paradise and politically stable since 1980'. Asked how the political situation in his country can be resolved he answered: 'The question is misleading because it assumes that there is a political problem in Zimbabwe. This

is not the case. There is no political situation in Zimbabwe' (Sasman, 2007). According to most others and in direct contradiction to the diplomat's view there clearly is.

These more critical views do not have to be a part of or closely affiliated to any of the organised political rival groupings contributing to a chronic state of protest, unrest and repression spiralling the country's people further down into misery and suffering. As the sub-regional body, SADC officially acknowledged, there is the need to mediate with the goal to bring the decline to a halt and the country back on track towards a peaceful future in stability. The *Communiqué* of the Extraordinary Summit of the SADC Heads of State, held because of the Zimbabwe crisis on 28-29 March 2007 in Dar es Salaam, however, provided a classic example of a dilemma when it 'reaffirmed its solidarity with the Government and people of Zimbabwe'. In this case, obviously, one can hardly have it both ways. It is fair to assume that Zimbabwe,

*has posed fundamental questions about the extent to which SADC members can and should intervene in the internal affairs of other member countries for the sake of regional interests. [...] SADC has been slow to respond to the crisis. It has failed to replicate the positive solidarity that SADC members once levelled against apartheid South Africa (Lee, 2007:129).*

Notwithstanding the reservations provoked by the ongoing double-bind message by SADC as the sub-regional organisation as well as individual SADC member countries, the latest assessment of the International Crisis Group (ICG) concludes that the regionally negotiated solution would be the most feasible option for Zimbabwe:

*The next few months present a moment of truth. [...] SADC and its member states have the capacity to reverse a downward*

*spiral which increasingly threatens the region's stability but they must be prepared to support the initiative they have begun and Mbeki's mandate. This means using economic leverage, conditioning a recovery package on performance and making clear that if there is no cooperation they will not hesitate to call the initiative a failure and reject elections that are not a product of their mediation and do not comply with SADC's own democratic standards (International Crisis Group, 2007:20).*

Such pro-active policy is a kind of interference, which corresponds with the new political realities and a common understanding as codified in the currently applicable documents guiding African continental politics. The Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) deviated in a substantial paradigm from the fundamental principles of the earlier Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The non-intervention into matters of member states had been a hitherto holy principle, on which the OAU based its continental policies. The AU Constitution has replaced this by a clear notion of collective responsibilities, which under grave circumstances even justify joint intervention into the internal affairs of the member states. This new approach has already provided results by means of a visible implementation on several occasions. Along similar lines and despite all critical analyses – justified with regard to the reluctant pursuance of the noble goals defined (Fombad/Keonang, 2006) – The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and its African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) have created a corresponding new paradigmatic framework for good governance and the commitment by African states to comply with such defined standards. It could do no harm to measure those governments not volunteering to this screening exercise according to similar criteria and seek their application (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007). Similarly, as suggested by SADC at its last ordinary

summit in August 2007 in Lusaka, a few among the growing number of voluntarily retiring elder statesmen and former presidents might be a suitable task force to seek negotiations with an aging autocrat reluctant to give up power.

But seeking for a lasting solution for Zimbabweans means more than entering a negotiated compromise in terms of power sharing among segmented political elites representing different interests while offering guaranteed protection for perpetrators if they comply with such controlled change. In an analytically remarkable Pastoral Letter released by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference on Holy Thursday of 2007 the internal, class-related roots of the current Zimbabwean crisis were brought to the point:

*Black Zimbabweans today fight for the same basic rights they fought for during the liberation struggle. It is the same conflict between those who possess power and wealth in abundance, and those who do not; between those who are determined to maintain their privileges of power and wealth at any cost, even at the cost of bloodshed, and those who demand their democratic rights and a share in the fruits of independence; between those who continue to benefit from the present system of inequality and injustice, because it favours them and enables them to maintain an exceptionally high standard of living, and those who go to bed hungry at night and wake up in the morning to another day without work and without income; between those who only know the language of violence and intimidation, and those who feel they have nothing more to lose because their Constitutional rights have been abrogated and their votes rigged (Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2007).*

This insight is of relevance not only for Zimbabwe. It is relevant for all societies marred by antagonistic forces culminat-

ing in extreme social disparities, where a privileged few feast at the expenses of the marginalised majority. This includes (though is anything but confined to) the societies in (Southern) Africa, who for both external as well as internal limiting factors have not managed to overcome the colonial legacy and its fundamentally unjust and discriminating social structures and corresponding mental dispositions.

This briefing opened with a quote from a rather spontaneously motivated speech by Dag Hammarskjöld in 1956, documenting his firm belief in the unity of humankind and its shared values and norms. Much is left in this world even half a century later as a continuing challenge to enhance such understanding further. A challenge, which clearly embraces the need to reduce the gross imbalances, which in a very concrete and lasting material sense prevent the full implementation of such universal ethical and moral norms to the benefit of most if not all in this world of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. But the lack of progress does not mean that Hammarskjöld's words and visions were neither practical nor realistic. For him, the work of the United Nations should build on the commonality of humankind, its conduct and experience:

*With respect to the United Nations as a symbol of faith, it may [...] be said that to every man it stands as a kind of 'yes' to the ability of man to form his own destiny, and form his own destiny so as to create a world where the dignity of man can come fully into its own (Hammarskjöld, 1972:660).*

These words should continue to serve as an invitation to jointly turn all corners of this world into a better one to the benefit of the ordinary people. 'In such a world', the late Secretary General further clarified in no uncertain terms, 'it is impossible to maintain the status of "haves" and

“have-nots”, just as impossible as it has grown to be inside the nation state’ (Hammarskjöld, 1972:661). The challenge to turn his words into social and political realities remains on our agenda. It includes the Southern African region in general and in particular Zimbabwe.

Such a demand is by no means a Eurocentric fantasy of neo-colonial or imperialist interventions, as so often claimed by those local elites under siege, simply because they are measured and judged against universal standards and values relating to fundamental and undivided human rights based principles and norms – the same principles and norms, they claimed to be *fighting for*, when *fighting against* settler-colonial minority regimes denying them those rights. The same rights they are now denying to so many among their ‘liberated’ people. The current necessity to take sides is by no means drawing a dividing line along race or the North-South axis (as relevant as such criteria for historically rooted privileges, identities and interests might generally be). Instead, such dismissals of human rights related notions are nothing more than a smokescreen, a constructed escape route for those, who try to get away cheating again the ‘wretched of the earth’. As a Pan African human rights campaigner clarified:

*I have heard some people argue that the ‘enemies’ of Africa now crying about human rights did not burden their conscience with such luxuries when benefiting from 400 years of industrial scale slavery, colonialism and brutal exploitation of Africa and its peoples. In other words, that ‘white farmers’ deserve some of their own medicine. Not only does such thinking reduce Africans to the moral bankruptcy of colonialists, it also fails to understand that it risks granting unlimited and indefinite power to Africa’s actual and imaginary liberators such that we may all end up be shackled by them. Africa’s liberation movements drew their*

*moral strength from the fact that on the balance, they fought for social justice, human rights, equality and democracy – for all [...] (Sankore, 2007).*

The 25-year old unemployed Harare woman Ndakaitei (quoted in Kamete, 2007:58) captured the sentiments after three *chimurengas* on behalf of a frustrated post-independent urban youth when she cried out: ‘We desire a future that is not like the present!’

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**Editor's Note:** The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO released a statement on the SADC mediation process which was published in *The Herald* in Harare on Sunday, 30 September 2007: 'The Human Rights Forum welcomes and is fully committed to any process that is founded on principles of democracy. Such a process cannot be achieved without the full participation of the Zimbabwean people. The Forum reiterates its concerns over the SADC mediation process and its outcome, Constitutional Amendment Number 18. A people-driven constitutional process, work towards transitional justice, the holding of free and fair elections under international supervision, and the implementation of the recommendations from international human rights bodies are some of the steps needed to restore Zimbabwe to a state of good governance. The Forum is however concerned that the SADC initiated mediation process does not conform to these principles and the minimum pre-requisites of participation, transparency and accountability. The mediation process is neither transparent nor participatory,

the parties have been sworn to secrecy, and there is no accountability to the citizens of Zimbabwe. The pillars of democracy can not rest on the shoulders of four men whatever their credentials may be. The Forum acknowledges that there are steps in Constitutional Amendment Number 18 towards a 'semblance' of democracy. The Forum however cannot support such an amendment as it does not result in a people driven constitution. Such a sectorial approach to constitutional reform does not level the ground to facilitate for democratic processes in Zimbabwe. Further, given the social, economic and political climate currently prevalent, it is doubtful that democratic elections can be held in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum calls on all stakeholders involved in the mediation process to return to a participatory, transparent and accountable process that enjoins the hope and aspirations of all Zimbabweans. Harare, 25 September 2007.

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## Negotiations in Western Sahara: The UN's Last Chance?

*Jacob Mundy*

In recent months, the 32-year old Western Sahara conflict has generated almost unprecedented media coverage, all because of one de-contextualised fact. The pro-independence Polisario Front and the occupying Moroccan government met to discuss the disputed Britain sized territory in June and August 2007. Optimists pointed out that these were the first face-to-face meetings between the two antagonists since 2000. For pessimists, this author included (see Mundy, 2007) the mere existence of talks has come as a surprise. Nonetheless, the chances of a Polisario-Morocco agreement any time in the near future remains nil given that both sides are still attached to diametrically opposed positions. As always, Polisario continues to demand a self-determination referendum on independence for the native Sahrawi population

of Western Sahara. Morocco, on the other hand, says independence is off the table, though it is willing to discuss an asymmetric power-sharing agreement (i.e., limited 'autonomy').

### High Stakes, Low Expectations

In terms of substance, there is little to report from the talks. According to participants and close observers, both rounds – 18-19 June and 10-11 August on Long Island in New York – were essentially a meet-and-greet. On the one hand, Polisario's delegation was the same respected 'founding fathers' who had represented Polisario at previous UN talks: Mahfoud Ali Beiba, Brahim Ghali, Ahmed Boukhari and Emhammed Khaddad. Morocco, on the other hand, sent an all new 'dream team' to the talks.

Though King Mohammed VI's closest advisors, they had no direct experience with Polisario: Tayeb Fasi Fihri, Fouad Ali Himma, Chakib Benmoussa and Yassin Mansouri. Making matters even more awkward, the Moroccan delegation included two members from the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs. From Morocco's point of view, the Western Sahara conflict is an internal matter and Polisario are thus separatists. To make this point, elements of the interior ministry, internal security chiefs and Rabat's co-opted Saharan leaders dominated Morocco's delegation. Yet in previous negotiations in 1997 and 2000, Morocco's delegation could only consist of members of the Foreign Ministry. Given that Morocco's delegation was entirely new, and composed in such a way as to offend Polisario, little progress was made. Following the second round of talks, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon flatly noted,

*Even though there has not been any visible progress in these negotiations, both sides had I think substantively good discussions [...]. What is important at this time is that they have agreed to continue*

*their dialogue* (Associated Press, 14 August 2007).

A date for the next round of talks has not been set, though any meetings will likely take place after the UN Security Council gathers in October to discuss the 'progress' made so far. In the meantime, the Moroccan government will be tied down with aftermath legislative elections in early September and Polisario has scheduled its major congress for December. It is unlikely that the outcome of these events will change the Western Sahara dynamic, unless Morocco is unsettled by an Islamist landslide and/or Polisario's leaders face stiff challenges from disgruntled constituents.

The peace process in Western Sahara was originally predicated on the idea that Morocco was willing to participate in a referendum on independence. This was the promise the late King Hassan II of Morocco made at the 1981 Organization of African Unity summit in Nairobi. In 1975, Morocco had invaded Western Sahara with the support of the United States and France, forcing Spain, the colonial power, out. Polisario contested the occupation and received backing from Algeria to fight for independence. The war for Western Sahara continued until 1991, when a UN peacekeeping force arrived to hold a referendum on independence. Disputes over who should vote in the referendum raged for the next nine years. When Hassan II died in 1999, his son, King Mohammed VI, soon reversed Morocco's Sahara policy and *insisted independence is off the table*. Polisario, however, remains firmly tied to the idea that the native Sahrawi people of Western Sahara are owed the right to self-determination, an idea that has *substantial* backing in the international community.

Making matters worse, this insurmountable divide between Morocco and Polisario is coddled – not confronted – by the UN Security Council. To comfort

Morocco, the Council's last resolution on Western Sahara, the one that triggered the new round of talks (Resolution 1754, 30 April 2007), called for negotiations 'without preconditions' to achieve 'a mutually acceptable political solution'. To further grease the wheels with Rabat, the Security Council – under pressure from the US – deemed Morocco's recent so-called autonomy proposal for Western Sahara 'serious and credible'. Morocco could now participate in negotiations because its diplomats could reasonably claim (1) that self-determination was not a 'precondition', (2) that a 'mutually acceptable' solution precludes the UN from imposing a settlement, and (3) that Morocco's autonomy proposal would be central to the negotiations.

For Polisario, Resolution 1754 said that any negotiated solution 'will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara'. This allowed Polisario to enter into negotiations with their most basic demand: self-determination intact, even if the Council was at pains to avoid casting it as a precondition.

The summer 2007 talks were a victory for quiet diplomacy of the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to Western Sahara, former Dutch diplomat Peter Van Walsum. He took the post in 2005 and had some rather large shoes to fill, those of former US Secretary of State James Baker, who attempted to resolve the Western Sahara conundrum from 1997 to 2004.

