Public/Private, Global/Local: The Changing Contours of Africa’s Security Governance

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From conflict zones to shopping malls, from resource extraction sites to luxury tourist enclaves, private security has become a ubiquitous feature of modern life. While the ‘monopoly of legitimate violence’ continues to be one of the defining features of state sovereignty, and one of the most powerful elements of the modern political imagination, the realities of security today increasingly transcend its confines, and include a wide range of private actors. At its most controversial, private security is represented by the combat active soldier, heavily armed and actively involved in warfare. At its most mundane, it involves the unarmed guard at a hotel entrance, or a neighbourhood watch of concerned citizens mobilising local energies in the pursuit of safety and security.

Africa is, of course, no stranger to these various forms of private security, although it is fair to say that to date, the military dimension has dominated discussion. The infamous activities of mercenaries such as Bob Denard and ‘Mad’ Mike Hoare in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the more distant exploits of Cecil Rhodes and the privately-financed armies of his commercial empire, mean that Africa easily lends itself to portrayal as the natural environment for rapacious and ruthless forms of entrepreneurship and control in which private gain is intimately and directly linked to the ability to wield private violence. More recent spectacular actions, such as Executive Outcomes’ (EO) intervention in Sierra Leone in the 1990s and Simon Mann’s aborted coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea in 2004 only reinforce this image of Africa as the chosen playground of the world’s soldiers of fortune.

It would be both foolish and wrong to deny the impact of mercenaries on the recent, as well as the distant, history and political economy of Africa. However, care is needed lest the power of this legacy and the important lessons that it holds are allowed to obscure a clear understanding of contemporary realities. Africa remains a continent replete with private security actors, yet as in much of the rest of the world, the nature and dynamics of security privatisation have undergone profound changes in recent years. Accordingly, analyses rooted in the by now decade-old activities of companies like EO may be ill-suited to a full appreciation of the political and economic impacts of today’s more pervasive forms of security privatisation and changing private military activities.

Instead, new forms of security privatisation demand new conceptual tools and a certain reorientation in empirical analysis. The goal of this Special Issue is to contribute to a wider understanding of the privatisation of security in Africa, starting from the assumption that political critique requires an appreciation of the
dynamics and structures driving and underpinning the processes of privatisation. We deliberately cast the net wide, and seek to provide empirical and analytical illustrations of the depth and diversity of security privatisation. As such, we include rural non-state security actors, urban vigilantes, global private security companies, private military companies, as well as private prisons, arguing that these various forms of security privatisation are in important ways linked to the same processes of transformation. By surveying the breadth of private security activity on the continent, and the varied political and economic factors driving its growth, the Special Issue seeks to broaden debate over the sources, impacts, and implications of these important, yet often under-appreciated, developments.

In this introduction, we situate security privatisation within contemporary debates in political economy. In particular, we draw attention to the constructed character of the public/private distinction, and argue that in the same way that the original emergence of this distinction was central to the development of capitalism and the rise of national bourgeoisies, we are currently witnessing a redrawing of this division which is in turn crucial to the understanding of contemporary global capitalism, and to the emergence of (global) private security. The manner in which the public/private, as well as the global/local, distinction is currently being re-articulated reflects important transformations in power and authority, and is central to an appreciation of the political impact of the various forms of private security on the African continent.

The Re-emergence of Private Security

Although the realms of political economy and security are often treated in isolation, the two have a long and intimate history in the evolution of liberal capitalism. The constitution of a ‘private’ economic sphere was in important ways made possible by the removal of the control of violence and coercion – what we today call ‘security’ – from private hands into the ‘public’ or political domain. This transition was a key feature of the move from feudalism to absolutism, in the consolidation of the modern state, and in the shift of social power from a landed aristocracy that wielded violence as part of its socio-economic position and dominance towards the rising commercial classes, whose position and property was underpinned by liberal conceptions of rights and an increasingly formalised and centralised monopoly of state violence that could enforce and secure them. Similarly, the subsequent development of nineteenth century liberal capitalism was linked to the construction of individuals whose economic liberty was part and parcel of their freedom from violent coercion by other private individuals, and the corresponding location of these individuals within new forms of market discipline and coercion. In short, the existence of a public sphere of security in principle applying uniformly to all subjects was, as both Max Weber (Gerth & Wright Mills, 1946) and Karl Polanyi (1944) stressed, a key element in the evolution of liberal capitalism and its specific articulation of the relationship between the economy and society (see also Anderson, 1974 & Wood, 1981).

These developments were of course neither simple nor uniform, historically or geographically. Private violence continued in many forms. Globally, the imperial commercial activities of the Chartered Companies involved the use of extensive private force throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; by 1782, for example, the English East India Company’s armed force outnumbered that of the British army at the time, consisting of over 100,000 British, German, Swiss and
Indian soldiers. Similarly, privateering or piracy was an integral element of early-modern commercial, as well as military, competition. At more individual levels, private violence continued to be seen as legitimate in even some of the most advanced industrial countries until at least the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, duelling as a matter of honour between gentlemen – a relic of feudal class hierarchies expressed through the right to engage in private violence – continued. In 1804, for example, the Vice President of the United States, Aaron Burr, killed former Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton in a duel, while in Germany the practice continued up to the First World War. The use of a wide variety of private force for the ‘public’ task of policing was also widespread in Europe until the later decades of the nineteenth century. The same was true in the United States, where the activities of one of the most famous – and in some eyes infamous – commercial private security firms, Pinkerton’s, provided investigative and arrest capacities on railways across the country, engaged in often violent suppression of labour disputes, and even for a time policed substantial parts of the city of Chicago.

In the colonies, of course, private force was even more prevalent and the connections between private and public force equally complex. Policing was a key part of strategies of imperial domination, and the British South Africa Company of Cecil Rhodes had its own paramilitary, mounted infantry force. Similarly, the first recognisable police force in Kenya was private, in the sense that it was set up by the East Africa Trading Company (later the Imperial East Africa Trading Company) in 1896. The company had an armed security force, recruited predominantly among the Indian police and watchmen, and the force was governed by Indian police statutes (see Clayton and Killingray, 1989). During the colonial period, commercial companies often maintained private forces; for example, the Sierra Leone Selection Trust, a subsidiary of De Beers, employed a private police force of 35 armed men to protect its diamond concession in the Kono area. Colonial rule also relied extensively on chiefs and more or less invented ‘traditional’ structures for a variety of policing and security tasks, whereby chiefs acted as a form of local extension of colonial rule.

Private force was thus far from absent during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as Janice Thomson (1994) has usefully remarked, historically the state’s monopoly of violence is the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that in broad terms the tendency throughout this period was toward the increasing concentration of force in public hands and the progressive marginalisation of its direct connection to private actors. The disappearance of the Chartered Companies, the outlawing of duelling, the progressive restriction of mercenarism, and the constriction of the activities of private security firms like Pinkerton’s, all in their different ways show that the story of liberal capitalism is to a large extent also the story of the increasing public control over security and a restriction of private activities and capabilities. By the same token, the end of formal colonial rule was accompanied by the explicit and extensive (and by no means unproblematic) building of public security forces of all kinds by the newly independent states, as an effective monopoly of violence was regarded as a crucial part of the state-building process. Often this nation-building project entailed an attempt to curtail the power of chiefs, but to date many continue to exercise significant authority in the security and justice sectors, reflecting the longevity of what Mahmood Mamdani (1996) has termed the ‘bifurcated’ state. That said, in Africa, as elsewhere, any glance at political debates and developments during this period reveals the gradually increasing dominance of public control over security at
the expense of the private, and the centrality of a public monopoly of violence both in practice and in competing visions of political order.

In the light of this history of centralisation, the resurgence – and re-legitimation – of private security both within national territories and globally in the last thirty years is striking. Over the last decade, for example, the growth of the private military sector has taken place at breakneck speed. Private firms now play major roles in the areas of logistics and training in many Northern militaries (Singer, 2003; Avant, 2005). Far from operating in the shadows of legality like the mercenaries of yesteryear, these private military companies (PMCs) are closely connected to the policies of national governments, development agencies, and NGOs. It has been claimed that to an ever-increasing extent the United States could not go to war without the ‘contractors’ who provide extensive logistical support for its forces, and who are often directly integrated into the operation of key weapons and intelligence systems (Avant, 2005). Nowhere is this more the case than in Iraq, where many PMCs are both heavily armed and combat-active. In a striking illustration of US dependence on private contractors, the controversial company Blackwater recently had its contract to provide security for US diplomats in Iraq renewed for another year, despite its guards having killed 17 Iraqis at a Baghdad intersection in September 2007. As the Under Secretary of State for Management, Patrick F. Kennedy, admitted ‘we cannot operate without private security firms in Iraq. If the contractors were removed, we would have to leave Iraq’ (Risen, 2008).

The exact number of private security personnel in Iraq is difficult to ascertain, but most estimates place it somewhere around 30,000, making private soldiers the second largest component of the ‘coalition of the willing’. A large contingent is South African, many previous elite soldiers from the apartheid era’s Special Forces, but also including post-apartheid police officers tempted by the prospect of making as much as $10,000 a month, or about ten times their normal salaries. The largest South African involvement in Iraq is in all likelihood through Erinys International, a company originally founded by Sean Cleary, a former military intelligence officer of the apartheid state, but now registered as a British security company with several subsidiaries. In a contract worth between $80 and 100 million, Erinys was tasked by the Coalition Provisional Authority to recruit and train an Oil Protection Force to guard Iraq’s oil installations. Given that South Africa has what is commonly regarded as one of the world’s most stringent anti-mercenary legislations, it is not surprising that the extensive involvement of South African security personnel in Iraq has been highly controversial. By the same token, the failure to stem the flow of personnel from South Africa to Iraq is a telling illustration of the difficulties of regulating private military activities (see Taljaard, 2006).

Although there may now be signs that growth in the private military sector is slowing and perhaps even reversing, this process has resulted in the establishment of a number of well-resourced PMCs whose activities extend well beyond the war-zones of Iraq and Afghanistan and are increasingly prominent in Africa and other parts of the developing world. The presence of private security actors in military assistance projects, security sector reform programmes, and post-conflict reconstruction can be seen across Africa, and the role of PMCs in logistics provision and their long-standing expertise in tasks such as mine-clearance has made them increasingly central to a number of interventions. There is also a strong lobbying effort to expand their involvement in peacekeeping operations (see Leander & van Munster, 2007). The private security industry has long played a key role in US post-
conflict policies; as Deborah Avant (2006) has pointed out: ‘Every single international civilian police officer the U.S. sent abroad in the 1990s was a DynCorp employee’.

In this Special Issue, the evolving role of private companies in the military sector in Africa is explored by a number of contributors. DynCorp’s role in rebuilding the Liberian military forces is discussed in a Briefing by Sean McFate, one of the architects of the reform programme. The extensive role of PMCs in US military training programmes on the continent is further analysed by Kwesi Aning, Thomas Jaye and Samuel Atuobi, while Stig Hansen shows the complex relationships that have existed between private security providers and the various state-like entities of Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland. Taken together, these contributions document not only the significant change that has occurred in private military involvement on the continent since the days of Executive Outcomes, but also the very different political challenges that arise from the contemporary relationship between public and private actors. We return to some of these issues towards the end of this introduction.

While the private military has received considerable attention in discussions of security privatisation, the growth in the non-military sphere has gone largely unnoticed. Politically, however, it is no less significant. In both developed and developing countries, the privatisation of everyday forms of security provision in non-conflict environments has expanded markedly, constituting what two prominent analysts have called a ‘quiet revolution’ (Shearing & Stenning, 1981). Private security personnel now frequently outnumber the public police by considerable margins; in the UK, the ratio is almost two private security officers per one public police officer; in the US, it is almost three to one; in Hong Kong, five to one, and in some developing countries, it has been estimated as high as ten to one (Mancini, 2006). By far the largest private security sector on the African continent is found in the Republic of South Africa, which as a percentage of GDP has the largest private security market in the world. Currently, there are 4,898 registered private security companies (PSCs) in South Africa, employing 307,343 active security officers (PSIRA, 2007). By comparison, the South African Police Service has 114,241 sworn police officers (de Lange, 2008). In the nine years from 1997 to 2006, the number of security guards grew by over 157 per cent (Ibid.), and as South Africa prepares for the 2010 World Cup, this figure is set to increase yet further.