Though Van Walsum's initial assessments were bleak, he slowly manoeuvred the parties into negotiations. His first task was to coax a counter-proposal out of Morocco. From 2003 to 2007, the deadlock stemmed from Rabat's rejection of the 2003 'Baker Plan', which was accepted by Polisario and Algeria and supported by the Security Council (see Mundy, 2005). Finally, on 11 April 2007, Morocco presented its long-awaited autonomy proposal.

There was little to note in Morocco's autonomy proposal, for it was simply a carbon copy of the 2003-2004 'non-papers' submitted in secret to Baker but leaked to the Moroccan press. Yet the 'new' Moroccan proposal, like previous offers, fails to meet the most basic minimum juridical requirement of autonomy. The local government in Western Sahara is still subject to the ultimate authority of the Moroccan King. It does not even need mentioning that the idea of a referendum on independence is nowhere to be found in the proposal.

Once Morocco's proposal was on the table, Van Walsum had to convince Polisario that it had nothing to lose if it engaged in negotiations with Morocco. Since 2003, Polisario's basic demand for talks was that Morocco had to accept the principles of the Baker Plan, above all a referendum with an independence option. While the 2003 Baker Plan was quickly dropped from Security Council resolutions (though not explicitly rejected either), the Council and the Secretariat continued to promise the Western Saharans their long-due referendum on independence. If Polisario had held out any longer, then it would, by implication, become the obstructionist party, a label it has successfully pinned on Morocco by accepting the Baker Plan in 2003.

This is not to suggest that the UN Security Council's Permanent Five and the Secretariat really care about the principle of self-determination in what is Africa's last official colony. Indeed, the Secretariat let slip its feelings on the matter when its 29 June interim report on Western Sahara was first released after the first round of negotiations (18-19 June). Under the 'observations' heading, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated,

*I would like to recommend that the Security Council call on all Member States to lend assistance to the process by urging both parties to make every effort to*

*maintain the momentum and to impress upon them that a final resolution of the conflict will require flexibility and sacrifice from both of them. In that context, the Frente Polisario could be asked to test Morocco's readiness to take part in serious, constructive negotiations by making concrete proposals to define, clarify or amend provisions in the proposal of Morocco, leaving the final status out of consideration at this stage (UN Security Council document S/2007/385, 27 June 2007, first release).*

The obvious favouritism shown towards Morocco's autonomy proposal by the Secretariat was not lost on Polisario, who quickly protested. Then, in what was a first in UN history, the report was withdrawn and then re-released with the offending 'observations' excised. Anna Theofilopoulou, who held the Western Sahara dossier in the United Nations' Department of Political Affairs during the Baker years (1997-2004), commented, 'The decision to withdraw the report and then re-issue it minus the observations was damaging to the stature of the United Nations as an independent mediator in the Western Sahara conflict' (2007).

If the UN Secretariat seems to think there is an opening in the Western Sahara conflict, the cause of this belief likely lies in Washington, not North Africa. In the past year, the US has taken an abrupt turn *away* from its longstanding ambivalence and towards a more openly pro-Moroccan position. While the peace process was under Baker's guidance from 1997 to 2004, the Bush administration deferred to his leadership. During the brief tenure of John Bolton – a Baker protégé – as the US representative to the United Nations (2005-2006), US policy remained basically torn between its interests in Rabat and Algiers. However, after Bolton's departure, White House pressure increased on the State Department to show more support for Morocco's autonomy proposal. This is

emanating from the office of Elliot Abrams, head of Middle East policy on the US National Security Council, a staunch neoconservative and a former Reagan era official convicted of crimes relating to the Iran-Contra Affair. In addition to this 'ace in the hole' in the White House, Morocco has also spent millions of dollars on high-powered lobbying firms in the US Congress, eroding Polisario's bi-partisan backing while building support for 'autonomy' (Zunes, 2007).

Like most Bush administration policies in the Middle East, its new tack on Western Sahara is short sighted and will likely prove counter-productive. Even if expectations are low, the stakes in Western Sahara are higher than they have ever been. The Morocco-Polisario negotiations are proceeding under bad faith: Polisario has no interest in autonomy; Morocco has no intention of discussing a referendum on independence; and the Security Council has no intention of forcing Morocco to re-consider its position on this key issue. The almost inevitable collapse of these talks will leave Western Saharan nationalists with even less faith in the 'good offices' of the United Nations and a greater feeling that armed struggle is the only language Morocco will understand.

### *Intifadah*

The ongoing nationalist 'Intifadah' inside the Moroccan controlled Western Sahara entered its second year in May. Large demonstrations, like those witnessed in 1999, 2002 and 2005, have become rare. When there are protests, they are small in scale and typically spontaneous. Meanwhile, Sahrawi youths have continued their block-by-block efforts to graffiti pro-independence messages and hang Polisario flags on power lines. Sahrawi youths have become so radicalised at increasingly younger ages that many of the primary schools in the cities of Western Sahara

are now surrounded by Moroccan police and military guards.

Over the past two years, Moroccan efforts to squelch the *Intifadah* have met with some success. Morocco has shrewdly refrained from overt mass coercion, which tends to draw unwanted attention from the international press and makes an easy target for now ubiquitous digital cameras. Instead, the Moroccan security apparatus in Western Sahara has opted for more selective harassment of pro-independence activists of all ages. The Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations (asvdh.net) has collected and disseminated testimonies and images of these cases of selective abuse, detailing many instances where Morocco has harassed, detained, and even tortured Sahrawis of various ages, including minors and young women. The result is that the *Intifadah* remains at a low simmer. Potentially, though, the situation could completely boil over.

Perhaps as a reaction to increasing Moroccan surveillance, persecution and repression, there were growing signs that the *Intifadah* might adopt more violent forms of resistance. Until recently, the *Intifadah* has attempted to maintain a strict code of non-violent civil disobedience. In July, however, an unknown group attacked a police vehicle with Molotov cocktails. The scant commentary on this event offered by the Moroccan government suggests that there was something to hide (i.e., it really happened). In other words, rather than publicise this attack as a terrorist act to gain sympathy, the Moroccan press ignored it. This silence was similar to Rabat's treatment of an apparent attack on the conveyor belt that shuttles raw phosphate from the large mine at Bukra' to the port of al-'Uyun several months ago. Contrast this to the recent spat of botched suicide bombings in Morocco proper, which have received endless streams of coverage and comment.

Within the *Intifadah*, there are roughly two generations of activists: first-generation nationalists who remember Spanish colonialism and second-generation activists who have grown up under Moroccan occupation. While it is the latter that give the *Intifadah* its in-the-street militancy and 'You-Tube' savvy, the former act as the political leadership at home and abroad. In recent months, this latter segment of Sahrawi civil society has taken a more explicitly nationalist role. In the past, Sahrawi activists had avoided touching on 'final status' issues, partially out of fear of Morocco's likely negative reaction and partially out of quiet deference to Polisario. Before the ascension of King Mohammed VI in 1999, Sahrawis were only allowed to form charitable (i.e., non-political) organisations under the previous King, Hassan II (d.1999). In the democratic opening promised by Mohammed VI, one Sahrawi human rights organisation was officially recognised, the Sahara Branch of the Moroccan NGO, the Forum for Truth and Justice. However, the Moroccan state dissolved the Sahara Branch in 2003 and has refused to recognise any of the other Sahrawi human rights groups in operation.

The Moroccan regime's refusal to accommodate Sahrawi nationalist elements is symptomatic of Rabat's longstanding refusal to acknowledge Western Saharan nationalism. It is also indicative of the retrograde democratisation process under King Mohammed VI, where press freedom and the right to free association are clearly under attack from the throne in Western Sahara and Morocco (Freedom House, 2007). As the Committee to Protect Journalists recently noted, '[P]ress freedom has eroded under what many journalists and human rights groups consider a government-inspired judicial assault against outspoken newspapers' (2007).

Nevertheless, dissident Sahrawi groups have kept up the pressure as best they

can. Shortly before the second round of negotiations, several Sahrawi groups, most of them human rights organisations, sent an open letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. They called for a self-determination referendum, but only after providing a litany of complaints: abuses by Moroccan security agents, the large number of Sahrawi political prisoners held by Morocco, the danger posed by Moroccan land-mines to nomads, and the still unknown fate of several hundred Sahrawis who disappeared into Moroccan prisons in the 1970s and 1980s.

Following the negotiations, one of the leading Sahrawi rights groups, the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders (CODESA) released a statement on 13 August in which they reiterated the demands of the previous letter. One of those is a standing request to the United Nations to publish a 2006 report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. In 2006, a UN human rights mission visited both sides of the conflict: the Moroccan controlled Western Sahara and the Polisario administered refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria. What is noteworthy about these statements is that, for the first time, Sahrawi nationalists living under Moroccan occupation are asserting themselves into the political sphere.

That is, instead of directing their appeals to Amnesty International and European solidarity groups, the Sahrawi civil society now feels comfortable addressing themselves to the highest levels of the international community. Furthermore, these actions, and the *Intifadah* generally, serve to boost Polisario's legitimacy in the peace process, as it further affirms that Morocco has clearly failed to win the hearts and minds of many Sahrawis. In fact, the *Intifadah* has become central to Polisario's overall strategy. Following the second round of talks with Morocco, Polisario's president in exile, Mohammed Abdelaziz, threatened, 'Saharawi

Intifada in the occupied territories of Western Sahara will continue and develop in new methods until the independence' (Sahrawi Press Service, 24 August 2007). The most pressing question for Polisario is not, When will the negotiations with Morocco collapse? That is already a given. The bigger question - the one that will preoccupy discussions at the forthcoming Polisario congress - is, What will Polisario do when it is finally faced with no realistic option besides a return to armed conflict?

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## 'How an Ordinary Boy Became an Extraordinary Man': Hussein Adam

*Faisal Roble*

On the evening of Friday, 17 August 2007, under heavy and thunderous skies of Columbus city in Ohio, one of Somalia's eminent scholars [and one of ROAPE's longest-serving editors], Dr. Hussein M. Adam, was honoured by the Somali Studies International Association (SSIA) for his sustained contributions to Somali Studies.

Professor Said S. Samatar of Rutgers University, who skillfully served as the MC, organised a by-invitation-only dinner; it was to be an exclusive banquet, or so we thought, until a horde of uninvited individuals crashed in, prompting Professor Samatar to snap at them, in order to shame and eventually steer them into paying up, but to no avail. A la Somali culture, they quickly transformed themselves into hard-to-ignore guests, just like the nomad who for the first time came to a city and, when ignored by its pedestrians, retorted, *Magaaloy waligaaba i dhaaf dhaaf, haddee aduun baa marti lagu yahaay*.

In its thirty years of existence, founded in 1978, the Association did not give such an honour until now to anyone of its elders or founding members. As a founding president and the inventor of the very name of the association, Said eloquently delivered an engaging tribute, with which he entertained us during the course of a delicious dinner, that introduced Hussein the author, the activist and the extraordinary intellectual to a captive audience.

In honouring Hussein, or, as he is nicknamed, 'Hussein Tanzani, Professor Samatar hit a home-run for his effort to familiarise us with Hussein the prodigious child, the man, and the soon-to-be senior citizen. In between was a long narrative of his survival, the premier learning institutions he has attended, a range of contributions to a nation-building campaign. But above all, we came to know the stick-to-it and loving husband that he is to his ailing wife, Fadumo Abulsamad.

With his unparalleled command, and, may I say, agility, to tap dance around and massage the written word, thence mincing at each line that he artfully weaved into a tasty and pertinent text, the master of ceremony of the night took us to the foothills of Kilimanjaro and the environment that shaped Hussein's childhood, a child longing for returning to his forefathers landscape in exchange for East Africa's alienating society. Born to and raised in a mosaic world of a Somali father, a Masia and Indian mother, Hussein, we came to know, had been an outsider and has always defied categorisation for most of his 63 years; he longed for a social and political space of Somali dominance, to mainly embrace its values and in turn be embraced.

I first met Dr. Hussein in 1978 when I was a junior at Lafoole College, Somali National University, where Dr. Hussein's footprints are hard to erase. My early impressions about his intellectual prowess and his leftist orientation were cemented at the wake of the 1979 Annual International Franz Fanon Conference, held in Mogadishu, Somalia. The 'who's who' of Pan-Africanism (Amiru Baraka, Granga, founder of the 'Kwanza' tradition, Claudia Mitchell-Kernnon, Vice chancellor of UCLA, who was instrumental in my admission to that institution in 1982, thanks to her unbridled love for Somalis after that conference, Karim Abdul-Jabbar, yes, that Abdulkarim-Jabar! et al.) descended into the Mogadishu of 1979, a city of peace and prosperity. It is fitting here to add that Dr. Hussein wrote his dissertation for his Harvard Ph.D. (in Political Science) on

gious child, the man, and the soon-to-be senior citizen. In between was a long narrative of his survival, the premier learning institutions he has attended, a range of contributions to a nation-building campaign. But above all, we came to know the stick-to-it and loving husband that he is to his ailing wife, Fadumo Abulsamad.

'The Social and Political Thoughts of Frantz Fanon' – a manuscript that I devoured (in 1978) at the then bustling but modestly stocked Lafoole library. As a young Marxist, or so I thought of myself, who fled Ethiopia's oppressive conditions, Hussein's dissertation, a comprehensive review of Marxism in the tradition of Fanon, left me with lasting impressions ( for further info, see wardheernews).