Exact figures from other African countries are difficult to obtain, and often there is no register of PSCs, and no laws pertaining to their regulation and operation. Estimates, however, suggest that in Kenya there are approximately 2,000 PSCs, employing nearly 50,000 people, while in Nigeria the sector is said to include between 1,500 and 2,000 companies, employing approximately 100,000 (Wairagu et al., 2004; Keku, 2003). In Senegal, there are some 150 companies, employing 25,000-35,000 people (O’Brien, this issue), while Sierra Leone has seen a rapid expansion of its private security sector following then end of the civil war (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2005a). Although most PSCs are small to medium-sized local companies, a number of large international companies have a presence in Africa. For example, Group4Securicor alone employs over 98,000 people across 21 African countries, and is according to some accounts the continent’s largest private employer. A number of South African companies also have operations across the continent, while several Kenyan PSCs are present throughout East Africa.
In the same way as the uniformed guards of private security companies have become a familiar part of the African social landscape, so too have a host of more informal non-state security actors. Urban vigilantes, neighbourhood watches and rural community police have proliferated in recent years, and while frequently derided as criminal and violent, such groups are often important security providers. In this Special Issue, the expanding role of PSCs is discussed by Hamilton Simelane and Cyrus O’Brien, while Bruce Baker and Lars Buur analyse informal non-state policing. These contributions draw attention to the complex political implications of various types of private security, and also the extent to which their emergence is linked to broader transformations in political economy.

The Political Economy of Security Privatisation

Relatively little research has been undertaken on the international political economy of security privatisation, and even less on its evolution in Africa. Most explanations of military privatisation revolve around a combination of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, where the downsizing of bloated Cold War military establishments is seen to have resulted in surplus personnel and equipment (Avant, 2005; Lilly, 2000; Musah, 2002; Singer, 2003). In Africa, this dynamic was further reinforced by the fall of apartheid, when large numbers of ex-military and ex-police personnel entered the private security sector. To these ‘push’ factors most authors add the ‘pull’ of escalating African conflicts at a time when Western powers suffered from intervention fatigue or were preoccupied with strategically more important parts of the globe.

This focus on dynamics in the military sector illuminates a number of key issues, but the process of security privatisation also needs to be located in the context of broader transformations in the political economy of security. For this, it helps to turn to the discipline of criminology, where the connections between the re-emergence of private security and political economy have been the subject of extensive investigation and debate (see Johnston, 1992; Johnston & Shearing 2003; Garland, 2001). Although these treatments tend to remain confined to individual countries in the North and lack a focus on the specific features of Africa or on global dynamics, they provide an important foundation for further analysis.

The political economy of security privatisation is to a large extent the story of neo-liberalism and post-Fordist, or post-Keynesian, trajectories, and one highly influential account dates the origins of the contemporary resurgence of private security to the ‘fiscal crisis’ of the Keynesian state that gathered force in the late 1970s (Jones & Newburn, 1998). According to this argument, as the state’s capacity to fund public services decreased (whether through economic necessity, political design, or both), the private sector expanded to fill the various the ‘gaps’ that ensued – including in the area of security. Unsurprisingly, appraisals of this shift differ markedly. From a ‘liberal’ or ‘pluralist’ position, the new policing division of labour was a rational development in which private enterprise could provide efficient protection for its clients (and even take on some state services, such as prisons and prisoner-management) while at the same time freeing public police for more pressing duties. Private security is here seen as a ‘junior partner’ supplementing but not supplanting the public police. From a more critical perspective, privatisation marked the erosion of the public good of security, allowing those with enough resources to insulate themselves from the ever-more economically and socially divided, and often increasingly violent, world of neo-liberalism. Mike Davis’ (1990)
memorable characterisation of Los Angeles as a ‘City of Quartz’ – of glittering hard surfaces of private wealth protected by private security from increasingly denuded public spaces, is one of the most well-known accounts.

There is little doubt that neo-liberalism and the retreat of the state have been key elements in the increase of private security. However, there are a number of areas where the fiscal crisis interpretation falls short. First and most importantly, while it is certainly the case that under neo-liberal policies many areas of public spending have decreased, it is difficult to make this case for the security sector. Indeed in many countries in the North, spending on the public security sector (both military and policing) has increased at the same time as the private security sector has grown. The idea of a ‘gap’ filled by private security cannot therefore be understood as an automatic result of the retrenchment of public capacities. Secondly, the policies of outsourcing did not represent a simple retreat of the state from security provision, but rather were part of a crucial relocation of its place within such provision. In fact, a broader and more complex process than mere ‘fiscal restraint’ has been underway, one that involves both the commodification of security and increased attempts by the state to make social actors of all kinds – individuals, corporations, communities – responsible for a greater involvement in their own security (Garland, 2001). The increased role of private security, in other words, is part of a general intensification of security activity across societies – a process abetted by the state and, in many countries, drawing power from an increasing demand for security from other sectors of society. What has evolved can be described as ‘networks’ of security governance that are ‘hybrid’ and ‘pluralistic’, crossing public-private boundaries and governing through devolved, responsibilised actors instead of resembling a hierarchical structure of state authority (Johnston & Shearing, 2003; Abrahamsen & Williams, 2007a).

In Africa, the situation is clearly somewhat different. Although military spending in sub-Saharan Africa has remained more or less constant in the period from 1988 to 2006, there is a much clearer case of the retreat of the state from public security provision.\(^2\) The neo-liberal order, reinforced by the structural adjustment programmes of the IMF and the World Bank, has had particularly harsh consequences and although the impacts vary from country to country, the main effect has been a drastic reduction in state expenditure on social welfare, education and capital investment. While the new aid modality of post-conditionality and poverty reduction may have gone some way towards reversing this trend, the consequences for security are still apparent. Many police forces have become increasingly under-resourced and under-paid (and sometimes not paid at all and certainly not on time), leading to a lack of efficiency and also intensifying the temptation towards petty corruption and predatory activities. In this sense, the ‘fiscal constraint’ perspective holds considerable insights when applied to the African context, and there is little doubt that the expansion of private security coincided to a large extent with the rise to prominence of neo-liberal economic policies. On the other hand, this argument is sometimes put too simplistically, revealing an underlying functionalism whereby the private inevitably fills the vacuum left by the public. On closer inspection the situation is somewhat more complex, and the ‘fiscal crisis’ argument needs to be tempered by political, sociological and historical factors.

Key among these is the preoccupation of many African security forces with a narrowly defined regime security. As Alice Hills argues, policing in Africa has generally been preoccupied with ‘the enforcement of order on behalf of a regime’
(2000:162) rather than with crime prevention and public protection. This preoccupation with regime survival finds its historical roots in the colonial origins of the state and its police forces, and has been further reinforced by the lack of popular legitimacy of many governments. As the period of neo-liberal restructuring alienated ever larger sections of the population, the need for regime security intensified. During this period then, the state was not only weakened in terms of its (economic) ability to provide for citizens, but also to a certain extent privatised by political elites concerned primarily with their own survival. There are of course important variations here, and while all policing and law enforcement is inherently political and defends a particular socio-economic order, the direct ability of political leaders to influence police operations significantly diminishes the public accountability and democratic control of many African police forces. The behaviour of the Kenyan Police in the wake of the December 2007 post-election violence is a case in point. In such cases, an ostensibly public police force acts primarily for private purposes, significantly problematising any simplistic public/private distinction.

This tendency towards the privatisation of public violence, although by no means uniform, needs to be factored into any explanation of why people turn to non-state solutions for their everyday protection. Given that the military in many African countries is also frequently used for internal security purposes, any automatic assumption that there has been a decline in the ability of the state to provide security needs to be treated with caution. It may be the case in some countries, but not in others. It may indeed be that the state’s coercive apparatus retained its powers, but that its priorities shifted. Hamilton Simelane’s careful analysis of the emergence of private security in Swaziland is a useful illustration here, and shows the interaction of economic decline, political concerns with regime survival and citizens’ subsequent turn to private security. Importantly, as Baker, Buur and Simelane document in their contributions to this volume, the absence of public forces does not necessarily mean the absence of security. In fact, as Baker and Simelane show, traditional modes of policing may be more effective, while as Buur demonstrates, vigilantism is more complex than simple extortion or predation and is intimately related to locally specific moral and ethical frameworks of identification and belonging, and may act to reinforce or renegotiate these at times of social uncertainty and transformation.

Explanations focusing on fiscal constraints also need to be complemented by an appreciation of the broader social transformations that have accompanied the liberalisation of the economy, such as increased urbanisation, unemployment, inequality, crime and general lawlessness. It is important to stress, however, that poverty and increased socio-economic inequality cannot be linked to rising crime by any direct causal mechanism. As Teresa Caldeira (2000) has observed in relation to Sao Paulo, economic crisis, urbanisation and declining state expenditure on security cannot alone explain contemporary crime and violence. Instead, the rise in crime is expressive of a complex combination of factors, at the heart of which is a highly politicised justice system that lacks respect for the rights of the poor. In Africa, as in other parts of the world, the everyday practices of the police and the institutions of law and order, the continuing excessive use of force, the disrespect of civil rights, and the failure to reform the police along more democratic lines are key elements of any explanation of crime and insecurity. But as Buur’s article vividly illustrates, the connection between rights and security is far from straightforward, and requires careful empirical investigation.
Politically, private security raises important questions of equality, legitimacy, and social cohesion. The extent to which the availability of private security for the rich entails an increase in insecurity by the poor, and cements and reinforces existing inequalities is a key issue of concern. Clearly, only the relatively well-off can afford the services of commercial security companies, leaving large section of the population with a choice between an often inefficient and oppressive public police force and local non-state initiatives. It is thus tempting to interpret the contemporary return of private security in all its various forms as a form of ‘neo-medievalism’; a fragmented social world of competing loyalties and authorities where gated communities and urban vigilantes are the modern day equivalents of the fortified towers and warring cities of fifteenth and sixteenth century Italy. In this dystopia, society fragments into a series of private domains and the power and authority of the state is supplanted by the private. To be sure, the phenomenon of gated communities is spreading throughout the world; it has been estimated that over two million Americans now live in some form of gated community (Low, 2003), and in many African countries the wealthy are also retreating to increasingly fortified enclaves of private safety (Lemanski, 2004). The proliferation of massive shopping malls provides another type of social exclusion of ‘undesirable elements’ through the promotion of consumer citizenship in what has been aptly characterised as ‘mass private property’ (Shearing & Stenning, 1983). Similarly, in less wealthy areas, informal, non-commercial forms of security provision be they in the form of traditional policing, neighbourhood watches or so-called vigilantes wield significant power and authority and command strong loyalties, while resource extraction frequently relies on a host of private security experts securing the operating site from the surrounding populations.

The medieval analogy, however, only goes so far, and for all its superficial similarities this interpretation fails to capture a crucial aspect of contemporary security privatisation. Unlike in the medieval period, when private authorities reflected the lack of a political unit capable or willing to centralise power, today’s private actors often operate alongside and with the active endorsement and encouragement of state authorities. Both PMCs and PSCs are frequently integrated into state programmes and polices, with most private security actors operating with the authorisation of the state – often receiving the large part of their business and profit from government outsourcing and public contracts. Similarly, many forms of informal policing are integrated into state structures and promoted by governments as part of strategies of partnership policing and responsibilisation. Even initiatives operating at the boundaries of legality may receive the tacit approval of state officials, as shown by both Buur and Simelane in their contributions to this volume.