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## US to Create New Regional Military Command for Africa: AFRICOM

*Daniel Volman*

On 6 February 2007, President Bush announced that the United States would create a new military command for Africa, to be known as Africa Command or Africom. Throughout the Cold War and for more than a decade afterwards, the US did not have a military command for Africa; instead, US military activities on the African continent were conducted by three separate military commands: the European Command, which had responsibility for most of the continent; the Central Command, which oversaw Egypt and the Horn of Africa region along with the Middle East and Central Asia; and the Pacific Command, which administered military ties with Madagascar and other islands in the Indian Ocean.

Until the creation of Africom, the administration of US-African military relations was conducted through three different commands. All three were primarily concerned with other regions of the world that were of great importance to the United States on their own and had only a few middle-rank staff members dedicated to Africa. This reflected the

fact that Africa was chiefly viewed as a regional theater in the global Cold War, or as an adjunct to US-European relations or, as in the immediate post-Cold War period, as a region of little concern to the United States. But when the Bush administration declared that access to Africa's oil supplies would henceforth be defined as a 'strategic national interest' of the United States and proclaimed that America was engaged in a Global War on Terrorism following the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, Africa's status in US national security policy and military affairs rose dramatically (Volman, 2003, Klare & Volman, 2006).

According to Theresa Whelan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs – the highest ranking Defense Department official with principal responsibility for Africa at the Pentagon, who has supervised US military policy toward Africa for the Bush administration – Africom will attain the status of a sub-unified command under the European Command by 1 October 2007, and is scheduled to be fully operational as a separate unified command no later than 1 October 2008 (Whelan, 2007). The process of creating the new command will be conducted by a special transition team – which will include officers from both the State Department and the Defense Department – that will carry out its work in Stuttgart, Germany, in coordination with the European Command (Whelan, 2007).

Africom will not look like traditional unified commands. In particular, there is no intention, at least at present, to assign the new command control over large military units. This is in line with ongoing efforts to reduce the presence of large numbers of American troops overseas in order to consolidate or eliminate expensive bases and bring as many troops as possible back to the United States where they will be available for deployment anywhere in the world that Washington

wants to send them. Since there is no way to anticipate where troops will be sent and the Pentagon has the ability to deploy sizable forces over long distances in a very short time, Washington plans to keep as many troops as possible in the United States and send them abroad only when it judges it necessary. This, however, was exactly the intention when the Clinton and Reagan administrations created the Central Command and based it in Tampa, Florida; and now the Central Command is running two major wars in southwest Asia from headquarters in Qatar.

Africom will also be composed of both military and civilian personnel, including officers from the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and the commander of the new command will have both a military and a civilian deputy. On 10 July 2007, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced that the President had nominated four-star General William E. 'Kip' Ward to be the commander of Africom. General Ward, an African-American who was commissioned into the infantry in 1971, is currently serving as the deputy commander of the European Command. Previously he served as the commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division (Light Infantry) in Mogadishu, Somalia during 'Operation Restore Hope' in 1992-1994, commander of the NATO-led Stabilization Force in Bosnia during 'Operation Joint Forge' in 2002-2003, and chief of the US Office of Military Cooperation at the American Embassy in Cairo, Egypt. The novel structure of the new command reflects the fact that Africom will be charged with overseeing both traditional military activities and programmes that are funded through the State Department budget (see below for details on these programmes).

The Bush administration has emphasised the uniqueness of this hybrid structure as evidence that the new command

has only benign purposes and that and that, in the words of Theresa Whelan, while 'there are fears that Africom represents a militarization of US foreign policy in Africa and that Africom will somehow become the lead US Government interlocutor with Africa. This fear is unfounded' (Whelan, 2007). Therefore, Bush administration officials insist that the purpose of Africom is misunderstood. As Theresa Whelan (Whelan, 2007) put it in her congressional testimony,

*Some people believe that we are establishing Africom solely to fight terrorism, or to secure oil resources, or to discourage China. This is not true. Violent extremism is cause for concern, and needs to be addressed, but this is not Africom's singular mission. Natural resources represent Africa's current and future wealth, but in a fair market environment, many benefit. Ironically, the US, China and other countries share a common interest – that of a secure environment. Africom is about helping Africans build greater capacity to assure their own security.*

DoD recognises and applauds the leadership role that individual African countries and multi-lateral African organisations are taking in the promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent. For example, Africom can provide effective training, advisory and technical support to the development of the African Standby Force. This is exactly the type of initiative and leadership needed to address the diverse and unpredictable global security challenges the world currently faces. The purpose of Africom is to encourage and support such African leadership and initiative, not to compete with it or discourage it. US security is enhanced when African nations themselves endeavor to successfully address and resolve emergent security issues before they become so serious that they require considerable international resources and intervention to resolve. On closer examination, however, the difference between Africom and other

commands – and the allegedly ‘unfounded’ nature of its implications for the militarisation of the continent – are not as real or genuine as the Bush administration officials would have us believe. *Of course* Washington has other interests in Africa besides making it into another front in its ‘Global War on Terrorism’, maintaining and extending access to energy supplies and other strategic raw material, and competing with China and other rising economic powers for control over the continent’s resources; these include helping Africans deal with the HIV/AIDS epidemic and other emerging diseases, strengthening and assisting peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts, and responding to humanitarian disasters. But it is simply disingenuous to suggest that accomplishing these three objectives is not the main reason that Washington is now devoting so much effort and attention to the continent. And *of course* Washington would prefer that selected friendly regimes take the lead in meeting these objects, so that the United States can avoid direct military involvement in Africa, particularly at a time when the US military is so deeply committed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and preparing for possible attacks on Iran.

The hope that the Pentagon can build up *African surrogates* who can act on behalf of the United States is precisely why Washington is providing so much security assistance to these regimes and why it would like to provide even more in the future. Indeed, as argued below, this is actually one of the main reasons that Africom is being created at this time.

So why is Africom being created and why now? I would argue that the answer to this question is twofold. First, the Bush administration would like to significantly expand its security assistance programmes for regimes that are willing to act as *surrogates*, for friendly regimes – particularly in countries with abundant oil and natural gas supplies – and for

efforts to increase its options for more direct military involvement in the future; but it has had difficulty getting the US Congress and the Pentagon to provide the required funding or to devoting the necessary attention and energy to accomplish these tasks. The creation of Africom will allow the administration to go to the US Congress and argue that the establishment of Africom demonstrates the importance of Africa for *US national security* and the administration’s commitment to give the continent the attention that it deserves. If Africa is so important and if the administration’s actions show that it really wants to do all sorts of good things for Africa, it hopes to be in a much stronger position to make a convincing case that the legislature must appropriate substantially greater amounts of money to fund the new command’s operations. And within the Pentagon, the establishment of Africom as a unified command under the authority of a high-ranking officer with direct access to the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff will put the new command in a much stronger position to compete with other command for resources, manpower, and influence over policymaking.

Secondly, key members of the Bush administration, a small, but growing and increasingly vocal group of legislators, and influential think-tanks have become more and more alarmed by the growing efforts of China to expand its access to energy supplies and other resources from Africa and to enhance its political and economic influence throughout the continent. These ‘alarmists’ point to the considerable resources that China is devoting to the achievement of these goals and to the engagement of Chinese officials at the highest level – including President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, both of who have made tours of the continent and have hosted high-level meetings in Beijing with African heads of state – as evidence of a ‘grand strategy’ on the part of China that jeopardises US

national security interests and that is aimed, ultimately, at usurping the West's position on the continent. The creation of Africom, therefore, should be seen as one element of a broad effort to develop a 'grand strategy' on the part of the United States that will counter, and eventually defeat, China's efforts. It should also be understood as a measure that is intended to demonstrate to Beijing that Washington will match China's actions, thus serving as a warning to the Chinese leadership that they should restrain themselves or face possible consequences to their relationship with America as well as to their interests in Africa.

So, what will Africom actually do when it becomes fully operational? Basically, it will take over the implementation of a host of military, security cooperation, and security assistance programmes, which are funded through either the State Department or the Defense Department. These include the following:

### **African Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS)**

This *academic* institution was created by the Defense Department in 1999 to conduct research, analysis, and education on issues of African security and defense activities. Based at the National Defense University in Washington, DC, the ACSS opened an annex at the US embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2006 and is planning to establish other annexes elsewhere on the continent.

### **Africa Clearinghouse**

This agency was created by the Defense Department *within the European Command* in 2004 to coordinate US activities with those of other countries engaged in security cooperation and assistance in Africa, particularly with France and the United Kingdom.

### **Bilateral & Multilateral Joint Training Programs & Military Exercises**

The United States provides military training to African military personnel through a wide variety of training and education programmes. In addition, it conducts military exercises in Africa jointly with African troops and also with the troops of its European allies to provide training to others and also to train its own forces for possible deployment to Africa in the future. These include the following:

### **Flintlock 2005 & 2007**

These are Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) exercises conducted by units of the US Army Special Forces and the US Army Rangers, along with contingents from other units, to provide training experience both for American troops and for the troops of African countries (small numbers of European troops are also involved in these exercises). Flintlock 2005 was held in June 2005, when more than 1,000 US personnel were sent to North and West Africa for counter-terrorism exercises in Algeria, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad that involved more than 3,000 local service members. In April 2007, US Army Special Forces went to Niger for the first part of Flintlock 2007 and in late August 2007, some 350 American troops arrived in Mali for three weeks of Flintlock 2007 exercises with forces from Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Both Flintlock exercises were conducted as part of Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) which now links the US with eight African countries: Mali, Chad, Niger, Mauritania, Nigeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. In 2004, the TSCTP was created to replace the Pan-Sahel Counter-Terrorism Initiative, which was initiated in 2002. The TSCTP also involves smaller,

regular training exercises conducted by US Army Special Forces throughout the region. Although changing budgetary methodology makes it difficult to be certain, it appears that the TSCTP received some \$31 million in FY 2006, nearly \$82 million in FY 2007, and is expected to receive approximately \$100 million annually from FY 2008 through FY 2013 (Daly, 2007).

### **Africa Contingency Operations Training & Assistance Program (ACOTA)**

This programme, which began operating in 2002, replaces the African Crisis Response Initiative launched in 1997 by the Clinton administration. In 2004, it became part of the Global Peace Operations Initiative. ACOTA is officially designed to provide training to African military forces to improve their ability to conduct peacekeeping operations, even if they take place in hostile environments. But since the training includes both defensive and offensive military operations, it also enhances the ability of participating forces to engage in police operations against unarmed civilians, counter-insurgency operations, and even conventional military operations against the military forces of other countries. By FY 2007, 19 African countries were participating in the ACOTA programme: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. New budgetary methodology makes it impossible to ascertain the levels of funding for ACOTA, since the programme's funding is subsumed within the budget for the Global Peace Operations Initiative.

### **International Military Education & Training Program (IMET)**

The IMET programme brings African military officers to military academies and other military educational institu-

tions in the United States for professional training. Nearly all African countries participate in the programme including Libya for the first time in FY 2008; in FY 2006 (the last year for which country figures are available – it trained 14,731 students from the African continent (excluding Egypt) at a cost of \$14.7 million.

### **Foreign Military Sales Program (FMS)**

This programme sells US military equipment to African countries; such sales are conducted by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency of the Defense Department. The US government provides loans to finance the purchase of virtually all of this equipment through the Foreign Military Financing Program (FMF), but repayment of these loans by African governments is almost always waived, so that they amount to *free* grants. In FY 2006, sub-Saharan African countries received a total of nearly \$14 million in FMF funding, and the Maghrebi countries of Morocco and Tunisia received almost another \$21 million; for FY 2007, the Bush administration requested nearly \$15 million for sub-Saharan Africa and \$21 million for the Morocco and Tunisia; and for FY 2008, the administration requested nearly \$8 million for sub-Saharan Africa and nearly \$6 million for the Maghreb.

### **African Coastal & Border Security Program (ACBS Program)**

This programme provides specialised equipment (such as patrol vessels and vehicles, communications equipment, night vision devices, and electronic monitors and sensors) to African countries to improve their ability to patrol and defend their own coastal waters and borders from terrorist operations, smuggling, and other illicit activities. In some cases, airborne surveillance and intelligence training also may be provided. In FY

2006, the ACBS Program received nearly \$4 million in FMF funding, and the Bush administration requested \$4 million in FMF funding for the programme in FY 2007. No dedicated funding was requested for FY 2008, but the programme may be revived in the future.

### **Excess Defense Articles Program (EDA)**

This programme is designed to conduct ad hoc transfers of surplus US military equipment to foreign governments. Transfers to African recipients have included the transfer of C-130 transport planes to South Africa and Botswana, trucks to Uganda, M-16 rifles to Senegal, and coastal patrol vessels to Nigeria.

### **Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA)**

In October 2002, the US Central Command played the leading role in the creation of this joint task force that was designed to conduct naval and aerial patrols in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the eastern Indian Ocean as part of the effort to detect and counter the activities of terrorist groups in the region. Based at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti, long the site of a major French military base, the CJTF-HOA is made up of approximate 1,400 US military personnel – primarily sailors, Marines, and Special Forces troops – that works with a multinational naval force composed of American naval vessels along with ships from the navies of France, Italy, and Germany, and other NATO allies. The CJTF-HOA provided intelligence to Ethiopia in support of its invasion of Somalia in January 2007 and used military facilities in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya to launch its own attacks against alleged al-Qaeda members involved in the Council of Islamic Courts in Somalia in January and June of 2007 (Gordon & Massetti, 2007). The command authority for CJTF-HOA, currently under the US Central Command, will be transferred to Africom by 2008.

### **Joint Task Force Aztec Silence (JTFAS)**

In December 2003, the US European Command created this joint task force under the commander of the US Sixth Fleet (Europe) to carry out counter-terrorism operations in North and West Africa and to coordinate US operations with those of countries in those regions. Specifically, JTFAS was charged with conducting surveillance operations using the assets of the US Sixth Fleet and to share information, along with intelligence collected by US intelligence agencies, with local military forces. The primary assets employed in this effort are a squadron of US Navy P-3 'Orion' based in Sigonella, Sicily. In March 2004, P-3 aircraft from this squadron and reportedly operating from the southern Algerian base at Tamanrasset were deployed to monitor and gather intelligence on the movements of Algerian Salafist guerrillas operating in Chad and to provide this intelligence to Chadian forces engaged in combat against the guerrillas (Jane's Islamic, 2004; Jane's Defense, 2004; Hunt, 2007).

### **Naval Operations in the Gulf of Guinea**

Although American naval forces operating in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea and other areas along Africa's shores are formally under the command of the US Sixth Fleet based in the Mediterranean, and other US Navy commands, Africom will also help coordinate naval operations along the African coastline. As US Navy Admiral Henry G. Ulrich III, the commander of US Naval Forces (Europe) put it to reporters at Fort McNair in Washington, DC, in June 2007, 'we hope, as they [Africom] stand up, to fold into their intentions and their planning,' and his command 'will adjust, as necessary' as Africom becomes operational (Gilmore, 2007). In a *significant* expansion of US Navy operations in Africa, the USS. Fort McHenry amphibious *assault* ship will

begin a six-month deployment to the Gulf of Guinea in November 2007. The ship will carry 200-300 sailors and US Coast Guard personnel and will call at ports in eleven countries: Angola, Benin, Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, and Togo. Its mission will be to serve as a 'floating schoolhouse' to train local forces in port and oil-platform security, search-and-rescue missions, and medical and humanitarian assistance. According to Admiral Ulrich, the deployment matches up perfectly with the work of the new Africa Command. 'If you look at the direction that the Africa Command has been given and the purpose of standing up the Africom, you'll see that the [Gulf of Guinea] mission is closely aligned,' he told reporters (Gilmore, 2007).

### **Base Access Agreements for Cooperative Security Locations & Forward Operating Sites**

Over the past few years, the Bush administration has negotiated base access agreements with the governments of Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Tunisia, Namibia, Sao Tome, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia. Under these agreements, the United States gains access to local military bases and other facilities so that they can be used by American forces as *transit bases or as forward operating bases for combat, surveillance, and other military operations*. They remain the property of the host African government and are not American bases in a legal sense, so that US government officials are, technically, telling the truth when they deny that the United States has bases in these countries. To date, the United States has done little to improve the capabilities of these facilities, so that there is little or no evidence of an American military presence at these locations.

In addition to these publicly acknowledged base access agreements, the Penta-

gon was granted permission to deploy P-3 'Orion' aerial surveillance aircraft at the airfield at Tamanrasset in southern Algeria under an agreement reportedly signed in during Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's visit to Washington in July 2003 (Jane's Islamic, 2004; Jane's Defense, 2004; Hunt, 2007). The Brown and Root-Condor, a joint venture between a subsidiary of the American company, Halliburton, and the Algerian state-owned oil company, Sonatrach, is currently under contract to enlarge military air bases at Tamanrasset and at Bou Saada. In December 2006, Salafist forces used an improvised mine and small arms to attack a convoy of Brown and Root-Condor employees who were returning to their hotel in the Algerian town of Bouchaouï, killing an Algerian driver and wounding nine workers, including four Britons and one American (Smith, 2006).

Over the course of the next 18 months, there is one major issue related to the new command that remains to be resolved: whether and where in Africa will Africom establish a regional headquarters. A series of consultations with the governments of a number of African countries – including Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Djibouti, Kenya – following the announcement of Africom found that none of them were willing to commit to hosting the new command. As a result, the Pentagon has been forced to reconsider its plans and in June 2007 Ryan Henry, the Principal Deputy Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy told reporters that the Bush administration now intended to establish what he called 'a distributed command' that would be 'networked' in several countries in different regions of the continent (Tisdall, 2007; Whitlock, 2007). Under questioning before the Senate Africa Subcommittee on 1 August 2007, Assistant Secretary Whelan said that Liberia, Botswana, Senegal, and Djibouti were among the countries that had expressed support for Africom – although only Liberia has

publicly expressed a willingness to play host to Africom personnel – which clearly suggests that these countries are likely to accommodate elements of Africom’s headquarters staff when they eventually establish a presence on the continent sometime after October 2008 (Tate, 2007).

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## Corporate Mercenaries: The Threat of Private Military & Security Companies

*Fabien Mathieu & Nick Dearden with an Introduction by Louise Richards, Chief Executive, War on Want*

Corporate mercenaries are known by a variety of terms: private military companies, private security companies, military contractors or simply mercenaries. We have chosen to use the term private military and security companies (PMSCs), primarily in order to express the essential continuity between the military and security services provided by the companies in question. The same formulation is increasingly being used by the United Nations and by UK government officials, and is fast becoming the standard terminology.

War is one of the chief causes of poverty. War can completely undermine a country's development prospects, destroying schools and hospitals and putting agricultural land out of use for years to come. Fully 80% of the world's 20 poorest countries have suffered a major war in the past 15 years, and the human legacy continues long after. Nine of the 10 countries with the world's highest child mortality rates have suffered from conflict in recent years.<sup>1</sup>

Yet not everyone is made poorer by war. Many companies thrive off conflict, whether through supplying military hardware to armed forces or running mercenary armies on behalf of combatant states. Others fuel conflict through their operations in war zones, such as oil companies in volatile countries like Colombia and Iraq [or Nigeria], or through their continued trade in goods such as blood diamonds. Others profit from financing the war effort.

This report forms part of War on Want's campaign to confront those companies which profit from war. The aim of the campaign is to expose the many different ways in which the corporate sector is involved in conflict, and to suggest public action to call such companies to account. This report also examines who these corporations are, what they do, how they rose so quickly to prominence, and most importantly, how democratic societies should deal with this new element of warfare.

The campaign complements War on Want's longstanding support for our partners in conflict zones: some of the world's bravest men and women, on the front line in the struggle for human rights.

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Today, the PMSC industry comprises hundreds of companies operating in more than 50 countries worldwide and working for governments, international institutions and corporations. They provide a wider array of services than traditional mercenaries, and employ better public relations machines. They are involved in direct combat, operational support, the provision of security, intelligence gathering, training, technical assistance and post-conflict reconstruction. PMSCs also encompass a wide variety of legal structures: private companies, companies listed on the stock market, and subsidiaries of much larger entities. Over the last 10 years these companies have moved from the periphery of international politics into the corporate boardroom, and are now seeking to become a respectable part of the military sector.

One recent report estimates that there are 48,000 mercenaries in Iraq. Income for the industry reached \$100 billion in 2004. Behind the rise of PMSCs lie changes in political, economic and social structures over the last 30 years, and the public perception of wars that accompanied these changes. PMSCs enable governments to cover their tracks and evade accountability; they are usually not accountable to government or the public and so allow governments to get round legal obstacles. PMSCs have become so much a part of war efforts that it is believed that some major Western countries, like the UK and US, would now struggle to wage war without PMSC partners. In a conflict environment like Iraq, the distinction between combat and combat support breaks down. There is often no perceptible difference between regular soldiers and their private support workers involved in protecting convoys or materials. The potential for human rights abuses in such situations in an ever-present threat, and it is nearly impossible to hold PMSC employees to account for their actions.

## The Rise of the PMSC

Private military and security companies (PMSCs) now constitute the second largest occupying force in Iraq behind the US military. Although no one knows exactly how many of these mercenaries are active in Iraq, most estimates have settled on a minimum figure of 20,000.<sup>2</sup> The US Government Accountability Office, however, in its June 2006 report to Congress, cited a newer calculation from the Private Security Company Association of Iraq (whose membership includes many of the PMSCs featured in this report) that there are actually more than 48,000 PMSC employees working for 181 different companies in the country.<sup>3</sup> By May 2006 at least 428 PMSC employees had been killed in Iraq.<sup>4</sup> Others have been implicated in the scandal at Abu Ghraib prison. In Washington, DC one Democratic senator has referred to these armies as 'a large paramilitary force', asserting that their mission is to make the war more palatable to the public.<sup>5</sup> British PMSC Aegis Defence Services, run by Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Spicer, coordinates all PMSCs working in Iraq today. Another PMSC previously run by Spicer, Sandline International, attracted unwanted attention for contravening a UN arms embargo by delivering weapons to the government in Sierra Leone in the 1998 'Arms to Africa' scandal. Spicer claimed both the knowledge and approval of the UK government.<sup>6</sup>

## From Ignoble Beginnings ...

The concept of the mercenary is as old as that of the state. Today, however, mercenaries are not just individual soldiers of fortune. They are corporations, providing a range of services above and beyond what the traditional mercenary could offer. In the 20th century mercenaries were regularly involved in conflicts, especially across Africa, propping up illegitimate regimes, denying self-determination to indigenous peoples and actively participating in human rights

abuses. Amongst the most famous was Mike Hoare, who attempted a coup in the Congo in the early 1960s and a later one in the Seychelles. More recently, Simon Mann was imprisoned in Zimbabwe in September 2004 for attempting to buy weapons to lead a military coup in Equatorial Guinea. Sir Mark Thatcher pleaded guilty to negligence for helping to finance a helicopter to be used in the attempt, receiving a four-year suspended sentence and a £265,000 fine under South Africa's anti-mercenary legislation.<sup>7</sup> The use of mercenaries increased following the end of the Cold War, as did their involvement in human rights abuses.<sup>8</sup> But recent years have seen a new evolution in privatised warfare in the shape of PMSCs selling their services at home and overseas.

## ... to Multi-billion Dollar Industry

**ArmorGroup** estimated that the international market for 'protective security services' alone was worth around US\$900 million in 2003 (US\$300 million in Iraq), rising to an estimated US\$1.7 billion by August 2004 (US\$900 million in Iraq).<sup>9</sup> Industry officials have estimated that the figure will continue to rise as US and UK forces withdraw. Other experts have suggested that combined revenues for all PMSCs across the world, broadly defined, could already be close to US\$100 billion.<sup>10</sup>

PMSCs have a history of direct engagement in combat operations.<sup>11</sup> In 1995, now-defunct **Executive Outcomes** employed a battalion-sized force of infantry, supported by combat helicopters and light artillery, in order to regain control of the diamond-rich Kono district of Sierra Leone and defeat Revolutionary United Front rebels who were approaching the capital.<sup>12</sup> **Sandline**, also now disbanded, later played a similar role in the conflict.<sup>13</sup> In Liberia, Intercon Security personnel guard the US embassy, and have been involved in combat with rebel

forces during sieges. Few firms openly advertise their role as providers of combat services. However, **Northbridge Services Group's** founder Andrew Williams boasted that he could 'put a brigade on the ground fully equipped and with full logistical support anywhere in the world within three weeks',<sup>14</sup> while Gary Jackson, president of **Blackwater**, aims to have 'the largest, most professional private army in the world' ready for active duties in any country.<sup>15</sup> **MPRI** claims to have more than 12,000 former soldiers and other professionals on call, and though it ostensibly eschews a combat role, one US State Department official noted: 'The only difference between [Executive Outcomes and MPRI] is that MPRI hasn't pulled the trigger – yet.'<sup>16</sup> In modern warfare, involvement in direct combat does not have to mean troops on the ground; combat refers to a broad spectrum of activities. As one analyst put it,

*Rather than being simply security guards in the domestic conception, such firms stake out the control of zones and fend off military tasks, sometimes using military-style force.<sup>17</sup>*

Examples of the blurring of the line between the combat and non-combat duties of PMSCs are to be found wherever they operate. For example, **International Charter Inc (ICI)** and **Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE)** provided military aviation support to the Economic Community of West African States peacekeeping force in Liberia.

### Defending Corporate Interests

PMSCs have provided critical force for developing country governments in return for a share of the profits derived from the use of that force. Such was the case for former PMSC Executive Outcomes, which had a close relationship with the **Branch-Heritage Group**. After Executive Outcomes secured the resource-rich areas of Angola on behalf of the

government, a Branch-Heritage subsidiary gained concessions over those same resources.<sup>18</sup> In Sierra Leone, another Branch-Heritage subsidiary gained a concession in the Kono diamond fields following action by Executive Outcomes to secure them for the government.<sup>19</sup> In the post-Executive Outcomes world, PMSCs claim that their long-term profits are dependent on their public image, and such 'cowboy' operations have been put behind them. Yet protecting extractive industry infrastructure remains a key element in PMSC operations. De Beers, Texaco, Chevron-Schlumberger, British Gas, Amoco, Exxon, Mobil, Ranger Oil, BP, American Airlines and Shell have all contracted DSL (now part of Armor Group).<sup>20</sup> In Angola, US oil giant Chevron was part of a consortium that contracted **AirScan** to work with the Angolan army to ensure their continued control over key oil fields, thereby guaranteeing Chevron's own continued presence.<sup>21</sup> UN Special Rapporteur Enrique Ballesteros reported to the UN Commission on Human Rights in March 2002 that mercenaries were inexorably linked to the illegal diamond trade in Africa.<sup>22</sup> In 1998, Belgian PMSC International Defense and Security (IDAS) sold Angolan diamond concessions obtained through a partnership with the Angolan State Mining Company to America Mineral Fields. The two companies already had a close relationship, and shortly thereafter IDAS became a wholly owned subsidiary of America Mineral Fields.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile in Nigeria in 2003, PMSC Northbridge set off on an operation to free dozens of British and US oil workers taken hostage by striking co-workers. Ultimately peaceful negotiations prevailed before the force arrived.<sup>24</sup>

### What do PMSCs Actually do?

*As non-linear battlefields and asymmetrical methods of warfare come to characterize more contemporary armed conflicts, the distinction between combatant and non-combatant has become increasingly*

*blurred* (J.K. Wither, 'European Security and Private Military Companies', PJP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, June 2005).