As such, it is often misleading to approach private security from the perspective of a process of ‘enclavisation’ or state withdrawal. In most settings private security exists in complex relations of cooperation and competition with public security actors and with the state. A telling example can be found in the city of Cape Town, which operates a ‘partnership policing’ programme that involves the extensive interaction of public and private officers as well a significant role for private security agents in patrolling public spaces (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2007b). Rather than a fragmented neo-medievalism or a simple decline or retreat of state power, we see the contours of a changing public/private relationship, where this very distinction is being reconfigured, gradually losing its conceptual and empirical validity. The contemporary security landscape is better described as a complex and fluid set of structures where public and private agents interact, cooperate, and compete in
numerous interactions. Instead of a withdrawal of the state, we are witnessing a re-articulation of the public/private divide. Importantly, this re-articulation cannot be understood with reference only to the local or the domestic, but requires an appreciation of the dynamics of global capitalism. Of course, this is by no means unconnected to the idea of the fiscal crisis of the state, since in many eyes the increasing transnational mobility of capital has been a key component of that crisis as more fluid forms of capital have moved beyond the confines of states. This mobility, along with the opening of global markets, can also be seen as a key aspect in the expansion of private security, although to date the international political economy underpinning this expansion remains largely unexplored.

Global Capitalism & Private Security

There is, as indicated above, nothing natural about the public/private distinction, nor is this a neutral or purely technical/managerial division. Instead, it is historically constructed, reflecting particular social interests and power relations at particular points in time. As such, different markets or economies can be seen to have their own public/private distinction, at the heart of which is the construction of a sphere of economic activity perceived to be private and by implication, non-political. At the present moment, the sphere of the private is expanding, both locally and globally, constituting more and more areas of life as ‘non-political’.

As Saskia Sassen (2006:144) has recently observed, the organising logics of the current global era are in part the result of realignments inside the state and, thereby, between the public and the private realm. Generally, these institutional shifts within the state have redistributed power in favour of those institutions directly embedded in global structures, such as finance ministries, elements of the judiciary that deal with international regulation, and the executive branch in general. A key feature of these agencies is their endorsement of a neo-liberal normative order that privileges global competitiveness. ‘Private logics’, as Sassen (2006:195) puts it, ‘circulate through public institutional domains’, and these public domains become powerful agents for globalisation, often operating in complex interaction with private and transnational actors. In the case of private security, it is for example notable that the World Trade Organisation now includes private security in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), thus providing a strong incentive for member states to allow free and fair competition in security services. China’s decision to open its private security market to foreign investment in advance of the 2008 Olympic Games is accordingly reported as being in part a response to its WTO obligations (People’s Daily, 2007), and many embassies regularly advertise their security sectors as lucrative markets for foreign investors. The normativity of the competitive state, in short, works to promote globalisation, and with it the global reach of private actors. Indeed, Claire Cutler (1997) has argued that the dissolution of the public/private distinction and the coming together of public and private institutions and activities are crucial moves in the consolidation of contemporary global capitalism. This is also the case with private security.

As capital has become more transnational, its security needs have widened. The fragmented and spatially dispersed operations of transnational capital, with its flexible and global sourcing and production structures, increase potential risks and may involve engagement in environments that are unfamiliar or insecure. Private security provision allows transnational corporations to exercise a degree of control over their own security, to put in place procedures that are standardised across large
organisations, and to engage with local security agencies from a position of expertise and resources. As O’Brien documents in this Issue, the presence of international corporations and organisations is a key driver of the expansion of the private security sector in Senegal, and in no small part, the continent-wide expansion of the sector is linked to the presence of international corporate activities and development personnel and their increasing awareness of risk and insecurity (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2007a). Risk society, to use Ulrich Beck’s term (1992), thus to a significant extent comes to Africa through its incorporation into the global economy. This is not only an issue of insurable risk, although this plays a major role in insecure environments, but also of risk as a way of thinking, as a more subjective sense of insecurity. As consumers of security services, individuals become increasingly conscious of their potential insecurity and vulnerability. Private security companies, of course, play a role in reinforcing this process as their own survival and profit depend to a significant extent on society’s sense of insecurity.

The increasingly global needs of transnational corporations provide a competitive advantage to PSCs that can offer a complete and integrated spectrum of services – from intelligence and risk analysis, to satellite tracking and multiple forms of response services – that is, to those companies that can claim a capacity as global providers to global clients. The needs of globalisation have thus contributed to a remarkable process of mergers and acquisitions that has seen a decrease in the overall number of larger companies and the evolution of a few security companies with a truly global reach. The world’s largest PSC in terms of geographical reach, Group4Securicor, has 530,000 employees, annual turnover of approximately $9 billion, and operations in 115 countries. It is also the largest employer listed on the London Stock Exchange, and recently entered the FTSE 100. The second largest PSC, Securitas, operates in more than 30 countries, and employs over 250,000 people. Listed on the Stockholm stock exchange, the company has an annual turnover of $10.4 billion. Prosegur, a Spanish company, is the third largest and has significant operations across Europe and South America. Other global PSCs are part of even larger transnational corporations. Chubb, for example, is part of United Technologies Corporation, a $43 billion, NYSE-listed global corporation, whereas ADT Security Systems is incorporated into Tyco International, providing security services to five million homes and two million commercial buildings worldwide.3 Globally, the private security industry is now estimated to be worth approximately $139 billion (Securitas, 2007).

PSCs have thus themselves become a form of global capital, and as core markets in the developed world have matured, they increasingly seek to expand their operations by focusing on the developing world. Today, North America and Europe account for approximately three-quarters of the global private security market, but the fastest growing markets are in developing countries. By 2015, Latin America and Asia alone are expected to account for 37% of the global guarding market (Securitas, 2007). Similarly, Africa is increasingly regarded as a golden opportunity for market expansion, be it for PSCs, PMCs, or the private prison companies explored by Andrew Coyle in this Special Issue. This expansion in turn raises a series of important questions in relation to local African companies and general economic growth. Local PSCs may struggle to survive in competition with well-resourced global giants, something that has been the source of controversy in both Kenya and South Africa (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2005b & 2006). Another important issue relates to labour rights and pay, and the possibilities that local labour may struggle to have their demands heard against such powerful global employers. The
campaign by the Alliance for Justice at Group4Securicor (G4S) is a case in point. The campaign brings together workers at G4S and their unions across the globe in a demand for living wages, social protection and freedom to join unions (see www.focusong4s.org). The fear that global PSCs may be able to ride roughshod over local rights, pocketing growing profits while exploiting local labour is a legitimate concern, though it also highlights the unfortunate fact that local companies cannot generally claim any moral high-ground in terms of pay and labour conditions. As the private security sector is currently one of the continent’s few sectors of employment growth, the fact that it is an almost uniformly poorly remunerated sector with poor labour conditions is pause for thought as well as concern.

Private security of course also facilitates access to Africa’s resources, most notably, but not exclusively, in conflict zones such as the Niger Delta, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan. As such, it is in many ways contributing to a re-emergence of the French colonial separation between Afrique utile and Afrique inutile, between a useful/useable and a non-useful/expendable Africa (see Reno, 1999). Reno’s account of ‘warlord politics’ provides one of the most well-known assessments of the relationship between transnational capital, private security and African states (Reno, 1999 & 2001). In this insightful account, neo-liberal policies and structural adjustment programmes are seen as having eroded the structures and practices of the neo-patrimonial state, and with it also the ability of elites to buy off and co-opt rivals and oppositional elements. Acute insecurity of office often means that power is increasingly privatised. Importantly, Reno’s analysis stresses that security privatisation does not necessarily represent a simple erosion of state power (as is often assumed) but arises from a sequential process of its erosion and re-articulation – a process intimately linked to the global political economy. State sovereignty allows local elites to access global capital, resources, and markets, often for illicit goods, and thus supports their activities and leads in some cases to the continuation of conflict and the erosion of central authority. Private military companies, as in the case of EO in Sierra Leone and Angola, provide external allies in struggles with internal competitors, while global capital that provides its own security allows for the extraction of resources in the absence of a public security apparatus. As Musah puts the argument, ‘Transnational corporate greed’ often leads global capital to form alliances with state elites to ensure access to mineral wealth such as diamonds (2003:924).

Seen from this perspective, the core feature of sovereignty for many weak African states is not the actual control of their territories or the monopoly of the means of violence, but instead the ability to provide contractual legal authority that can legitimate the extractive work of transnational firms (Reno, 2001). In other words, private security actors and their foreign, financial backers (often mining companies) enable weak state rulers to extend and maintain their non-bureaucratic, personal control within the commercially viable parts of their countries. As for the other parts of the country, and the vast majority of citizens, they matter less and less in a weak state where power is increasingly privatised.

The continuing insights and relevance of this analysis are clearly evident in Stig Hansen’s contribution to this volume, while an investigation of private security in parts of the DRC, for example, might well reveal similar dynamics. The danger, however, lies in the application of Reno’s particular interpretation to security privatisation in general. Reno’s analysis focuses on a particular set of states, in a particular period of time, primarily that of West Africa in the late 1990s. Its insights
might be generalisable, but we cannot assume that the relationship between transnational capital, states and private security companies are always and everywhere the same; actors, interests, structures, practices and discourses may evolve and differ in time and space. Interpretations derived primarily from the experiences of Sierra Leone, Angola and Nigeria may not be ideally suited to capture the dynamics of private security in contemporary Kenya, Senegal or South Africa. In particular, interpretations derived from the experiences of ‘weak’ but resource-rich states may lead too easily to assumptions of resource enclavism, i.e. highly secured sites where externally traded commodities such as diamonds or oil are extracted for the benefit of elites and their transnational allies, bypassing the surrounding communities. While such enclaves do exist, privileging their ‘enclave’ nature risks overlooking the more complex and extensive links between state, security, and market. In most settings, including resource extraction, private security actors are, as we mentioned above, located within complex and highly politicised public/private, global/local security structures, and an understanding of their political and social significance needs to take account of this embeddedness.

By the same token, generalisations derived from the 1990s’ experiences of mercenary interventions and ‘weak’, war-torn and resource-rich countries risk underestimating the impact and extent of security privatisation in its more mundane, everyday form. As we have argued, and as this Special Issue demonstrates, the impact of private security goes far beyond merely strengthening the private power of weak rulers or more or less criminalised ‘shadow states’, and relates to a much more foundational transformation in global governance that have implications both for the functioning and maintenance of state authority and the operations of global capital.

Conclusion

The way in which the public/private distinction is currently being re-drawn both globally and on the African continent reflects significant transformations of power. One of the consequences of these shifts is the growing capacity and legitimacy of non-state actors to operate at the transnational level and as part of global systems for governing a broad range of activities and issue areas. Be it in trade, finance, international law, environmental regulation or development, private actors are now often an intrinsic part of global governance (Cutler et al. 1999; Hall & Bierstecker, 2002; Callaghy, Kassimir & Latham, 2001). Security privatisation in Africa needs to be situated in this context. It is insufficient to explain the rise of private security on the continent with reference only to the ‘weak’ or ‘failing’ state, as if this state was entirely domestically produced and unaffected by the interventions of global capital, other states and the discursive practices of neo-liberal reform. Instead, an analysis of private security on the continent must be situated within an international political economy that takes account of the new geographies of power brought into being by the devolution of authority to private actors. In these new geographies, absolute public/private distinctions and national/international divides are poor guides for political analysis and understanding.

A key effect of the public/private distinction is to construct one sphere (the economy) as apolitical – a move which of course has important political implications. The increasing role of private actors in one of the core spheres of public authority – security – is thus an issue of no small significance. As we have suggested, it is vital to understand the processes through which these transformations are taking place...
in order to grasp their political impacts and the challenges they present. The effect of the commodification of security is to de-link it from local issues of justice and politics, making it a commodity that can be bought and sold on the free market and a technique that is universally applicable everywhere. Thus constituted, the political effects of security privatisation are obscured. Nevertheless, the power and authority conferred on private actors can alter the political landscape and have clear implications for who is secured and how. The privatisation of previously public functions such as security can also remove these activities from public scrutiny and accountability, with important implications for democratic control and oversight. The issues at stake are thus both enormously complex, and of ever-increasing significance in contemporary Africa.