PMSCs provide a wide variety of services previously carried out by national military forces: direct combat; intelligence services; training; security in conflict zones; consulting and planning; maintenance and technical assistance; operational and logistical support; post-conflict reconstruction

In a conflict zone such as Iraq the distinction between combat and combat support breaks down. There is often no perceptible difference between regular soldiers and the private contractors protecting convoys or materials. Even providing security for an oil company, aid agency or media outlet in such an environment necessitates being armed and ready to shoot, often under uncertain circumstances where combatants and civilians are difficult to separate. PMSCs such as Control Risks Group which have traditionally maintained that they do not employ armed guards have been cited as doing precisely that – an indication of the increased militarisation which Iraq has introduced.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, other activities traditionally termed 'combat support', such as intelligence provision and military training, contain within them significant scope for human rights violations in modern warfare. As such it is impossible, when considering the impact of PMSCs, to draw neat lines between combat and noncombat operations. Some PMSCs have been bold in seeking to redefine their roles. Blackwater's vice-chair Cofer Black told a conference in March 2006 that Blackwater was ready to move towards providing private armies, up to battalion size, for use in low-intensity conflicts. He suggested Sudan as a country which might benefit from such a presence.<sup>26</sup>

Intelligence gathering is another area where PMSCs are taking a larger role in what was formerly the purview of government agencies. PMSCs increasingly provide a range of services, from interrogation to strategic intelligence, in a field that is a key aspect of waging war. USAID and DFID (UK) increasingly rely on PMSCs to provide training in support of security sector reform programmes aimed at strengthening political control over the military and security establishments of weak states. While this may be a laudable objective, critics ask whether using PMSCs is the best way to spread awareness of democracy, transparency and accountability.

While there may be broad agreement on the undesirability of PMSCs playing a combat role, the definition of combat is far from clear cut. With the introduction of new technologies, operating a weapon 'in the field' is only one small aspect of what combat entails. Recognition of this complexity has important implications for any attempts to regulate the activities of PMSCs. PMSCs have grown to become a central component of US and UK military activity. They are now multi-million dollar enterprises, and the market is still growing ... particularly the desire of governments to maintain their global reach while evading accountability from a general public increasingly unwilling to pay the costs of war.

## The Privatisation of War

*Private military corporations become a way to distance themselves and create what we used to call 'plausible deniability'... It's disastrous for democracy* (Daniel Nelson, former professor of civil-military relations at the US Defense Department's Marshall European Center for Security Studies).

The use of PMSCs also enables governments to cover their tracks and evade accountability. Evidence which may otherwise be made available to the public

under freedom of information legislation is impossible to obtain from private contractors.<sup>27</sup> When campaign group Corporate Watch asked a US government official why the United States had awarded a contract to **DynCorp** to support the rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Movement in their negotiations, he replied:

*The answer is simple. We are not allowed to fund a political party or agenda under United States law, so by using private contractors, we can get around those provisions. Think of this as somewhere between a covert program run by the CIA and an overt program run by the United States Agency for International Development. It is a way to avoid oversight by Congress.*<sup>28</sup>

Also known as the 'Vietnam Syndrome' or its updated variant 'Mogadishu syndrome', Western governments are increasingly turning to PMSCs to take on conflicts that are too costly – in terms of resources or public opinion – to undertake themselves, with the advantage that lines of accountability become increasingly blurred. Aegis chief executive Tim Spicer has acknowledged the usefulness of PMSCs in this regard: 'the impact of casualties is much more significant if they're sovereign forces as opposed to contractors.'<sup>29</sup> A similar unwillingness to commit soldiers to UN forces led UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to consider using PMSCs in Rwandan refugee camps in 1997.<sup>30</sup> PMSCs have already been contracted to support other UN operations, as for example ArmorGroup in Mozambique, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Developing country governments themselves are also increasingly delegating the task of securing life and property to PMSCs.<sup>31</sup>

*Most national armies, including those of Britain and the US, are undermanned and overcommitted. A wide range of national interests overseas demand attention and protection that uniformed soldiers are not*

*available to provide* (Max Hastings, 'We must fight our instinctive distaste for mercenaries', *The Guardian*, 2 August 2006).

Governments have tended gradually over recent years to outsource more of their responsibilities to the private sector, and the military is also beginning to succumb to market forces. PMSCs are flourishing in this environment and profiting from the privatisation of war. The companies claim they can do the state's work more effectively, more quickly and more cheaply than the state's own forces. As so often with privatisation projects, the cost effectiveness of PMSCs is largely unproven.<sup>32</sup> What is certain, however, is that given financial constraints on military budgets and downsizing of armed forces following the end of the Cold War, privatisation allows states to extend their reach beyond the limits justified by their military apparatus. It is believed that the UK and US would now struggle to wage war without PMSCs operating as their paramilitary partners.

For instance, since the mid-1980s, the British government has steadily outsourced military service functions, embracing a market-oriented approach to the military sector.<sup>33</sup> More recently still, the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) has required private tenders for contracts covering the construction, maintenance and servicing of military facilities – contracts which typically last between 10 and 40 years. To date the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has signed 55 private finance deals, bringing private sector investment through PFI to the MoD to over £4.57 billion.<sup>34</sup> PFI contracts do not have to be approved by parliament, which means less transparency and accountability to the public over what can amount to enormous contracts.

## Weapons Trade

The end of the Cold War has also seen an erosion of political control over the means

of war, and large stocks of arms have fallen onto the open market. Machine guns, helicopters, tanks and even fighter jets have become available. In Africa, a T-55 tank costs US\$40,000, while an AK-47 rifle can be purchased for the price of a chicken in Uganda.<sup>35</sup> In this context, PMSCs have easily obtained the armaments they need. In Sierra Leone, Executive Outcomes mercenaries possessed attack and transport helicopters fitted with fully automatic cannons and grenade launchers.<sup>36</sup> More worrying still, PMSCs have themselves channelled weapons into conflict situations. **Life-Guard Systems**, which protected diamond fields in Sierra Leone, was strongly believed to have shipped arms during the civil war there, including RPG-7 rockets, AK-47 ammunition, mines and mortar bombs to the rebel forces. A further link between PMSC operations and the weapons trade was made explicit by the UK government in its 2002 Green Paper, *Private Military Companies: Options for Regulation* (treated more fully in [www.waronwant.org](http://www.waronwant.org)).

Western governments and multinational corporations do not represent the only market for PMSCs. Weak governments and rebel groups, especially in Africa, have relied on their expertise and force in numerous conflicts, and PMSCs are credited with shifting the balance of wars in Angola, Croatia and Sierra Leone. Yet even where the interventions may seem to have been humanitarian in their aims, troubling aspects remain. Two major problems arise from PMSCs augmenting the military capability of one side or other in a conflict.<sup>37</sup> Firstly, the availability of mercenary assistance means that the use of force continues to be prioritised as a decisive means of bringing war to an end, as opposed to developing less bloody forms of conflict resolution. Secondly, and as a consequence, victories may be temporary. This ultimately means that weak states either come to rely on PMSCs in the long term or that the situation degenerates into conflict again as soon

as the PMSCs end their contract. The profit motive behind all corporate adventures means that, at one level, PMSCs have an inherent interest in ongoing conflict and the social tensions that lie behind it. Moreover, many PMSCs are now part of large business empires involved in intelligence, surveillance and information systems, construction and energy production, and even production of weapons. These business interests provide 'synergies' which allow the company concerned to derive greater profits from controlling more aspects of an economic sector. **Northrop Grumman** and **Raytheon** are major arms contractors also selling PMSC services. **Halliburton** specialises in energy exploration and construction, but also provides logistical support to the US military. While conflicts such as the Iraq War have brought companies enormous profits, their gain has come at the expense of the victims of war. The rapid expansion of PMSCs over recent years means that there is now an urgent need to bring their activities within the compass of both legal and democratic control (see [www.waronwant.co.uk](http://www.waronwant.co.uk) for the legal initiatives in train).

In recognition of the large numbers of South Africans who have set up or served in PMSCs, the South African government has led the way in PMSC legislation. Around 2,000 South Africans are believed to be serving in PMSCs in Iraq, many trained under the Apartheid government.<sup>38</sup> The Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance (FMA) Bill was passed in 1998 in the wake of the controversy surrounding Executive Outcomes. It bans 'mercenary activity' and regulates military assistance including advice, training, personnel, financial, logistical, intelligence or procurement support.<sup>39</sup> However, loopholes and insignificant penalties have undermined the Bill's effectiveness.<sup>40</sup> As a result, a new law, with unprecedented reach, is currently before the South African parliament. It is intended to prevent South

Africans from working for PMSCs in conflict zones altogether.<sup>41</sup> The legislation will outlaw mercenary activity and allow the government to declare certain conflicts prohibited to South Africans. The penalty for infringement will be losing South African citizenship. The US lobby group IPOA has called the legislation 'a threat to the peace and stability industry worldwide'.<sup>42</sup>

## Buying Influence

One reason for the lack of regulatory legislation is governmental unwillingness to interfere in an industry that is profitable and useful to it. However, in order to remind officials and ministers of these and other considerations, PMSCs have also developed significant lobbying capacity to prevent unwanted government interference in the US and UK alike.

In 2001, the 10 leading US private military firms spent more than US\$32 million on lobbying, and donated more than US\$12 million to political campaigns.<sup>43</sup> DynCorp gave more than US\$500,000 between 1999 and 2002 (72% to Republicans).<sup>44</sup> CACI and Titan, the two PMSCs involved in the Abu Ghraib scandal, made political donations and employed lobbying firms to divert political pressure.<sup>45</sup> Titan spent US\$2.16 million from 1998 to 2004 on lobbying,<sup>46</sup> and fully 96% of its US\$1.8 billion turnover in 2003 came from US government contracts.<sup>47</sup> Blackwater founder Erik Prince and his family have given US\$275,550 to Republican campaigns since 1989, with nothing going to the Democrats.<sup>48</sup> In 2001, two firms retained by DynCorp worked to block a bill that would have forced federal agencies to justify private contracts on cost-saving grounds.<sup>49</sup> One was the lobbying firm Alexander Strategy Group (ASG).<sup>50</sup> The 'revolving door' between government and PMSCs – the movement of former officials and military officers to and from the private sector, exerting political influence

through their connections and inside knowledge – is also a key factor in explaining the sector's success. Blackwater's vice-chair Cofer Black was coordinator for counterterrorism at the US State Department and director of the CIA's Counterterrorism Center, while Joseph Schmitz, COO of Blackwater's parent company, was the Pentagon's inspector general. Three members of CACI's board have formerly worked for US government security.<sup>51</sup> Titan's team includes two former senior air force officials and a Pentagon official.<sup>52</sup> Best of all, MPRI president Carl Vuono is a former chief of staff for the US army (1987-1993), while the five MPRI vice-presidents were senior personnel in the army or FBI. James Roche, secretary of the air force, is a former vice-president of Northrop.<sup>53</sup> From 1997 to 2004, the 20 largest US federal contractors hired 224 former high-ranking government officials to serve as lobbyists, board members or executives. The US non-profit organisation Project On Government Oversight (POGO) noted that:

*the revolving door has become such an accepted part of federal contracting in recent years that it is frequently difficult to determine where the government stops and the private sector begins.*<sup>54</sup>

In the UK, the British Association of Private Security Companies (BAPSC) now represents the largest PMSCs. As a result of current contracts in Iraq, meetings between government officials and PMSCs such as ArmorGroup and Control Risks have become frequent. While understandable under the circumstances, this type of relationship can blur the line between government departments and the PMSCs to which they outsource their functions. The 'revolving door' operates in the UK too. Former defence and foreign secretary Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP is non-executive chairman of ArmorGroup, while COO Stephen Kappes comes from the CIA.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, Aegis's non-executive directors include former de-

fence minister Nicholas Soames MP as well as Lord Inge, former chief of defence staff, and Roger Wheeler, former chief of the general staff in the UK. The director general of the BAPSC itself, Andy Bearpark, was director of operations for the CPA in Iraq.<sup>56</sup>

PMSCs have grown so large and so fast that legislation to regulate them is now a critical necessity. It is already four years since the UK government published its Green Paper on PMSCs, and in that time the explosion of mercenary activity in Iraq has effectively rewritten the sector's role in contemporary conflict. The UK remains in the unhappy position of having one of the most developed PMSC sectors in the world, and yet having no legal or democratic controls over it. War on Want will contribute more detailed recommendations on what form these controls should take once the government launches the public consultation which is a necessary precursor to legislation (see the War on Want website for an update on their recommendations).

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## CORPORATE MERCENARIES: THE MAJOR PLAYERS

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### **Blackwater (USA) [www.blackwaterusa.com](http://www.blackwaterusa.com)**

Blackwater was founded by multi-millionaire Erik Prince in North Carolina in 1997. Gary Jackson, its president and a former US navy SEAL, has declared that he would like to have the 'largest, most professional private army in the world', and other Blackwater officials have spoken of a brigade-sized armed force ready to be deployed in 'stability' missions. In Iraq, the company guards officials and installations and trains Iraq's new army and police forces. It provided security guards and helicopters for Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) head Paul Bremer and the then US Ambassador to Iraq John Negroponte, under a contract worth US\$21 million. Since June 2004 the Bush administration has paid Blackwater over US\$320 million to provide 'diplomatic security' overseas. Blackwater has also won contracts to combat opium cultivation in Afghanistan and to support a maritime commando force in Azerbaijan.

### **DynCorp International LLC (USA) [www.dyn-intl.com](http://www.dyn-intl.com)**

DynCorp is owned by Veritas Capital, a private equity investment firm, and employs 25,000 employees. It won a US\$50 million contract to send 1,000 ex-police officers and security guards to Iraq to train the new police force there. Its revenue was just under US\$2 billion in 2006, and it provides a broad range of military services including building camps, protecting borders and protecting Afghan president Hamid Karzai, in which role the company has acquired a reputation for aggressive behaviour. DynCorp employees in Bosnia were implicated in prostitution rings trading girls as young as 12, while others were accused of filming the rape of two women. A number of employees were fired, but no prosecutions followed.

### **Military Professional Resources Inc. (USA) [www.mpri.com](http://www.mpri.com)**

Founded in 1987 by retired US military officers, MPRI has 3,000 employees and reputedly more high-ranking military officers per square metre than the Pentagon. It is part of mega-corporation L-3 Communications, whose government services companies (of which MPRI is one) brought in revenues of US\$2 billion in 2005. MPRI provided tactical training to the Kosovo Liberation Army in the weeks before the NATO bombing campaign, while its collaboration with the Colombian military has been widely questioned. A range of programmes continue in Africa, former Soviet states, Asia and the Middle East.

### **Vinnell Corporation (USA) [www.vinnell.com](http://www.vinnell.com)**

Vinnell is a ground-breaking PMSC that was directly involved in US military and intelligence operations in South-East Asia from 1965 to 1975. At the height of the Vietnam War it had more than 5,000 employees in Vietnam, and later trained Saudi forces to protect oil fields. It was described by a Pentagon official as 'our own little mercenary army in Vietnam ... We used them to do things we either didn't have the manpower to do ourselves, or because of legal problems.' Now a subsidiary of Northrop Grumman, Vinnell has been awarded a US\$48 million contract to train the nucleus of a new Iraqi army, while Northrop itself has been involved in counternarcotics missions in Colombia.

### **Aegis Defence Services (UK) [www.aegisworld.com](http://www.aegisworld.com)**

Aegis is the UK's biggest PMSC success story. The firm's 2003 turnover of £554,000 rose to £62 million in 2005, three quarters of which came from work in Iraq. It became one of the world's largest private armies with the awarding of a US\$293 million contract by the CPA in Iraq in May 2004, at a time when the company was two years old and had no experience in that country. Aegis now coordinates the operations of all PMSCs working in Iraq, including handling security at prisons and oil fields. The company is run by Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Spicer, former chief executive of Sandline International of the 1998 'Arms to Africa' scandal.

### **ArmorGroup (UK) [www.armorgroup.com](http://www.armorgroup.com)**

Probably the largest UK-based PMSC, Armor Group has provided protective services to the extractive industries since its original incarnation as Defence Systems Limited (DSL) in 1981. ArmorGroup registered as a public limited company in 2004 and is the only British PMSC currently listed on the London Stock Exchange. Its turnover has increased from US\$71 million in 2001 to US\$233.2 million in 2005. The British Foreign Office and Department for International Development (DFID) awarded Armor Group armed security contracts in Kabul (March 2005), Baghdad (June 2005) and Basra (June 2005), as well as control of the Iraqi police mentoring programme in Basra. ArmorGroup recently fostered the creation of the British Association of Private Security Companies (BAPSC), the UK's trade association and lobbying arm for PMSCs.

### **Northbridge Services Group Ltd. (UK) [www.northbridgeservices.com](http://www.northbridgeservices.com)**

When the USA was deliberating over whether to intervene in Liberia in 2003, Northbridge said it could deploy between 500 and 2,000 armed men to the country in three weeks to halt the

fighting and offered to arrest Liberian president Charles Taylor for a fee of US\$4 million. In 2003, the British government publicly chastised the company after reports that it was hiring British, French and South African mercenaries on behalf of the Cote d'Ivoire government; Northbridge expressed surprise given foreign secretary Jack Straw's previous support for the use of such forces.

**Control Risks Group (UK) [www.crg.com](http://www.crg.com)**

Control Risks works around the world primarily with the energy sector, but also with the pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, maritime and telecommunications sectors. It provides security information, assessments and training, as well as site security. The company's turnover increased from £47 million in 2003 to £80 million in 2004. Control Risks has been employed in Iraq by the US Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), the CPA, US Department of Defense, USAID and several UN bodies to provide security and to distribute the new Iraqi and Afghani currency. The British Foreign Office has used Control Risks to provide armed guards for staff in Baghdad and Basra.

**Erinys International Ltd (UK/ South Africa) [www.erinysinternational.com](http://www.erinysinternational.com)**

Erinys was formed in 2003 when the Coalition Provisional Authority awarded it security contracts worth US\$100 million to defend oil sites and pipelines in Iraq. Led by a former political adviser to Angolan rebel leader Jonas Savimbi, Erinys protects oil interests in Nigeria and has contracts from major corporations including AMEC, BHP Billiton, Anvil Mining, Siemens and the BBC.

**Editor's Note:** all references to this section are on the War on Want website.

## CAAT & The Corner House Win Landmark Ruling on BAE-Saudi Corruption Case

At a hearing on Friday 9 November 2007 in the High Court in London, Lord Justice Moses, sitting with Mr Justice Irwin, granted permission to CAAT (Campaign Against the Arms Trade) and The Corner House to bring a full judicial review hearing against the UK Government's decision to cut short a Serious Fraud Office (SFO) investigation into alleged corruption by BAE Systems in recent arms deals with Saudi Arabia. Lawyers for the two groups argued before the two judges that the SFO decision was unlawful under the OECD's Anti-Bribery Convention, which the UK signed in 1997.

Lord Justice Moses agreed with the groups that the issue 'cries out for a public hearing' because it involves 'matters of concern and public importance'. He stressed that the issue was closely concerned with the legal system in the UK that 'judges have to protect'. He concluded that 'it is in everyone's interest that a full hearing take place.' The full judicial review hearing has now been scheduled for late January-early February and is expected to last two days.

Symon Hill of CAAT said, 'This is brilliant news for everyone who wants to see an end to arms companies' influence over government. We are now one step further today to the point when BAE Systems is no longer calling the shots.' Nicholas Hildyard of The Corner House said, 'Today is a great day for British justice. The courts have today shown that no one is above the law – not BAE Systems, not the Government, not Saudi princes. There are key legal principles at stake here. At last this case will get the public hearing it deserves.'

On 15 January 2007, 140 NGOs from 37 countries called upon Prime Minister Tony Blair to re-open the investigation of the Al Yamamah defence contract between BAE and Saudi Arabia government because of the impacts of corruption on democracy, sustainable development, human rights and poverty.

And it won't stop here. On 13 November 2006, the following was a report by David Leigh in the *Guardian*:

*BAE Systems is being investigated for suspected corruption over an arms deal with the heavily indebted African country of Tanzania, in which commissions of more than 29% may have been paid ...*

*Of all the company's international deals being investigated by the Serious Fraud Office (SFO), the Tanzanian deal is the most politically sensitive, although it was relatively small in cash terms. The £28m military air traffic control sale was pushed through the cabinet in 2001 by Tony Blair against the heated opposition of then-development minister Clare Short, who subsequently alleged corruption ...*

*Westminster sources say that the SFO and the Ministry of Defence police, who are conducting a joint investigation into BAE's deals around the world, believe that millions of pounds were paid into Swiss banks to cement the sale. One said: 'I was told the SFO would not be surprised if commissions exceeded 29%'. ... John Bredenkamp, a Zimbabwe-based tycoon who acted as an agent for BAE in the sale by the Labour government of Hawk and Gripen warplanes worth £1.6bn to the ANC government in South Africa [is also under investigation]. He is also believed to have acted as a BAE agent in other African countries. The SFO investigations started three years ago following disclosures in the *Guardian* of corruption allegations against BAE, and began by inquiring into alleged 'slush fund' payments to Saudi Arabia. Inquiries moved to Chile, Romania, South Africa and now Tanzania.*

For background into 'South Africa: The Arms Deal Scandal', see ROAPE 100 (June 2004), pp.329-342 by Terry Crawford-Browne:

*To people in South Africa and millions around the world who supported the struggle against apartheid, it is incomprehensible that the ANC government's first major decision was to buy warships and warplanes when there is no conceivable foreign military threat and when the real threat to the consolidation of democracy is poverty. Instead of houses, schools and clinics being built, instead of money to tackle AIDS, South Africa bought submarines.*

*When allegations arose that BAE Systems had paid £1 million to various South African politicians (including Tony Yengeni) as a 'first success fee', they were referred for investigation to the British Secretary of Trade and Industry, Stephen Byers. Byers delegated the task to the London Metropolitan Police who, with desultory indifference, reported back that there was insufficient evidence to pursue the matter. The British government, however, was at that time under pressure from BAE Systems to stall on implementation of the 1997 OECD Anti-Bribery Convention. It was apparently then not illegal in Britain to bribe officials of foreign countries and, accordingly, it would seem that there was a feeling in London that there was no crime to investigate.*

## Book / Theatre Reviews

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*Making Ends Meet at the Margins? Grappling with Economic Crisis and Belonging in Beitbridge Town, Zimbabwe* by Rekopantswe Mate; Dakar: CODESRIA, 2005; (Distributed by the African Books Collective); 44pp. ISBN: 2-86978-152-0.

*Suffering for Territory: Race, Place and Power in Zimbabwe* by Donald S. Moore; Durham, NC: Duke University Press/Harare: Weaver Press, 2005; 399pp. £15.95 (pb); ISBN: 0822335700.

*Walking a Tightrope: Towards a Social History of the Coloured People of Zimbabwe* by James Muzondidya, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005; 323pp. £19.99 (pb); ISBN: 1592212468. Reviewed by Sarah Bracking, University of Manchester.

Chikwava (2007) recently noted of Zimbabwe's fiction:

*Thankfully, in spite of or because of the difficulties that Zimbabwe is going through, the turn of the century has seen a quiet adjustment in the publishing of fiction, giving new voices a better platform to be heard.*

The comment seems to carry resonance across, at least, the academic disciplines of social history, sociology, and anthropology. It is as if the political and economic crises have catalysed a deep-rooted collective investigation of embedded cultural identities and inheritances, not least in the selected publications listed above. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to suggest that despite of, or again perhaps because of, the diasporic movements of people, and the slow but sure temporal space expanding since

Independence, the Matabeleland atrocities, the 1987 'Unity' Accord, the post-2000 seizures of farms and elections, that a space beyond the established post-colonial landmarks is emerging. And it is emerging as a multi-layered, entangled, and many voiced space, as Moore so expertly narrates in his ethnography of Kaerezi, Eastern Highlands. As Chikwava notes of fiction, but it is also true of academia, the questions and explorations have become more complex and the narrative of liberation war and its aftermath is being more often set aside in favour of investigations of new Zimbabwean lives, emerging from neo-liberalism, globalisation, shifting moral community and political economies of displacement and crisis.

More detailed accounts of the diversity and social history of Zimbabwe are also emerging in contra-distinction to the global labels and fixed polar identities of war, liberation, reconciliation, structural adjustment and the Third Chimurenga. Muzondidya work is archetypal here, although selected from a much larger group of possibles. In *Walking a Tightrope*, Muzondidya writes an impressive social history of how Coloured identity has been constructed and understood, challenging the conventional fixity of ethnicity and race in Zimbabwe as biologically determined through the act of miscegenation, and imposed as a category by the colonial State. He both restores the active agency of Coloured people in making their identity, while going some way to reclaim space for the community in a region where the binary white/black racial categorisation has dominated.

In Mate's ethnographic account of the perception and social construction of 'locals' and 'outsiders' in Beitbridge Town the nuances of conflicted identity and its relationship to entitlements, rights and resources literally comes alive from the page. She has conducted a careful study of tensions and continuities of belonging and outlines the contradictory definitions and criteria used by variously resident people in Beitridge. Those without patrilineal roots and Venda language skills, for example, stress home ownership or length of formal employment in the town as criteria of localness and belonging, whereas those with Venda, Shangani, Sotho or Ndebele linguistic belonging, and corresponding patrilineage and clan name, discount these criteria in favour of an ethnicised indigenous categorisation. To the latter, the former remain outsiders who may, in addition, be seen as an unwelcome beneficiary of local resources, housing and employment.

Also, a central strength of this work, despite the author's initial claim (p.3) to be studying through a binary lens of 'local' and 'outsider' is that she actually goes beyond this initial sorting, accounting for the gradations and multilayered attributes of localness (p. 25). For example, when an Ndebele speaking woman marries an (even more) local Venda man, Mate notes that the children will tend not to learn the patrilineal Venda language, such that even within the non-Shona group of related peoples gradation of belonging, and perceived cultural hierarchy, still occur. In this case, the woman contributes to the family's dispossession from the man's cultural and patrilineal heritage.

After a discussion of the various ills apparently wrought on the town by outsiders (according to locals) – the increase in children born out of wedlock, the increase in informalised, and sometimes criminal livelihoods (foreign currency trading, prostitution and assisted

border jumping), crime, public health crises (cholera and HIV/AIDS), and their trickery in gaining housing and resources – Mate contextualises these perceptions within broader sociological processes. She explains the role of identity cards in producing covert discrimination by authorities (pp.11-12), the role of a crisis in gender relations which produces relationships of mutual abuse (pp. 28-29) and the way in which the crisis of material life is displaced onto and explained within expressions of outrage to the moral community.