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Endnotes

1. We are of course mindful that no clear cut distinction can be made between private military and private security companies, and that numerous companies have contracts in both areas. For the purpose of this analysis, however, PSC refer to those companies whose majority of contracts are in the domain of everyday security services in non-conflict environments, or what would could be referred to as ‘policing’ rather than ‘warfare’.


3. Factual information drawn from the respective companies’ websites.

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Beyond the Tarmac Road: Local Forms of Policing in Sierra Leone & Rwanda

Bruce Baker

Civil war deeply disrupted policing in Sierra Leone and Rwanda, leaving their state police forces inadequate in numbers, skills and resources to serve all citizens. In this security vacuum local forms of policing play an important role. The article argues that the country-specific pattern of local forms of policing depends on three factors: the nature of the conflict and peace settlement; the regime ideology; and the level of regime insecurity and fear of conflict recurring. The empirical data concerning the local policing groups is presented under three headings: crime prevention and intervention; investigation and resolution; and punishment. The article concludes with an assessment of the hazards and potential for states and donors supporting such groups. They are certainly flawed agencies in the eyes of both users and government, but in a context of less than fair and accountable state policing, their widespread provision and support is not to be dismissed lightly.

Civil war deeply disrupts and transforms policing. The two civil wars seriously undermined the ability of the states of Sierra Leone and Rwanda to maintain the rule of law (Baker, 2005b; 2006b). The state police were decimated during Sierra Leone’s civil war 1991-2001 and virtually dissolved in Rwanda’s civil war and subsequent genocide of 1994. Neither state has the resources to offer the protection from crime and the investigation of crime that their people seek. Sierra Leone can still only offer 8,000 police (6,000 operational) for its population of 5 million (that is 1:625) and Rwanda can only offer 5,500 for its population of 8 million (that is 1:1,454, c.f. England and Wales 1: 402). Neither of these state police forces are adequate in numbers, skills, resources or available national infrastructure to serve all citizens. They are confined to the centres of the main urban areas and to the main roads as they were before the wars. Ill-equipped and inaccessible to most, they are clearly not in a position to provide all the policing that is required by their citizens, nor can they replace long-standing local security arrangements and prevent new local initiatives. Even the most concerted externally led reform programmes are not going to change this reality in the short to medium term. This harsh reality begs the question of who then will provide policing to the poor of Africa? If the state cannot fulfil the core function of protection, then is there an alternative?

Post-conflict transition invariably sees contestation over the new order of policing. Immediately after the wars the new regimes and the local communities had to decide what sort of policing there should be ‘beyond the tarmac road’ and how far ‘beyond the state’ it should be allowed to be. The answers they reached in Sierra Leone and Rwanda, and the reasons behind those answers, are the subject of this article.
Policing, as understood in this article, is any organised activity that seeks to ensure the maintenance of communal order, security and peace through elements of prevention, deterrence, investigation of breaches, resolution and punishment. This differs little from the 1829 definition of Richard Mayne, upheld by the UK’s Metropolitan Police on their website: ‘the primary object of an efficient police is the prevention of crime: the next that of detection and punishment of offenders if crime is committed’.2 But though the Metropolitan Police assume policing is an activity only of the state police, African realities require the recognition that such activities can be authorised and provided by non-state groups. For the most part, I term the alternatives to state policing in Sierra Leone and Rwanda, local forms of policing, because they are authorised and provided by the local community (or part of it) for the local community (or part of it).

The article demonstrates that local forms of policing are widespread and preferred to state policing for reasons of effectiveness, accessibility and adherence to local definitions of what constitutes disorder. It also shows that their form and function varies widely. Though often called ‘non-state’ policing agencies, it will be shown that few are totally autonomous. Rather, the more typical form is a hybrid model where some form of relationship (formal or informal) with the state police exists. Put another way, it will become apparent that state power tends to infiltrate non-state policing.

Though local factors such as perceptions, values, poverty, cultural heterogeneity, geography and the presence of political entrepreneurs give a specificity to local policing (Baker, 2005a; 2005b; 2007a), from a national perspective, the country-specific pattern of local forms of policing will be shown to depend primarily on three factors: First, the nature of the conflict and peace settlement; second, the regime ideology (itself, of course, shaped by the experience of the conflict); third, the level of regime insecurity and fear of conflict recurring.

Policing is a broad cluster of functions, discussed in this article under the three headings of ‘crime prevention and intervention’, ‘investigation and resolution’, and ‘punishment’. First, however, the three key factors determining the reconstruction of policing in post-war Sierra Leone and Rwanda will be outlined.

Factors Shaping Local Forms of Policing

The Nature of the Conflict & Peace Settlement

Although both countries suffered a violent civil war, there are key divergences that have affected the willingness of local policing actors to work with the state in the post-conflict environment. In the case of Sierra Leone, the war saw atrocities committed by all sides (Gbere, 2005) and a confusing picture of changing allegiances on a temporary or permanent basis. With the withdrawal of police and many of the customary chiefs from the main conflict zones, army units (Sierra Leone Army, SLA), units of renegade factions (Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, AFRC), rebel units (Revolutionary United Front, RUF) and self-defence militias (Civilian Defence Forces, CDF) made the law. Most armed groups were predatory, though some, such as the CDF, acted for the most part as protectors of their communities and tried to promote order (Reno, 2007). After the war, the CDF, which despite its occasional atrocities still retained widespread support, was disbanded, whilst many customary courts remained closed. This left the state as the main security service deliverer. But failure to protect the population and the abuses of its armed forces in the war had
done nothing to raise its credibility as a defender of the people. In this context there was little incentive for communities to work with the state in rebuilding policing.

The situation was quite different in Rwanda. It was not just a civil war that Rwanda suffered, but a genocide; one that saw one million citizens lose their lives in three months in 1994 (Prunier, 1995). For all the irregularities, there was a much clearer picture of who was on the side of justice and who was not. Hence those outraged by the horror of genocide needed little incentive to serve the regime that brought justice: they had either risked their lives in the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) or suffered as victims until the RPA intervened. As a Police Commander said: ‘If you fought for injustice then your desire is to maintain it’ (Interview, 22 February 2006).

The two countries also differed in the outcome of the war. In the case of Sierra Leone, it was the existing regime that prevailed over the rebels; in Rwanda, it was the rebels who triumphed. The two different conclusions have shaped each regime’s approach to policing. In Sierra Leone a political class returned to power that had been largely contained within the ‘fortress’ of Freetown and was used to relying on external advice and military support. This dependency on outside professional expertise had become deeply ingrained and was transferred to its policing policy. It uncritically followed a western policing model at the advice of western donors.

For its part, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) saw their success in the war and in the subsequent insurgency in the northwest, as due to winning the hearts and minds of the local people. As Cyprien Gatete, former RPA fighter and subsequent Assistant Commissioner of the Rwandan National Police put it:

_We began as a very small group. We were poorly equipped and had no logistical support. We had to rely on the support of ‘family members’ … And they gave us food and cover and information about the movements of the enemy. We knew the population’s support was crucial. In fact we were doing community policing! And it continued after we seized power_ (Interview, 16 February 2006).

Inevitably the new regime was keen to incorporate the participation of local people into its security and justice structures. Both regimes, therefore, looked to support in security to those who had assisted them in war.

A third difference was that the end of the war provided very different opportunities for the two regimes. Sierra Leone’s police force was decimated, but not destroyed. Hence the regime had little choice but to seek to reform what remained. In other words, it passed up the opportunity to remove from the force human rights abusers and/or those accused of corruption. Rwanda, on the other hand, saw the ancien regime leaders and security agents largely swept into the Congo forests and beyond. It was closer to a clean slate than anywhere else and the opportunity was seized. So in all three respects the experience of war was distinct for the two regimes and this is reflected in the policing models they have pursued since.

_The Regime Ideology_

As the two regimes began reconstruction, the conclusions drawn (or not drawn) during the war had to be directed to specific policy choices: should it be a rebuilding of the old or the construction of something new; should it be the new or the past actors who authorise and provide policing; and should alternative policing systems be state planned and approved, or left alone?
The answer was of course partly dependent on the experience of war, as outlined above, but ideology played a part. The ideology of the Sierra Leonean leaders was state-centric and committed to formal rather than informal solutions. President Kabbah had been an international civil servant for almost two decades, holding a number of senior administrative positions at UNDP. The regime, therefore, accepted without question the donor position that policing was (beyond the withdrawal of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL) the prerogative of the state police and accepted donor funding that focused on state building (Gbla, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2004). It was an ideology that saw state building as the product of good governance, including western professional state policing. It never questioned that the state police should be the main provider (if not monopoly provider) of internal security. The regime wanted reform of the old forms, not new forms of policing. Hence though there were changes in senior personnel and management structures, the state police was to stay essentially the same. The war had taught the regime to defend the state institutions, not to overthrow them.

The Rwandan regime took a different approach to policing reconstruction. Even before the war, RPF leader Paul Kagame had embraced the centralisation and surveillance of the Frelimo government in Mozambique and enthused, along with his mentor Museveni, about popular justice in Tanzania and Mozambique (Museveni, 1986; 1997). In their eyes popular justice is popular in form because its language is open and accessible; popular in functioning because its proceedings involve active community participation; and popular in substance because judges are drawn from the people and give judgment in the interests of the people. Besides, it was evident that it would take time to build a police force from scratch and that even when the process was complete, resources would not allow for it to be adequate to provide all the policing needs of the nation. From the beginning Rwanda chose a policy of incorporating the participation of local people into its state security and justice structures. Such participation of the public alongside and in co-operation with the police was also seen as an instrument for healing both the aversion to the state police caused by the previous regime’s oppressive and racist policing and positively for stimulating reconciliation and social cohesion through mutual co-operation.

Two different ideologies, therefore, have lead to two different models being pursued: the western policing model and a form of popular justice model (Baker, 2004).

**The Level of Regime Insecurity & Fear of Conflict Recurring**

Where the two regimes do agree is that the return to insecurity must be avoided at all costs. Civil wars make new regimes nervous of political opposition and renewed conflict. Hence neither of the two police forces have fully cast off their regime-policing role of harassment and suppression of political opposition.

The regime insecurity extended to their response to policing agencies other than the state police. Rwanda insists on strictly supervising all matters of security and very little space is allowed for security ‘beyond’ the state. Hence the voluntary community participation in policing is overseen by the local government structure and there are interventions to ensure ‘suitable’ candidates are chosen. Tens of thousands of unpaid local leaders keep watch over, manage and assist very small units of the population. Given that one of the local leadership roles is policing, it ensures that criminal and socially unacceptable behaviour is recorded and passed
up the numerous layers of local government, the police and the central government, to the security office of the President. As a result, other informal policing has little chance of succeeding. Here then is a security structure that is nationwide and harnesses the voluntary assistance of thousands of local leaders to provide crime protection and investigation. Yet being in a centralised state this form of popular justice is under the guidance of the state. It is a case of the state infusing the informal.

Sierra Leone has no comparable informal structures to penetrate society and win compliance for official policies. The government has very little knowledge of what policing provision is going on beyond the main towns and only fleetingly attempts to employ the energies and knowledge of the local community or to supervise what the local community offers in the way of policing. Even its Police Partnership Boards, aimed at drawing in the assistance of citizens, give very little opportunity for genuine participation, often fail to meet and in one case those who attended a meeting to consider the Community Action Plan, found it had been drawn up by the police beforehand (Baker, 2005b, 2007). The insecurity of the Sierra Leone regime is expressed in their desire (along with the international community) to see no arms in the hands of any agency outside the army. All policing, including the state police (with the exception of the Operational Support Division) and commercial security companies, are prevented from possessing weapons. This, together with their emphasis on DDR (Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration), is assumed (optimistically) to cut off the supply from would-be rebels.

Taken together, these three factors (the nature of the conflict and peace settlement, the regime ideology, and the level of regime insecurity and fear of conflict recurring) have shaped the profile of policing in the two countries and in large measure explain the different patterns between them.