What is exemplory about this work is how a careful ethnographic case study can convincingly lead to such insightful theoretical comment. For example, Mate notes of prolonged poverty and material crisis that it affects the morality and behaviour of the poor in particular ways, that 'relationships are temporary and dependent on market conditions' (p.92). Mate concludes that poverty, and its harbinger globalisation, destroys communities and certainties while simultaneously preventing others forming (p.31), although it remains unclear how globalisation can be privileged with such a role, given the salience of localised coordinates of political degeneration, or quite why these degraded and materialised social relations are not a 'community', but rather just a community which does not appeal.

In Moore's much longer book and period of field study in Nyanga District, Manicaland, further entangled contradictions of the Zimbabwean identity emerge in an exceptional ethnographic study of the discursive and material production of power, race, and place, within an anthropological elaboration of governmentality. Moore examines how history, discourse, ideology and cultural understandings combine to produce subjects enlisted in the project of their own rule, guiding their conduct and self-disciplining them, in a Foucauldian sense, into their spaces of racialised

dispossession. This is understood by Moore as a situated 'contingent constellation of practice, milieu, and materiality' (p.4); an

*entangled landscape in which multiple spatialities, temporalities, and power relations combine: rainmaking and chiefly rule; colonial ranch and postcolonial resettlement scheme; site-specific land claims and discourses of national liberation; ancestral inheritance and racialised dispossession (Ibid.).*

He summarises that 'Rhodesian eviction, Mugabe's escape [through the district in 1975] and political opposition to racialised rule entangled Kaerezians' suffering for Tangwena territory within struggles of national liberation' (p.17), yet 'within any one place, social actors become subjected to multiple matrices of power' (p.21), such that the details of his local ethnography complete the depiction of an entangled landscape strewn with the sediments of historical struggle. This book could not be a better antidote to the standardising and anodyne texts of international development and its knowledge industry, nor a better reminder that Gramsci's 'violence of political economic relations' (p.10) has its roots in an embedded, situated spatiality, disciplined metaphorically and literally through the 'malines' of clinical linear colonial housing (p.39).

I was reminded of the resonance of these architectural and linguistic metaphors of the spatiality and disciplining of development and power, in the similar 'malines' emerging from *Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle* ('live well'(sic)), the pictures of the (small number) of outside-toilet-sized 'houses', built in rigid lines, and largely unoccupied due to errors in construction (see Solidarity Peace Trust, 2006). In sum, the continuities of struggle and complexities of a rural identity are carefully explored by Moore with clear contemporary resonance, in an exemplary ethnographic case study: I don't

think I have ever recommended a book to quite so many people, or cited one text so often in quite so many diverse contexts. All these books, and others, contribute to the recognition of a diverse Zimbabwe and indirectly, to the richness of its possible future.

## References

**Chikwava, B.** (2007), 'Zimbabwean Literature: A Nervous Condition', Guest editorial in *Pambazuka News*, 11 January, available from <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/>

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*Re-Living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* by Fay Chung; Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute / Harare: Weaver Press, 2006; 358pp. £17.66 (pb); ISBN: 9171065512. Reviewed by Brian Raftopoulos, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Cape Town.

It is one of the ironies of Zimbabwean politics that even as the ruling party Zanu PF has recently steadily imposed a stodgy diet of narrow party history on Zimbabweans, this view of the past has been challenged not only by an increasing flow of critical historiography, but also from within the ranks of Zanu PF itself. The latter has taken the form of emerging biographies by critical voices within Zanu PF, that have added very useful insights into the history of the liberation struggle and the internal battles in the liberation movement. These voices have not so much provided a new paradigm for understanding the liberation struggles as added new information to doubts that have been apparent in both the creative literature and historiography of the struggle for some time.

Of equal significance however is the manner in which such critical biographies have been received within Zanu PF. The ruling party's response to Edgar Tekere's recent biography *A Lifetime of Struggle* has been somewhat hysterical. The book has been denounced because it 'clearly and explicitly denigrates and vilifies' Mugabe, and Tekere been expelled from the party for the second time in his lifetime. The overblown response to Tekere's story is a reminder that authoritarian regimes like Zanu PF are usually most sensitive to criticisms from within their ranks. The personal bonds formed by such nationalist groupings during periods of prolonged struggle, are most keenly affected by the personal criticisms that emerge from within. Some of the 'myths' of the struggle have begun to unravel as key participants tell their stories of the inner workings of Zanu PF, within the broader context of the intense succession battle taking place within the ruling party and the resurgent opposition to the regime.

It is from this perspective that Fay Chung's book is interesting not only for its valuable discussion of the history of Zanu PF, but as part of the general rethinking of Zimbabwean nationalism that has been taking place over the last decade. Chung's narrative of her early life is an interesting account of a Chinese youth in colonial Southern Rhodesia, showing the ambiguous status of the Chinese in the colonial racial hierarchy. The author provides an absorbing narrative of her childhood and education in Coloured schools, as well as her move into nationalist politics in Zambia after her time at university.

It is however her narrative of the internal struggles within Zanu in the 1970s that provides the most interesting and contested part of the book. In these chapters Chung takes the reader through the Nhari-Badza rebellion of the mid 1970s and the rise and fall of the left-leaning Zipa group. On the former, Chung ar-

gues that the 'rebels' had substantial grievances against the High Command, and that the summary execution of the leaders on the orders of Tongogara were part of the ongoing leadership battles taking place in the party. Wifred Mhanda (2006), formerly known as Dzinashwe Machingura, one time leader of Zipa, has contested this interpretation. In his view the rebellion was 'a clear attempt at the usurpation of power by Nhari and Badza, chagrined by their demotion', in the army. He thus concludes that 'if the revolt was ill conceived, and if it has been misconstrued by Chung, its suppression was characterised by unparalleled brutality'.

On the Zipa period in Zanu, while Fay Chung displays sympathy for the left-wing guerrillas, she argues that the group was ultimately defeated by the old guard because of a combination of poor negotiating skills, 'uncompromising rigidity' and their unwillingness to work with traditional structures. In her discussions of this period Chung also throws some light on the growing rightward shift of the liberation leadership, marked by its own forms of racial intolerance. As Chung was centrally involved in Zanu's education programme in Mozambique, the book provides a very useful insight into the liberation movement's efforts in this area.

The weakest parts of the book are the two concluding chapters on the post-1980 period, and it is in this section that one of the central tensions in the book is most apparent. For while the discussion of nationalist politics in the 1970s is largely a critical examination of the problems of nationalist politics, the post-independence assessment, for the most part, provides an official rendition of the causes of the crisis in Zimbabwe. Issues of state violence, political intolerance, and human rights abuses are largely neglected in favour of a position that, notwithstanding the problems she has tracked in Zanu, the spirit and traditions of libera-

tion politics in the latter provide the best hope for the future. Her position on this is backed by an extremely shallow assessment of post-1990s opposition politics, that in no way matches the nuance she displays in understanding the history of Zanu. Moreover Chung's uncritical view of the figure of Robert Mugabe himself will raise many eyebrows. Preben Kaarholm's very good introduction provides an important context for understanding this and other problems in Chung's narrative.

Several areas of the book can be contested for historical accuracy, and no doubt there are many in Zanu PF who will challenge her interpretation of the 1970s struggles in liberation politics. Nevertheless Chung's critical perspectives on the form and content of the political struggles and conflicts in Zanu have provided the historiography of the liberation struggle with an important new voice, and for the frankness with which she approached her subject she is to be greatly thanked.

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*Sudan, the Elusive Quest for Peace*, by Ruth Iyob & Gilbert M. Khadiagala, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers/International Peace Academy Occasional Paper Series, 2006; 224pp. £11.99 (pb); ISBN 978-1-58826-350-6. Reviewed by Mark Leopold, University of Sussex.

The vast and complex country of Sudan tends to confuse observers, even those who have spent a long time studying the place. Iyob and Khadiagala are not Sudanists by background, and I approached this volume with some suspi-

cion. Reading it, however, many of my caveats faded away, and I became aware that there are strengths, as well as weaknesses, in coming at the subject of contemporary Sudan from an outside perspective. In the first place, the book is presumably intended for people, particularly in the NGO world, who themselves know little about the country. Secondly, the book's main value lies in its explanation of the regional context of Sudan's conflict, especially in relation to the countries of the Horn.

It begins, however, with a brief but largely accurate account of the all-important historical and geographical background to Sudan's present predicament. The authors emphasise, quite rightly, the inadequacies of the usual media travesty of Sudan's civil wars as conflicts between an 'Arab, Muslim North' and 'African, Christian or Animist South'. Rather, they argue that, '[c]ontemporary Sudan is mired in multiple conflicts whose origins can be traced to the distant precolonial past and the eccentric colonial heritage of Anglo-Egyptian overrule' (p.27), and 'it is the conflicts over resources – agricultural land, water, pasturage, and recently oil – that underpin the attenuated rivalries that followed, leaving behind new hostilities that were, in turn, woven together to become the poles of identity/ethnicity around which the contesting groups rallied.' (p.29).

The first two substantive chapters explore these processes in a way that is necessarily rather superficial, given the available space. Some of the emphases are questionable; I wanted more on Equatoria, Abyei, the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile region, while the role of White Nile flooding in determining patterns of conflict should have been explained rather than merely alluded to. Darfur, on the other hand, is perhaps over-emphasised, in line with current political preoccupations. Issues of Muslim theology and history are presented in

a rather superficial manner, while provocative but somewhat far-fetched comparisons are made with Rwanda and Brazil. Nevertheless, these chapters manage to cram a huge amount of information and analysis into a rather small space.

The next two chapters form the heart of the book. They examine the development of conflict in postcolonial Sudan from 1955 to 2005, emphasising the influence of the regional context (and to an extent the wider international arena) on events in the country. The growth of the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) is outlined and the changing roles of Sudan's neighbours in the processes of civil war are examined in detail, as are the twists and turns of the peace process under the auspices of the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). This concern with the regional factor is original and valuable, but inevitably skews the analysis somewhat away from the internal dynamics of Sudanese politics, while also downplaying the influence of powerful Western political and economic interests. The importance of the oil industry, for example, is mentioned, but not outlined in any detail. Given the presumed audience for the book, there should also be more about the often contested role in the conflict of the aid and development industry – Operation Lifeline Sudan, for example is barely mentioned.

Chapter 6 focuses on Darfur, and again does a reasonably good job of outlining the history of the area, with due emphasis given to both the longstanding role of slave raiding and the long lasting influence of the social institutions of military slavery. The chapter underlines Darfur's ethnic complexity and its relatively late incorporation into the Sudanese polity. The authors argue that the conflict here reflects wider patterns in Sudanese society, such as 'economic marginalisation of the region and centralisation of power in Khartoum ... [T]raditional conflict

over scarce resources; the polarisation of Sudanic communities – inextricably linked through ties of history, kinship and culture; and the demands of political inclusion and economic integration by marginalised regions' (p.160). Nevertheless, one feels that singling out Darfur reflects current international political preoccupations rather than an analysis of the area's importance in Sudanese history and contemporary politics per se.

The final substantive chapter looks at the progress of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between North and South. Inevitably this is already rather dated, though it does (just) manage to cover the death of the SPLA leader John Garang in July 2005. The authors conclude that Sudanese history does contain potential resources for peace and reconciliation, notably the interconnectedness of supposedly distinct groups, and a claim that '[m]ore than any other society of the Horn of Africa, the peoples of this vast nation have retained a healthy respect for dialogue and the importance of intra-Sudanese communication in the resolution of feuds, hostilities and wars' (p.177). This somewhat pious conclusion rather underestimates the abilities of Khartoum's ruling elite not to listen to such communications.

Given the constraints of length, this book represents a reasonable attempt to outline the complexities of Sudanese politics and history for an NGO audience. However, as a one-volume introduction to the Sudanese conflict for non-specialists, it does not measure up to Douglas H. Johnson's magisterial account in *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (2003). Where *Sudan: the Elusive Quest for Peace* differs from Johnson's book is in its emphasis on regional political factors, which in itself makes it a useful contribution to the field. ♦

*Rebels and Robbers: Violence in Post-Colonial Angola* by Assis Malaquias, Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2007; 263pp. £25 (pb); ISBN: 978-91-7106-580-3. Reviewed by Steve Kibble, Progressio.

This book shows how the political economy of violence is central to Angola, as an unchanging presence but a constant mutation, including the period of (negative) peace since 2002. UNITA provided the physical violence and the ruling MPLA the structural violence – the ‘criminal insurgency’ versus the ‘criminal state’. The continuities of structural violence weave in the historical patterns of ethnicity, class, ideology, race and power – and indeed massive inequality/corruption as a form of violence. The other defining feature is the criminal nature of the warring parties.

Not only is there a ‘Bermuda Triangle’ in Angola where money moves unaccountably between the Presidential Palace, the central bank and the state oil company and thereby into the pockets of the elite, but this is mirrored by the triangle of violence, wealth and power. Although the military outcome and defeat of Savimbi meant that the alternative elite, i.e. the UNITA leadership, was quickly absorbed into the power bloc after April 2002, there was no opening up of political and economic power to accompany it. Instead there was the continuation of the accumulation strategies of war and the elite’s use of ever-expanding oil revenues (through Chinese loans, high oil prices, and lack of international pressure points). This is maintained through the ruling party’s cavalier attitude to elections, combined with a fanatical desire to win them and thus maintain power and hence massive amounts of illegitimate wealth and impunity. Malaquias warns of the dangers of the inheritance of violence through ethnic identity being more of an unexploded landmine than the physical ones still littering Angola’s farmland.