**Functions of Local Forms of Policing**

This section discusses some of the local forms of policing groups active in the two countries and investigates the extent of their functions.

**Crime Prevention/Intervention**

Local forms of policing aimed at preventing crime are largely about patrols, particularly at night. Extended families and neighbours can and do keep their eyes out for strangers and unusual behaviour during the day, but at night with no street lighting, homes with outside kitchens, possibly no external fence/wall and with weak or no locks on the doors, they are more susceptible to crime. Further, it is more often at night that troubles arise with drunkenness, associated fights, prostitution and drug dealing.

What do local forms of policing offer in the way of protection? How are the patrols organised? Who authorises them and provides them? Are they effective? In the absence of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and sometimes with the failure of the customary structures (courts and chiefdom police) to re-establish themselves after the war, there emerged in Sierra Leone a clear security gap. Ironically, given their demonisation as violent combatants and idle unemployed civilians, it is the youth that frequently fill it. The more violent certainly perpetuate mob justice, however, in villages and poor townships many young people perceive themselves as ‘guardians of security’ (Interviews, Makeni, 20 February 2005).
In the town of Yengema in the east, where there is no police post, the youth stay alert at night. The Youth Chairman described the role of youth in crime prevention:

*We know everybody and everything. If there is a fight they go to the youth group or after them the chiefs; only finally do they go to the police ... We patrol at night. We respond if there is a problem. We harass anybody who brings drugs. We arrest them, destroy the drugs; we give them a beating. Solved! No more drugs!* (Interview, 8 February 2005).

The town chief concurred that the area was ‘depending on youths to take care of us at night’, though he added that ‘youths are not always reliable’ (Interview, 8 February 2005). Similarly, in the nearby village of Tombodou, the chief spoke of youth controlling security: ‘they see [that] things go on normally’ and fill in for the inactive chiefdom police and absent SLP (Interview, 9 February 2005). According to the Tombodou women’s leader, they ‘ensure local policing where SLP don’t go. They make arrests and take them to the SLP’ (Interview, 9 February 2005). Youth also frequently provide unpaid security for alluvial diamond workings on behalf of the elders.

In parts of Freetown, youth groups participate in crime prevention and response. By the port, in high-density Kroo Town, Camp Divas Youth maintain a measure of order, especially among the youth. In the words of a member:

*We never see the police down here ... If there is fighting or stealing we take them to the police. And if there is provocation or abusive language we fine them!* (Interview, 31 January 2005).

The Youth Secretary was asked how people responded when fights and thefts occurred: ‘People call the youth group; or the elders if there is a problem solving it. Finally they go to the police’ (Interview, 31 January 2005). A local tribal headman concurred that youth often intervened to stop fighting when the police failed to respond (Interview, 31 January 2005).

Another local initiative has been promoted by the Sierra Leone Police themselves. From 1999 police-community forums, known as Police Local Partnership Boards, have begun to be introduced. They are chaired by a civilian body that includes representatives of the significant groups and interests in the locality, including youth groups, chiefs, religious leaders and business persons (see Baker, 2007b). These Boards have improved communication between police and communities and provided intelligence, investigation, intervention, arrest and dispute resolution. On the negative side, they are elite dominated and most of the activities, initiatives and even finance are coming from the community. There is serious doubt about whether they are sustainable and will play any serious role in security provision in the short term.

Informal crime prevention groups exist in Rwanda, but they are not the product of spontaneity or local initiation, but responses to invitations of the state for communities to build on and extend the long-standing local forms of courts (*gacaca*). Here the local voluntary groups constitute, in effect, the lowest levels of local government, have responsibility amongst other things for the mobilisation and sensitisation of the local community in law and order matters. This not only means crime prevention in the form of patrols, but law enforcement; resolution and reconciliation mechanisms (individually or a *gacaca*); punishment for misbehaviour; making by-laws that reflect local needs; and the supervision of the local militia, the Local Defence Force (LDF). The structure has a significant ordering effect on social
life and acts as the first line of protection against crime. Prior to reorganisation in February 2006, there were two levels below the lowest formal level of local government the elected **résponsible**, namely the **nyumbakumi**, who was in charge of 10-15 households and the **chef de zone** who was in charge of 200 households. Under the new arrangement the two have been merged to become **umukuru** and as a committee of four are responsible for 50 households or perhaps up to 200 in the towns. The **résponsible** is responsible, with a committee of seven and five LDF personnel, for about 500-1,000 households.

Local leaders work voluntarily and take their work seriously. Patrols are formed at the **chef de zone** level with each local **nyumbakumi** supplying two to five people and the LDF providing one armed member. They work under the responsibility of the **résponsible**. The frequency of patrols ranges from several times a week, to simply if and when there is a security problem. Should a patrol catch a petty criminal they are taken to the **secteur** (level above the **résponsible**) and locked up. For stealing bananas they may spend a single night, for more serious offences up to a week. After that there may be public shaming: ‘We then parade them in front of the local people before getting them to tell us all they know about other criminals in the area’ (Interview, 6 February 2006).

The regular night patrols were deemed by the population interviewed to be an effective deterrent and a useful means of stopping suspicious movement. But even watchful neighbours and night patrols cannot provide total protection from crime. Those who live by themselves can still be vulnerable, even during the day. A woman living alone in a high-density area in Kigali in a poor mud-brick house with no yard wall and only a flimsy door secured by a small padlock responded:

*Thieves come a lot. Whenever I go for a short while I find things are missing. Every time I go to pray [at the church] or to the market I find things have gone: clothes taken [from the hedge] … Sometimes they push the door. Recently a thief took some clothes. We ran after the young man but he escaped. It is very common when I go to church. I keep going [during the service] to see if my door has been broken into* (Interview, 30 January 2006).

Besides initiatives by youth and local leaders, many of the economic activities in Sierra Leone and Rwanda have a work-based association. The Motor Drivers Association in Sierra Leone, with a membership of about 5,000, control many of the commercial vehicle and mini-bus parking areas in the main towns. In Freetown they use car park attendants to oversee loading and protect passengers. In Waterloo, a small town east of Freetown, members take it in turn to be attendants. They have distinctive bibs and deal with problems relating to drivers, passengers and pickpockets. They exclude ‘undesirable’ persons. In Bo the drivers claimed responsibility for all vehicles in the town and took offenders to the police.

Something very similar takes place in Rwanda. ATRACO  (**Agence Rwandaise pour le Transportation en Commune**, ATRACO-EXPRESS) is an association of about 3,000 taxi drivers that operates as a private company. It is responsible for the security of drivers, passengers and visitors in taxi parks throughout Rwanda. The taxis park in lines designated for particular destinations and each line has a ‘line leader’ in a green uniform responsible for that line. Every morning, the line leader is responsible to check the vehicles’ tyres and cleanliness. If members commit a disciplinary offence (for example, driving too fast or driving under the influence of alcohol or marijuana) they are first given a warning, then a fine, and finally the police are asked to take away their licence. Disputes and fights between drivers and between drivers
and passengers are resolved by the line leader or if they fail to reach a solution the senior managers of ATRACO bring the parties together (Interview, 23 February 2006).

Investigation & Resolution

Investigation is the Achilles’ heel of all policing in Africa, state and community-based, owing to the heavy reliance on witnesses in the absence of investigative skills and forensic science facilities. Police CID’s have very limited resources and only a few commercial companies offer any serious services, mainly private investigative companies concerned with domestic and marriage disputes. Investigation by local forms of policing therefore, take the form of inquiry into the incident in the process of mediation and trial. Traditionally African justice systems outside the state structure have emphasised resolving disputes rather than seeking punishment. This applies to work-based associations such as markets and drivers, to customary structures, to restorative justice groups and to local government.

Almost everywhere in Sierra Leone, anti-social behaviour and its resolution are regulated by chiefs. Not that chiefs are always popular (Richards, 2005), but there may be very little in the way of attractive alternatives. One chief from the Bo area claimed:

> People would not report directly to the SLP even if it was a criminal case such as wounding or theft cases. They come to the paramount chief first and they [the chiefs] give advice as to what to do. You see there is a general ignorance of legal matters (Interview, 3 March 2005).

A town chief in Tombodou, Kono District, made a similar claim:

> As local chief I deal with 70-80 per cent of the work [disputes]. I see all cases of less than 30,000 Leones. People come to the Native Authority court because they have no respect for the authorities (Interview, 9 February 2005).

Using customary law, chiefs handle cases involving family law, debt repayment, inheritance, and land tenure (Fanthorpe, 2006). This system was the only form of legal system available before the war, and despite its decimation, it was the only one during the war. Since the war, for all the British support for maintaining the chieftain system and the money spent on reconstructing some of the burnt-out chiefs’ barrays (court houses), there have been difficulties in re-establishing the system and some courts only sit infrequently. For instance, of 20 in the Bo District, only 16 barrays were operating at the time of the research and there had been no salary for the Native Authority police since 1989. Further, many chiefs have also had their authority undermined because of their failure to protect the people and some lost their ‘mystique’ when they were seen being tortured and killed by the rebels or queuing with the people for food handouts. Various young people in a northern village told me: ‘We don’t send cases to the paramount … He hid in the bush with chiefs [in war]’ (Interview, 27 January 2005). Other complaints suggest that some chiefs are using their position to make money from the fines. Although chiefs insisted that they could only impose fines up to 10,000 leones, it is possible that some abuse their office.

In Rwanda, with the state’s proscription of ethnic identity in favour of a single ‘Rwandan’ identity, it could not contemplate a customary system such as Sierra Leone’s and any such identity is prohibited socially and in the courts – formal and
informal. So although the responsibility for resolution still largely falls to the local leaders, these are either elected by the people (résponsible) or appointed by those elected (chef de zone and nyumbakumi). The latter two constitute the lowest and informal levels of local government. Either personally with the disputants or in gacaca, they seek to resolve the problem rather than have it enter the formal state legal system. They can legally deal with anything that concerns property worth up to three million francs (about £3,000). One chef de zone in Kigali summarised the desire for resolution that motivates the system:

*I try to make relationships between me and the population and for them to see that we are one and are able to solve our problems together. A chef de zone makes sure that the population don’t see him as a leader among them, but one who is there to solve their problems. Before they go to the police they come to us. Whenever they bring their problems we speak to them as family members not as the police* (Interview, 27 January 2006).

If a crime is committed, complainants have to follow the local leadership hierarchy. This means beginning with the nyumbakumi. A nyumbakumi in Kigali described his role:

*I am responsible for 10 houses: seeing how people live, things they do; to know what problems they meet with, see if there are any disputes or conflicts between people … I try to reconcile any problem* (Interview, 28 January 2006).

If that fails, people take it to the next level, the chef de zone.

*I call seven or so to a gacaca court. I listen to what they say [their assessment] and decide [the verdict] on the basis of what they say. If the accused man accepts he did it, then it is agreed the payment he has to pay and the instalments* (Interview, 20 January 2006).

If the chef de zone fails to resolve the dispute it goes to the next level, the responsable.

According to two responsable:

*The responsable calls his advisers and together they make a decision. But it is not a court that can punish; it tries to sort out problems. At the end the responsable may tell the [‘guilty’] party to buy a crate of Fantas for 1000 francs and then there are hugs and forgiveness. If it doesn’t work out then it goes to the secteur level which is a court with power. It tries to bring reconciliation but they may use the law. If it can’t get people to sort it out it goes to the official court of the commune [next level]* (Interview, 6 February 2006).

*Wherever there is a problem I call a gacaca. All 9 of the court will sort out land disputes for instance. We prefer to sort out disputes amongst ourselves rather than forward them to outside* (Interview, 13 February 2006).

The emphasis therefore is on resolving disputes in the time-honoured and still almost universally supported manner of gacaca, and to prevent the individuals and community from having to go to the slow, and potentially community-divisive process of formal courts where there are winners and losers. This concern for community stability and order by both Rwandan gacaca and Sierra Leonean customary courts is a much stronger motivation than any pecuniary gains from fines.
Punishment

Local forms of policing are frequently accused of human rights abuses, especially when it comes to punishment of those found guilty of crime. However, corporal punishment, though a regular feature of mob justice, is not the only or even the main punishment used in local forms of policing in Sierra Leone and Rwanda. Conflict resolution is preferred, although dispute resolution processes (whether work-based association meetings or customary courts) may still issue punishments, fines or exclusions from the workplace. There are times when beatings are administered and this is invariably with the support of most of the local community. For example, the Camp Divas Youth of Freetown maintain that they ‘flog’ all those who fail to pay fines imposed for bad behaviour. Market traders in Freetown admitted that if a thief was caught he was usually beaten on the spot. Likewise in Makeni, Sierra Leone, the drivers association alleged that for dangerous driving by members: ‘we give them lashes’ (Interviews, 20 February 2005).

Corporal punishment does not play a large part in the local government system of Rwanda, though it is not totally absent. If a responsable finds someone involved in crime they are usually taken to the secteur and locked up for a few days. When they are released, as mentioned before, they may be paraded in front of the local people, have to ask them for forgiveness and do community service in the form of joining the local patrol. They may also be required to provide information on other criminals and their organisation. For the most part corporal punishment is avoided although one responsable admitted that though criminals cannot be beaten, ‘if he runs away then you are allowed to throw stones. The Local Defence are allowed to shoot at serious criminals’ (Interview, 6 February 2006).

Thus, both Sierra Leone’s spontaneous and Rwanda’s supervised informal policing function very similarly in terms of responses to crime, both following long-held patterns of dispute resolution.

Attitude to State Police

While it is often assumed that Africans want more state police (Goldsmith, 2003), the cases of Sierra Leone and Rwanda with the ubiquity and popularity of the local forms of policing show that it is not the case that people are missing the presence of the state police. Asked if they would like to see more of the police in their northern Sierra Leonean village, the villagers said they already had a local court ‘for conflicts’ between men and women: ‘There is no need for a post … What do we need a post for? … We are all right’ (Interview, 20 February 2005).

In Rwanda the police are rarely seen beyond the tarmac road unless they are called to a serious incident. But far from people feeling abandoned, most of those interviewed felt that their local security structures offered them what they needed. Typical was the view of a farmer living in a poor district in the east who claimed that the community rarely had more than the odd petty thief and that they were well organised in terms of patrols and restorative justice by the nyumbakumi. When asked if the community ever saw the police, he replied: ‘No they never appear in these areas unless there is a serious crime that has happened’ (Interview, 14 February 2006).

It is evident, therefore, that in the absence of the state police, local forms of policing in Rwanda and Sierra Leone undertake a wide range of services, including prevention, intervention, investigation, resolution and punishment. Few in the two countries are far from access to these local policing services.
How Autonomous are Local Forms of Policing?

In countries where the state police have never provided a nationwide service for all, even before their partial urban service was further weakened by war, there have always been alternative providers. Today in Sierra Leone and Rwanda they are a diverse group. It includes in Sierra Leone youth groups, customary chiefs, community peace monitors, market vendors’ committees, taxi drivers’ associations, commercial security guards, mine monitors, beach police and community police forums. In Rwanda there are informal local government structures, the LDF, commercial security and work-based security associations. One of the most interesting questions concerns how these groups relate to the state: what degrees of autonomy do they have if any; is the relationship competitive or co-operative; beneficial to both parties or only one party; who sets the terms of the relationship? In terms of the boundary between state and non-state, is this distinct, blurred, fixed or shifting?

Elsewhere I have noted that in Africa there are degrees of distance or escape from the state’s gravitational pull (Baker, 2006). Some groups pay no deference to the state, but others are emerging within the boundaries of state initiation or at least state influence and approval. There are different levels at which the state may shape and influence policing agencies other than the state police. Sponsorship, regulation/criminalisation, networking/exclusion, incorporation and training, are all techniques by which the state may seek to maintain a level of control over ostensibly ‘non-state’ policing, and seek to uphold its sovereignty. From the state’s point of view, a relationship provides an opportunity to infiltrate non-state policing. From the point of view of the local forms of policing, the relationship provides a measure of official legitimacy.

In the case of Sierra Leone and Rwanda few policing agencies are totally autonomous. The closest case would be the youth groups in Sierra Leone who have little to do with the police for the simple fact that they provide local security in areas where the SLP are rarely seen. They are prepared to break the law, especially in terms of violence meted out, to achieve their goals of protection and investigation (or sometimes trials and sentencing). Such informal organised security groups whose emphasis is on punishment often bear the pejorative name of vigilantes. Yet in the case of Sierra Leone they are not averse to working with the state police when it suits. Outside a police divisional headquarters in Freetown I watched 40 youths demonstrating loudly for compensation for a cow they had ‘arrested’ wandering down the main road. Inside the station the Local Unit Commander negotiated with the youth and the cow’s owner, until a financial settlement was reached and the crowd left in jubilation. The ambivalence of the relationship is shared by the police. There is no doubt they know of their existence and acknowledge that they do at times bring to the police stations those accused of crime. Yet the police are wary of youths in general. For example, the Annual Crime Report of the SLP attributes the increase in crime rates in the Freetown area to, *inter alia*, ‘lots of idlers and unemployed youth roaming about’ (SLP, 2005), while one local police commander described the youth representatives on the Neighbourhood Watch as ‘criminals’ (Interview, 20 February 2005). Despite these strained relations with the police, the youth enjoy a considerable amount of popular local legitimacy on account of the approval of their elders, as has been shown above and few in their communities would harbour doubts about the use of violence. It demonstrates that the dividing line that is seen in the west between positive and negative local forms of policing is less clear on the ground.
The more typical form of policing, however, is a ‘hybrid’ model where some form of relationship with the state police exists (Johnston, 1992). The relationship can be relatively tight. Rwanda’s local community structures, for instance, are almost a case of incorporation. Because these structures are accessible, free, offer a quick response by local people that are trusted, and are effective in protection, investigation and reconciliation, they are well regarded by the people. Officially they are outside the legally constituted local government system, but they link smoothly with the latter and pass on to them information and unresolved cases. For the most part they are free to handle their cases in their own way and only turn to the police if the crime is serious. Not only do the police approve of this free nationwide service of first response to crime and disorder, but they draw from it substantial intelligence. The local leaders each keep a book of local crime and disorder and of people known for different trouble. That information goes up the hierarchy until it reaches the commune, where it is passed onto the local police commander. Said a chef de zone: ‘I give reports [to the responsable] of people who drink, fight, exceed sleeping time!’ (Interview, 27 January 2006). And a responsable said: ‘Every Wednesday we give a written report of our area’ about those ‘who have been fighting, stealing’ (Interview, 16 February 2006). Though it is the state that sets the terms of the relationship, both sides regard the relationship as beneficial.

Some of the work-based security associations have looser relationships of co-operation with the police. The motorbike taxi association of Rwanda, when asked how it protected its members from robbery answered: ‘The police help a lot. We have the authority to call them. They come quickly’ (Interview, 30 January 2006). At the same time it appeared that the police used them as an organisation to provide information to track down criminals.

A still looser alliance is found between the police and the customary courts of Sierra Leone. The system is structured such that there are chieftoms with their sections and sub-section, and every town outside of Freetown has a chief. Cases are reported from the town chief’s court to the section chief’s court, then to the paramount chief’s court. Their courts would probably be left entirely to their own discretion, were it not for two factors. First, there are rising complaints by users and human rights NGOs against abuses in customary courts. Allegations include discrimination, particularly against women (chiefs, for example giving minimal fines for or ignoring cases of wife beating); illegal detention; charging excessive fines for minor offences; and the adjudication of criminal cases contrary to the constitution. These require some token of state and police response. At the same time, the second factor militates against too much interference, namely that chiefs are an essential part of neo-patrimonial rule, particularly in their role of mobilising support for the ruling party. It is not an accident that the government has refused to bring any reform to the customary policing and courts since the war, as it needs to maintain chief loyalty. Yet there is a link between the two legal systems. If the paramount chief is unable to resolve a case, it goes to the magistrates. In addition, the chairman of the customary court is appointed by the Minster of Local Government, and despite the complaints, the police in practice rarely intervene. In their view: ‘Our priority is the main towns. We cannot cover all the villages. I am confident that the native authority police can cope, except with the mining youth’ (Interview, 21 February 2005).

The relationships in the two countries between local forms of policing and the police vary widely, but in no case could it be said to be competitive in the way it is sometimes between commercial groups and the police (Baker, 2005a). Yet despite the
existence of relationships between state and local forms of policing, there is little actual mutual exchange of intelligence or joint operations, even in the case of community policing forums which are ostensibly set up to facilitate this. The intelligence traffic tends to be one-way and police operations are normally exclusive, reflecting the fact that in both countries it is the police who are setting the terms of the relationship. Even in a weak state like Sierra Leone, local forms of policing are not often beyond the reach of the state. Having said that, this does not mean it is within the state’s arena of trust. The role of local forms of policing, from the point of view of the police, is that they are essentially there to complement them rather than to be partners with them.

It is apparent, therefore, that as discussed in the introduction to this Special Issue, the boundary between the public and the private, or in this case the state and local forms of policing, is complex. As elsewhere in Africa, the boundary is porous in terms of the crossing of information and cases handled. Transgression may be formal or informal (based on personal relationships), but it is clear that such relationships make the usage of the terms state and non-state problematic. The boundary is constantly negotiated – with the police agreeing, for example, to keep away from markets and taxi ranks or turning a blind eye to mob and vigilante violence. The boundary could also be said to be shifting as local groups formerly regarded as non-state are incorporated into officially approved community police forums and there is always the possibility of the role of the chiefs in policing moving from the legal to the illegal with new legislation. No boundary can be regarded as beyond renegotiation (Wood & Dupont, 2006).

Importantly the boundary does not correspond with the boundaries proclaimed by the state. States and their police are constantly constructing an image of policing and its boundaries that does not correspond with reality. State monopolies of force and public/private distinctions are largely fictions constructed by the state. Such statements present an image of the state as the sole legitimate and effective provider of nationwide policing, while non-state policing is typically portrayed as being beyond the boundary of the formal and legal, and as largely unnecessary, biased, abusive and illegal. Links across the public-private boundary are seen as problematic except in very limited circumstances. Although state policing retains political and symbolic significance, in practice local forms of policing are the policing of first choice for most Africans in most circumstances and there are (for reasons of mutual benefit) widespread links between public and private policing agents, especially at the local level. This divergence between practice and image is subject to an ongoing power struggle and negotiation such that the boundaries between public and private, legal and illegal, state and non-state are subject to change and reconstruction (Migdal and Schlichte, 2005).

In addition to blurred boundaries some have spoken in terms of loose networks that bring together the nodes of policing providers, though with the state police as the primary node (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2007; Wood & Dupont, 2006; Loader, 2000; Newburn, 2001). There are certainly elements of that in the cases of Rwanda and Sierra Leone, but bearing in mind that the links are often, as in the rest of Africa, limited in time, content and may rely on personal informal relationships, the relationships are better conceptualised by Johnston and Shearing’s (2003) ‘security governance’ in which no prior assumption is made of state dominance, or by Wood and Shearing’s ‘nodal governance’ (2007) which does not assume that nodes are necessarily networked.
Can We Live With Them?

Beyond the tarmac road where the majority of the people of Rwanda and Sierra Leone live, policing will continue as it has for centuries to be in the hands of local actors. Neither violent war, nor a centralising state, nor the international donor community will alter this reality, though they may shape the particular manifestations of it. Yet none would say that working with them will be easy. They cannot be romanticised into the answer for the failure of the state police. The world of local forms of policing is complex, diverse and dynamic, making a common strategy problematic and not one readily programmable. In addition, the resistance of local and national elites to the building up of institutions outside the state is inevitable and the police, too, are inclined to see alternative policing groups as rivals that threaten their professional monopoly. It is certainly true that anything run by volunteers is always prone to being unreliable and unsustainable. Further, such local groups are particularly susceptible to corruption and to the abuse of power and manipulation by local elites, although this is of course also a problem with large national institutions like the state police. Undoubtedly local police activities are not fully compliant with international human rights standards and despite increasing awareness, discrimination, especially against women and the poor, is still common. However, when these defects are acknowledged in the state police, the usual reaction is to devise methods of reform and there is no evidence that local forms of policing are inherently more resistant to reform than the state police. Sceptics also point to irregular record keeping, though this is often a reflection of the same poverty that makes it problematic for the police service too. Again, the evidence does not suggest that local policing forms are unwilling to document cases.