The sub-theme is how violence is shaped by and shapes the mutual and sustained intolerance of rebels and robbers in the civil war – from the commonly-quoted slogan ‘MPLA robs but UNITA kills’. ‘African authenticity’ versus ‘African cosmopolitanism’ meant the three liberation movements were unable to find common cause, and were engaged in a zero sum game to deny the other two space (even to the extent of one being prepared to collaborate with the colonial power). This had massive impacts on the population as successive peace agreements failed to stick, endemic war, revenue (mis)appropriation, denial of rights and/or identity to the ‘Other’ – and indeed misery. Although the ‘orphan of the cold war’ element is stressed, and the external and internal dynamics of the Cold War are handled with a good understanding of the South African and US positions, the internal and post-colonial dynamics of Angolan history are seen as more important, including the current *lack* of external leverage – including positive opportunities.

Malaquias asserts one positive in this centrality of violence and criminality, namely that war established a political and economic basis of statebuilding through large scale indigenous capital accumulation not present at independence. This is to ignore the lack of ‘trickle down’ or any commitment to poverty alleviation and the fact that post-war spending on infrastructure rather than social services means ‘development’ is an option, but only if it benefits the elite. Malaquias does see the possibility of the elite grouped around the personalised rule of the President moving into more sustainable forms of accumulation from rent-seekers using export/import through investment in construction, light industry, services and commercial farms, although this would be under their control and to their advantage.

Much of the work stresses, via Galtung, the necessity of going beyond absence of

war to sustainable peace/ freedom from structural violence. None of the peace agreements cared about the citizenry's view, and none dealt with the key question of revenue sharing. A significant percentage of the population had no political voice within a very restricted political system, thereby legitimating violence as a resource. The genius and tragedy of Jonas Savimbi was to capitalise on this.

As well as parliament and party being subservient to the clientelist Presidential system Malaquias sees no alternative vision from UNITA, which appears unable to transcend its military nature. How are Angolans to change this venal nature of the state, when the elite is comfortably in the driving seat and has no incentive to change in a situation of little internal or international pressure? Like most of us Malaquias finds this difficult, although he is prepared to suggest some options (however unlikely the cynic might think). First, UNITA must undergo genuine transformation and have a coherent political programme – difficult when manipulation of all opposition parties by MPLA is both blatant and successful. Second, politics has to be delinked from the pursuit of economic gain. Third, there is the building up of sustainable (neutral is not mentioned but is implicit) political structures.

Although a good deal of the book brings in wider theoretical questions such as what structural violence entails, the problematic nature of the postcolonial state, the nature of nationalism and its relation to ethnicity, and the malignity of external intervention, there is oddly no mention of women. Nevertheless, this is an insightful and useful contribution to the literature on Angola.

*The Crisis of the State and Regionalism in West Africa: Identity, Citizenship and Conflict*, edited by W. Alade Fawole and Charles Ukeje. Dakar: CODESRIA, 2005; (Distributed by the African Books Collective). 226pp. £9.95 (pb). ISBN: 2869 781660. Reviewed by Morten Bøås, Fafo, Institute for Applied International Studies, Norway.

Issues concerning identity, citizenship and regionalism are hotly debated in contemporary West Africa, and the same issues are also closely connected to the region's many conflicts. This volume is therefore very timely, and there is much to recommend here. Evaluated separately the chapters are of high quality, and in the beginning they even fit nicely together. Said Adejumbi (chapter 1) does us all a service when he revisits Peter Ekeh's (1975) concept of the two publics in Africa. However, one could only wish that Adejumbi had spent more time discussing Ekeh's work in relation to Mamdani (1996 and 2001) and the West African context instead of focusing on Rwanda, which no matter where we draw the border of the region is beyond the geographical scope of this volume. Another gem in the volume is Aron's chapter about the Niger Delta. This is an elegant display of both how deeply embedded the conflict is in history and how it is connected to the political economy of the Nigerian state and the ways in which its practice turns the inhabitants in the Niger Delta into secondary citizens. The other contributions also have much to offer as they give insight into many different aspects of the West African crisis.

The volume is a product of the 2003 CODESRIA conference 'West Africa in search of democratic nationhood', and it is unfortunately more a collection of the conference proceedings made available to the editors than a volume based on well-integrated chapters that engage with each other from page one through to the very end. This is a pity, because it would

have been very interesting to hear what the mainly Nigerian based authors had to say about the relationship between the various dimensions of the West African crisis that are mentioned in the first couple of chapters.

The state is undoubtedly both the problem and the solution. The regional dimension cannot be ignored in West Africa, and there is much more than material aspects to the many conflicts in this region. Identity, be it ethnic, regional or generational also matters. And as the Ivoiran conflict shows us all too well, the issue of citizenship is not only obvious, but the discourses created by citizenship conflicts can also rip a country apart. These dimensions are the very heartbeats of the West African conflict zone, and all of them are addressed in various ways here. The problem, however, is that the volume lacks a coherent approach. The regional dimension is weak in many of the chapters and completely absent in others. The overall majority of the authors are affiliated to Nigerian universities and Nigeria is therefore also, quite naturally, at the centre of analysis in most chapters. Nigeria is undoubtedly the most important country in West Africa, but as this is presented as a book about identity, citizenship and conflict in West Africa, more emphasis should have been placed on how this is played out in cases such as Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone as well, and what relationships and trajectories that exists between local and national conflicts in the region. This is unfortunately a task that the volume does not accomplish.

This criticism apart, people concerned with West Africa should read this book. Everybody will find something of interest, and the weaknesses pointed out are more a consequences of the difficult circumstances that West African scholars work under, than anything else. Hopefully, the editors and the authors will get the opportunity to address the interplay of these factors in the region in

a more integrated manner in another publication. The strength of the individual chapter proves that they have a lot to offer in this regard as well.

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*Governing Global Desertification: Linking Environmental Degradation, Poverty and Participation* by Pierre Marc Johnson, Karel Mayrand & Marc Parquin, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006; 312pp. £55.00 (hb); ISBN 0-7546-4359-X. Reviewed by Sarah Bristow, University of Aberystwyth.

Since drylands occupy 41% of the planet's land area and are home to a third of the human population, desertification and the related development challenges are an important feature of sustainable development. This edited volume explores the salient aspects of governance and desertification by investigating the relationship between dryland degradation, poverty and participation; three interdependent facets of sustainable development in the world's drylands. The book provides a balanced account of the challenges, strengths and weaknesses of the United Nations Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification (UNCCD), which forms the cornerstone of global desertification governance. The volume also achieves its objective of providing an analysis of some of the complex issues related to sustainable development governance in drylands

and the role of the UNCCD in that context (p. 6).

Published in 2006, this is a timely collection; its publication coincides with the UNCCD's tenth anniversary and the Year of Deserts and Desertification. Composed of thirteen chapters and an appendix of the full text of the UNCCD, the volume begins with a short, though sufficient, account of the scale and character of land degradation in dryland regions. The first three chapters focus on issues directly covered by the UNCCD, namely its scientific basis, the linkages between poverty and land degradation and desertification and migration. The book then dedicates chapters to the discussion of the historical context of the Convention's negotiation including an overview of the UNCCD Secretariat's role in global governance, good governance and financing, followed by chapters on regional perspectives with respect to knowledge exchange and the implementation of National Action Programmes (NAPs). The volume concludes by contextualising the UNCCD within contemporary processes of economic globalisation and considers the role of the UNCCD in the years ahead.

A central theme running through the collection reflects the dual focus of the UNCCD, namely the achievement of sustainable development and the mitigation of desertification and drought. In this respect, the volume highlights a key challenge of global sustainable development governance broadly and of desertification governance specifically, namely how to successfully link environmental and poverty reduction objectives. Though the UNCCD was originally designed to integrate poverty alleviation, sustainable economic growth and social development, efforts to implement its provisions are often hindered by questions concerning whether it is an environmental or a development convention (pp. 76, 138). While there is scope for both interpretations, the Convention is

often perceived to privilege the environment (Ibid.). For example, the government bodies responsible for implementing the NAPs in affected countries are generally located in environment ministries. This in turn creates a problem; environment ministries are often under-funded, under-staffed and politically marginalised 'with very limited influence on development planning' (p. 200). Environment ministries are also often 'without adequate links to ministries of finance, agriculture, and other departments poised to influence policies and budgets pertinent to UNCCD implementation (such as rural development or agriculture)' (p. 138). In other words, the integration the Convention sought between environment and poverty alleviation is impeded by this separation in the implementation of its provisions.

This situation poses a problem for sustained dryland development and the mitigation of desertification; neither is likely to be achieved if efforts to combat desertification are not fully integrated within broader development strategies since in rural dryland regions, land degradation impacts poverty alleviation while the lack of development often hinders ecological sustainability. Hence, the incorporation of the many facets of sustainable land management in dryland areas is not only preferred, but is necessary for addressing both poverty and desertification. Indeed, the implementation of the UNCCD requires its provisions to be integrated within mainstream development practices. Such 'mainstreaming' should not be out of reach for the UNCCD since the convention itself, the editors argue, has within it the ability to bridge 'the very distinctive worlds of environmental and development governance' (p. 199).

On this issue, the volume successfully draws attention to both the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of UNCCD as an instrument of global sustainable development governance

and is a valuable contribution to knowledge about the effects of desertification on development and how the implementation of the UNCCD might be valuable to achieving sustainable land management in drylands. It is recommended for academic audiences as well as development practitioners, particularly those concerned with rural dryland regions.

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*The Investigation*, by Peter Weiss, adapted by Jean Beaudrillard, played at The Young Vic Theatre, London by the Rwandan company, Urwintore. Reviewed by Victoria Brittain.

Travelling in Rwanda in the early years after the genocide of 1994, lines of prisoners in pink pyjamas, repairing roads or buildings, were a commonplace part of the landscape. The sheer numbers of prisoners was overwhelming – 120,000. Who were they? And how were they ever to be brought to trial, especially in a country with a judiciary shattered like all the administration?

Inside a women's prison I once spent several hours interviewing a number of women whose dossiers indicated their deep involvement in rapes, mutilations and murders of other women, and of children. None of them showed the faintest hint of remorse or guilt, all claimed mistaken identity or settling of old village scores were the reasons for their incarceration. Inside the huge Kimironko prison in Kigali the governor described how the men's old lines of authority that had drawn every level of society into the killing, remained intact inside the prison. No one was confessing to their role in the genocide of the Tutsis, in which a million or more people died in three short months.

The army and the church were the most powerful organisations in Rwanda; without them there would have been no genocide. In those first years after 1994 the confidence of the perpetrators across the social spectrum was high that their power would be back with a new war launched from over the border in the Democratic Republic of Congo. For them, the Rwanda Patriotic Front was based on a Tutsi minority that would not be allowed to survive.

Dorcy Rugamba, a dancer, actor, author and director, left Rwanda a week after the massacre of his family of artists on the first day of the genocide. His direction of Peter Weiss's 'The Investigation', is a revisiting of the Nazi war crimes trial and, also, as he puts it, 'it is our own time in history that we examine.'

The words of Weiss' play come from the eighteen month Auschwitz trial which began in Frankfurt in 1963. There were 22 defendants, from SS men to *kapos*, the German criminals used for low level control in Auschwitz, and 319 witnesses.

The seven Rwandan actors, all dressed in various simple cream suits, are on a completely bare stage backed by large screens for the English translation of their French delivery. Nothing distracts from the power of the words. Rugamaba has called the play 'our gateway to questioning this world which continues to permit such genocides to be committed with such indifference.'

As though to underline the universality of evil responses in extreme situations, the actors shift between playing witnesses, perpetrators, judges, at various times. How heartfelt this must be for the actors who have watched the long and shabby process of the United Nations Criminal Tribunal in Arusha, where corruption spread even among the court personnel, witness protection was poorly organised, and because the court was not even in Rwanda, the trials of a few

big fish served none of the redemptive purpose of Frankfurt.

The play captures perfectly the alternative versions of history which have been, and remain, such a feature of writing on the genocide, and of discussions in almost any forum in Rwanda, from village to university. The lies and evasions of Weiss's characters are the lies and evasions these actors know at a profound level few of their audiences could reach. This has been the fundamental story of the big men of the genocide, many of whom fled abroad and in many cases are still evading justice protected by powerful forces.

Anyone who has sat in a village in Rwanda through a long session of *gachaca* justice – the homegrown trials under 19 locally elected judges – has seen how the lies and evasions can fall away, and the torrent of modest testimonies from friends and neighbours can produce confession and apology.

Weiss's words about annihilating a philosophy, and racial extermination, are delivered with chilling clarity from the actors. In the genocide, Tutsis were killed as 'cockroaches'. The reminder of the dehumanisation is almost unbearable in the faces of these actors. Similarly unbearable are the stories Weiss tells of the deaths of children. His small girl with a pigtail, shot in the head, is every one of those Rwandan children who met much grimmer individual deaths from machete cuts, or from repeated rape.

Rugamba is appealing against indifference in our world. With this play, he and his actors have created a potent force to stir consciousness. Before the 1994 genocide, Rwanda's Tutsis suffered massacres in 1959, '60, '61, '63, and '72. Generations were in exile. The very survival of Rugamba and his company's artistic vision is a miracle and an inspiration, which The Young Vic have done so well to bring to Britain.

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**Editor's Note:** Would you like to review books, films, theatre, art or music for us? If so, get in touch with our new Reviews Editor, Rita Abrahamsen, e-mail: rra@aber.ac.uk