Undoubtedly there are considerable difficulties in working with local forms of policing. Yet it has to be acknowledged that they offer intriguing potential as development partners. After all, there is not a village, town or city slum where such institutions are not already in place offering some form of service delivery. These groups can be highly effective, since they have local knowledge and significant local support. Being locally owned they also overcome the problem of resistance to external reforms. And though war and conflict quickly decimate state structures, these groups have a history of being resilient and of being adaptable to the changing needs of the local populace. The fact that they are not in need of large capital expenditure means that their services could be improved in manner that is both affordable and sustainable. While for some critics, the difficulties of building links between the state and local forms of policing may seem insurmountable, the fact is that those linkages often exist in informal if not formal ways. As such, any programme that seeks to improve security for the poor, may thus want start by strengthening these existing linkages of information exchange and delegated activities.

The price of order in poor post-conflict states that must rely on local forms of policing for most of their inhabitants most of the time may well be a deficit in terms of justice. Local forms of policing may be flawed in the eyes of both users, government and donors; but in a context of less than fair and accountable state policing, they are not to be dismissed lightly. As this article has argued, they are not without support and a modicum of accountability and, most positive of all, most are capable of being upgraded – and would welcome that. Of course there are those groups that act like criminal protection rackets and are answerable to no one. No one would support their existence, including most of the communities that they prey on. Fortunately they constitute only a very small proportion of groups in Sierra Leone and Rwanda.
For the rest, they can be reformed to enhance their service delivery quite as much as the state police. If policing is to be provided for the poor of Africa, then it will not be without the help of local forms of policing. States need their partnership. They deserve state support.

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Endnotes

1. During the ten-year war approximately 900 SLP officers were killed, and a considerable number suffered amputation.


3. Because individuals and groups are in a unique position to depict and analyse their own experience of policing, the fieldwork emphasised participatory methods. Survey sites across the two countries were chosen that included poor neighbourhoods in the capital and in provincial cities; the rural margins of the capitals and provincial towns; and rural districts. The principal methods used were semi-structured interviews, focus groups, workshops, and observation. Purposive sampling was used in interviewing users of policing, ensuring a balance between urban and rural environments, and of gender.

4. Interviews with Native Authority Police in Kamara chiefdom, 8 February 2005; P.C. Sebora, Paramount Chief, Sebora chiefdom, Bombali; Joe Kamgeai-Macavoray, Paramount Chief, Tikonko chiefdom; Village Head, Massesse; R. Clarke, headman, Krootown; A. Wright, headman, Waterloo; Village Head, Malong; Kenneth Tommy, Town Chief, Yengema; Sahr Babonjo, Town Chief, Tombodou, February and March, 2005.

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Richards, P. (2005), ‘To Fight or to Farm: Agrarian Dimensions of the Mano River Conflicts (Liberia and Sierra Leone)’, *African Affairs*, 104, 417, pp. 571-90.


This article argues that due to the particular position of crime in South Africa, the resurgence of vigilantism needs to be re-evaluated in light of the country’s attempt at institutionalising human rights as the new society’s founding values. Because many township dwellers see vigilantes as their protection against crime, vigilantism should be seen as a criticism of and a comment on human rights as the new expression of the country’s most intimate values. The article begins by introducing an ethnographic case study of a vigilante group from Port Elizabeth’s townships, which has become incorporated as an official ‘Safety and Security’ structure under the Community Policing Forum. The article suggests that fighting crime relates to wider questions of the perceived need for discipline and corporal punishment in response to the erosion of social authority.

South Africa has undergone enormous changes since the democratic transition from apartheid in 1994. The political transition has been perceived as a political ‘miracle’, generating a non-racial dispensation in which the humanity and dignity of all South Africans is protected – at least formally – through a constitutional form of democracy based on the values of human rights. Everyone is now subject to the same sovereign rule of law – ‘One law for One nation’ as the first page of the 1996 Constitution puts it. Since 1994, Parliament has passed more than 789 new pieces of legislation ‘aimed at reconfiguring South African society’ (former Speaker of Parliament, Frene Ginwala, quoted in Madlala, 2004). With its emphasis on ‘One law’, the South African Constitution can be seen as an attempt to codify, fix and attain closure with regard to the multiple, overlapping domains of law and moral systems that had evolved, both as part of and in resistance to the colonial and apartheid eras. The new South African Constitution is built on human rights as the ‘cornerstone of democracy’ (Constitution Chapter 2, 7, 1). As well as mediating and regulating the vertical relationship between state and society – the usual position of rights – human rights must also be applied horizontally between citizens. This dominance in the new dispensation means that human rights are not only the foundation of the legal and political order, but also – in theory at least – the core value regulating social relationships.

The attempt to establish a new social foundation by and through human rights can be analysed as an attempt to propagate a new social imaginary, one that appears in official and popular discourses, public spectacles and ritualised events such as the Constitutional Assembly and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (see Buur, 2001). Perceived in this way, human rights go well beyond their legal and institutional intent: as a social imaginary, they function to reconcile the
slippage between demands for formal representation, equity and accountability on the one hand, and the constant, often unfulfilled, undoing of the apartheid legacy on the other. In the underdetermined sense used here, human rights is enacted in the social and political spheres, but is never lastingly or abidingly instantiated. As a powerful imaginary, human rights allow for the positive and negative normative and moral evaluation of laws, public discourses and practices. The influence of human rights is, as Harris (1996:5) has pointed out,

the idea of Human Rights has a universal remit and transcendent value which makes it a viable basis for political claims, and for criticising particular states.

I agree, but I will suggest that we need to take this further and explore how adherence to human rights as the society’s new founding value and rights interpolation as a social imaginary can trigger strong and surprising responses. Since 1994, ‘crime’ has become the single most important preoccupation of South Africans of all race and class groups. Crime became a catchword used to explain everything that has gone wrong with the country since 1994. In the confusing and highly ambivalent post-apartheid landscape, the ANC inherited, as Terreblanche (2003) has convincingly illustrated, a contradictory legacy that included both the most developed economy in Africa and major socio-economic problems. The hope of ‘a better life’ that the ANC had promised as part of the political transition has become impossible to reach for very large groups of the new polity, as the socio-economic transformation that democratisation implied became a jobless growth economy with large enclaves surviving on a burgeoning informal economy (Bourgouin, 2007).

The ANC government has built more than a million township households, provided water for well over nine million people and given access to electricity for millions of households by redirecting social spending previously allocated to ‘whites’ and ‘poor coloureds’. The flip-side of these achievements is the fact that the black underclass or ‘lumpenproletariat’ (Terreblanche, 2003) is still confined to the townships or the former homelands on the fringes of the booming cities of opportunities. Here the socio-economic conditions have deteriorated so that the population simply cannot pay for the new services. As a former Azapo struggle organiser formulated it:

I have generated a R6,000 bill for water and garbage and I cannot pay. First they [the municipality] cut electricity, then the telephone and now they have notified me that they will take my house from me … sell it. Where do they expect me and my family to live? Is this what we fought for? If they could just give us jobs so we could live a decent life, not just sitting here and waiting for something to happen, doing nothing, just waiting (Interview, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, 2001).

As is often the case when it is politically difficult to do something about global forces, a common enemy, easily recognisable and readily available becomes the scapegoat. In many and sometimes surprising ways, crime and/or the criminal has come to stand in not only for increases in violent deaths, rapes and robberies, but also for teenage pregnancies, unemployment, the breakdown of social cohesion resulting from the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the lack of development funds and investments, and so forth. The concept is therefore profoundly polyvalent – able to give a name to local grievances and problems of order and disorder, and to link them with broader issues. Paradoxically, however, the concept of human rights has become attached to crime, not as a safeguard for victims, with the state as the guarantor of security, but rather as fuel for criminal behaviour.
Recent studies of vigilantism in South Africa have suggested that it has emerged as a result of soaring crime rates and the state’s failure to enforce its own laws (Schärf & Nina, 2001; Tshehla, 2005). Many analysts of non-state forms of ordering argue that, in its benevolent form, vigilantism is stimulated by the state’s incapacity to police and secure citizens’ rights for them (Dixon & Johns, 2001). Underpinning this is the view that the ‘new social contract’, according to which township residents relinquish their monopoly on violence in exchange for state protection, has not been honoured by the state. If only the state would get it right, there would be no problem. The problem seen from mainstream perspectives on vigilantism is that the law has not been applied either consistently or coherently.

The argument I pursue here, conversely, is that vigilantism is not an implicit critique of the application of the law, but of the moral and ethical foundations of the law itself. Vigilantism seeks to provide an alternative moral and ethical framework around crime and particularly, as emphasised in this article, around the control of women and youth, thus challenging the foundation of human rights and the state’s monopoly on violence by inflicting corporal punishment. In South Africa vigilantism can be seen as a response to – and thus a site of struggle and negotiation over – the attempt to enshrine human rights as an all-encompassing foundational value, where many township dwellers see vigilantes as their protection against crime. My argument is that rights as the constitutive idea of the rule over territory and people, actuated through a formal language of law as the dominant horizon for political authority and imagination, run counter to \textit{de facto} configurations of sovereignty both within and beyond the state. The re-emergence of vigilantism is therefore a criticism of and a comment on human rights as much as it is an expression of the country’s people and a measure of its values. If this is the case, then we need to qualify Abrahams’ (1998) powerful suggestion that vigilantism is both implicitly and explicitly a particular form of criticism of state failure.

For the residents of Kwazakele township on the outskirts of the industrial town of Port Elizabeth, the institutionalisation of human rights is at the heart of the erosion of social cohesion and its associated rises in crime levels. Human rights are spoken about in Kwazakele as something new, strange and alien, an interruption whose introduction is closely associated with the dawn of democracy and its failure to deliver on its promises. The government’s concern for equity and the post-apartheid establishment of a rights-based rule of law, with rights for children, youth and women, is seen as the root cause of an apparent erosion of the socio-cultural order and mechanisms of control. Pushing this contention further, I will argue that the very legitimacy of vigilante formations within the township is based on the fact that they are dealing with the issues that the state is felt to be undermining.

I begin by introducing an ethnographic case study of a vigilante group from a section of Kwazakele township known as D-Man, which has become incorporated as an official Safety and Security (S&S) structure under the Community Policing Forum (CPF). The case provides an opportunity to analyse the category of crime in an era in which human rights constitute the new democracy’s founding values. I suggest that fighting crime relates to wider questions of the perceived need for discipline and corporal punishment in response to the erosion of social authority. This is followed by a presentation of the emergence of the vigilante group and its subsequent incorporation into the local CPF, with the aim of illustrating various styles of vigilantism in South Africa and the history on which they draw. Finally, I analyse the legacy of vigilantism in South African townships.
Crime, Discipline & the Erosion of Authority

The dissemination of information about human rights, which was important for the promotion, circulation and institutionalisation of equality and the establishment of a rights-based rule of law after apartheid, has led township residents to believe that crime has one common source. It is believed that the granting of legal entitlements to women, children and young people has sweepingly condoned misbehaviour, so that the police and the courts now protect rather than punish people who flaunt social norms and established hierarchies as they please. Misbehaviour can be boiled down to a view that ‘these rights have gone too far’, where young people as a broad category are believed to have the constitutionally sanctioned right to behave as they please: human rights have become ‘my right to do as I please’.

In practice, for township dwellers in KwaZakele there is no clear distinction between criminal and civil law-breaking; civil law-breaking is itself considered a symptom of crime or social disorder. At the core of most crime is the need to reassert or reorder ‘social relations expressed in practices of identification’ (van Beek, 2001:527). By this I mean relationally constituted forms of identification such as gender and generational hierarchies, which are construed differently according to the law of the township than in the ideology of individual rights which assumes that, in a hierarchy of legal forms, individual rights overrule other forms of law. One of the profound problems is that many of these ‘fluctuating forms’ of identity identification (Buur, 2007) have come under considerable pressure in the new South Africa, which makes it difficult not only for ‘uncles’ or ‘brothers’ but also for ‘fathers’ to play a meaningful role in many households as the social regulatory authority – a role they have been used to playing and are, by and large, expected to continue to perform. As a means of regaining their position of authority, specifically parental authority in the case discussed below, corporal punishment is seen as not just important, but, I suggest, indispensable. In the following, I consider a case from a S&S structure in KwaZakele that highlights the problems that human rights are perceived to cause, intertwined with the struggle of fathers to fill the role they are expected to perform within the household.

Case Study: Working around Rights

The case had been brought to the attention of the S&S structure by the mother of a young girl at the age of 16; it implicates the daughter’s father and her young boyfriend. All of them have been subpoenaed to appear at the office.

There is a knock on the S&S office door, and a well-dressed young man in his early twenties enters with a teenage girl. A man of around sixty is told to wait outside the door. He looks angry and carries a wooden walking-stick with a spherical head (a knopkie). The two members of the S&S have already explained to me that this case is related to family matters and therefore they should not be dealing with it according to the constitution of the S&S structure. The young girl has been sleeping over at the young man’s house and her father, the man told to wait outside the door, has found out and is now angry and wants to punish her. The girl’s mother has brought the case to the S&S behind the father’s back, because she fears what the father might do; his bad temper is well-known. The two S&S members begin by chatting with the young man and having a good laugh because, they explain to me, the young girl has not kept her misbehaviour hidden from her father. Hence, she has offended the honour of her family.

They then call the father in, respectfully: ‘Baba, please come in’. The father enters the office, leaving the mother, who has now arrived, outside the door. The father is very angry. He...
explains in a low but forceful voice that the daughter jumps out of the window at night and sleeps at her boyfriend’s place. Furthermore, she is not attending school regularly. The father is worried about her education and about her getting pregnant. The young girl is asked to explain. She is visibly nervous, rubbing her hands together, but after a short while she says that she has the right to do as she wants, and that her father has no right to beat her – the law says so. She insists that she is old enough to decide for herself. Daughter and father then enter into a lengthy and heated discussion. On top of the father’s anger towards the daughter, he is also angry with his wife because he has to sit here and explain these family matters to the two young men.

The case then takes a dramatic turn. The father suddenly holds the walking-stick upside down so that the wooden ball is pointing downwards. Abruptly, he gets to his feet, swings the walking-stick against his daughter with his right hand and, in the same movement, pulls out a flick-knife from the back of his trousers with his left hand. But the two S&S members must have sensed what might happen, because they place themselves strategically on either side of the father and manage to prevent him from hitting his daughter with the stick or from using the flick-knife by grabbing both of his arms. They disarm him and tell him to sit down and be calm. They shake their heads in disbelief and smile at me as if to say, ‘We are in control’.

The S&S members tell the father that they understand his need to discipline his family, but he must use other means than the stick and the knife. They make it clear to him that they will have to call the police if he uses the stick or the knife, and that would mean yet another family in the township without a man in the house. They explain that he can use a sjambok (originally a herding whip of dried animal hide, but nowadays made of plastic and used primarily for purposes such as the young men suggest) to discipline his daughter or alternatively can give her duties to perform in the house as a form of punishment and discipline, but that it is not a solution to kick her out of the house (next to death, this is considered the worst possible punishment), as she would end up on the streets as a prostitute. After a while, the father promises not to hurt his family and he leaves the office with his daughter. The mother enters the office and tells the two members of the S&S that she is worried because she is sure he will punish them when they get home. The S&S members tell her to come back immediately if further problems arise. Then the young man is told to be more careful in the future. But he insists that he has done nothing wrong; it was the young girl who wanted to stay over in his shack, not he who persuaded her to do so. They all laugh and he leaves.

Not ten minutes pass before the mother is back at the office, completely distraught and shouting: ‘He is going to kill us all!’ The S&S members race out of the office and jump into my car. We drive to the family’s house, roughly one kilometre away. Outside the house, a crowd has gathered. In the front yard, suitcases, blankets and clothes are lying everywhere. The young woman stands in the nearby field with others who turn out to be her sisters and their small children. The father stands in the front yard, holding the stick in front of him. He looks as if what happens around him does not matter. When we arrive, he starts crying. He gives the mother a harsh look, shaking his head and saying: ‘Once again, you interfere’. He continues crying and asks, ‘What can I do?’ and ‘What kind of family is this?’

The two S&S members suggest that they go into the house. The father does not want to enter with the other members of the family, but after a while he agrees and we enter the house, followed by the mother and the daughters with their crying children. Inside, the S&S members start talking to the father in deep Xhosa (rural Xhosa, mainly spoken by elders), and calling him by his clan name. They explain later that by doing so, they are showing him respect. In the following half an hour, they explain that he has done ‘the right thing’ by punishing and disciplining his daughters, but that the means he used were not right, because he could end up in jail if he is not careful. During this exchange, the father says that his other daughters got
pregnant and then didn’t get an education. He hoped things would be different with the youngest daughter. He keeps saying, ‘What kind of family is this?’ The S&S members explain again and again that he can use a sjambok or order his daughter and wife to wash the whole house to discipline them, but he cannot use his knife and stick because that could kill them. As we leave, the S&S members give some harsh words to the daughter for not respecting her father.

Fear of the Law & the Need for Discipline

This case offers numerous themes for discussion. Here, I restrict myself to briefly considering a few aspects related to the above discussion of human rights and the polyvalent understanding of crime. The father’s main concerns are respect for his family from the wider community and respect for his position as the male patriarch from within the family. The way this is dealt with is less to question whether the daughter should be disciplined at all, but rather to consider how. In doing so, the young men from the S&S and the father are promoting a moral code around the control of women that in theory is shared by all the men. Yet, the young members of the S&S and the boyfriend joke about the sexual relationship. For the young men, the issue is not whether the young woman has been sleeping with the man, but the fact that she has been stupid enough not to keep it hidden. This could point to the negotiation of generational conflicts and an attitude towards crime. Let us deal with these issues one by one.

For the father, his position as the male patriarch of the family is intimately linked to the fear of his daughter dishonouring the family, becoming pregnant, not receiving an education, and consequently being one more burden for a family with too many young women with children already. In a situation where few men can take their place at the table as the ‘breadwinner’, the usual position of authority, the father’s legitimacy has been eroded. While the oldest male in a household is still expected to take this position at the table, its sources of legitimacy (employment, marriage, unchallenged respect and a public face of control) can no longer be sustained. The residual anchor of this position of authority has been lost. The men in the S&S structure understood this well. Except for one out of the eight making up the core group, they all lived with their mothers and took the position of absent fathers. They were all unemployed except one, living off their mothers’ small salaries (mainly from domestic work) or pensions, small amounts that fed their sisters, themselves and their children. Without jobs, they were not able to build their own homes and lived instead in backyard shacks. Nor were they able to pay a lobola (bride price) for the women they have ‘broken the breast’ of (the local term for impregnating a young woman). The S&S members renamed the position at the end of the table ‘the place of the woman’, which they had to assume as the recipients of food, with nothing to show after another day of waiting for a job to come their way. One important reason for acting as crime-fighters was that at least they earned a little money, receiving a few rands for opening a case and earning 20 per cent of money-lending cases, and they could also, with some dignity and legitimacy, assert themselves as males disciplining the youngsters.

They therefore understood the situation of the man in the household, struggling to assert himself, but the situation they shared as men had clear generational differences. While their interaction with the older man was disempowering for him, it enabled the young men of the S&S to carve out a space where they could perform male roles, acquire status and respect from the community and assert generational
hierarchies vis-à-vis its younger members, while also readjusting their relationship to older men. The S&S members constantly contradicted the language of the state that invoked rights in order to prohibit corporal punishment, but at the same time they accepted it. As they explained, when you are in a situation such as the old man faces,

you easily lose control and become too harsh. That’s why we tried to calm him down; if we had not done that he would have killed the girl. There is nothing you can do; children can run to the police nowadays. In the old days, we feared them (both the fathers and the police). You have to discipline in the right way. If you don’t do that, there will be just one more family without a man to bring bread to the house.

Although in an awkward manner, they have seized the new language of rights to claim status and authority, in doing so playing with and perhaps even undermining the power and status ascribed to the older, respected generation. This interpretation is supported by the fact that, contrary to what one might expect given the male bias in the S&S, many of the cases brought to its attention came from old and middle-aged women, and ranged from money-lending disputes and problems with discipline in the household to theft and domestic violence. Men called on the S&S only when the issue at stake was theft, which they could not deal with themselves.

Despite these differences, however, they all agreed on the need for discipline. Their question was, rather, how, with rights as the founding values, could they do what was needed and expected? I suggest that at the core of this view is the legal and discursive intolerance of corporal punishment, locally referred to as patha-patha, which literally means slapping or cuffing. Given the concern for rights, primary authority figures – parents, teachers, males and the police – are believed to have lost the main means of instilling discipline and punishment. The excessive use of force and physical discipline associated with vigilantism cannot therefore be attributed only to the exceptionally high levels of crime and the state’s failure to deal with it. Rather, the prevalence of corporal punishment resonates and merges with everyday practices and with strongly held ideas concerning the evolution of human beings, that is, beings who can distinguish between ‘right and wrong’ and for whom, in turn, the production of authority has an increasing importance. The great irony here is that the new laws prohibiting the use of corporal punishment are seen as one of the causes of the breakdown of the social fabric.

The wider socio-cultural universe, in giving legitimacy to the use of corporal punishment, is intimately related to the perception of socialisation, the essence of which is: ‘How can you know what is right or wrong, if you have not been beaten?’ There is a profound belief that ‘If you put the iron in the fire, the iron will be strong’, a reference to the physical body and the psyche. The need to feel pain is a recurring explanation whenever one asks parents about physical discipline and how to teach proper behaviour. Discipline is nearly always directed at the future in the form of ‘prevention’, ‘change of behaviour’ and ‘learning the right way’. In the past (except between the mid-1980s and early 1990s), when parents could not handle their children, they would go to the police, who, as a source of authority, would take care of discipline by using the sjambok, the main symbol of authority. A self-respecting household would have a sjambok behind the door, and men would walk the streets publicly displaying that symbol of authority, just as, to the pride of their parents, children would play with smaller sjamboks in the street, acting out roles they knew well.
Today, many of these disciplinary measures are curtailed by the prevailing rights discourse. In the context of this contradiction between the wider socio-economic transformation and more traditional methods of socialisation and asserting authority, parents who can no longer physically discipline youngsters turn to structures such as the S&S and to vigilante formations more generally, just as for decades they used to turn to the police in the townships. This was particularly the case with grandparents who were no longer able to exercise disciplinary power over the grandchildren for whom they were responsible. The enforcement of tradition by both the old man with the stick with regard to his relationship with his family and the members of the S&S with reference to the use of ‘deep Xhosa’ to bolster his self-esteem should not be understood solely as a return to conservative or traditional ways of being. Rather, what is at stake are current modes of coping with uncertainties.

Legal restrictions on corporal punishment and the fear of accusations of domestic violence have driven parents and caretakers to invoke local law enforcers who know how to discipline in a manner that does not make the punishment visible (see Buur, 2005). My argument is that there are practical reasons structuring the formation of individuals and collective identities, where modern and traditional components may overlap and imitate one another, or differentiate themselves, or support and at times converge, according to their articulation. The result is the production of local ways of being-a-person, of articulating a moral community that cannot be captured by the sources and means available to the formal authorities.

This, of course, resonates with the fact that universal norms, rights and ‘rights talk’ are not blindly adopted but, as Wilson (1997) has suggested, must be recognised as a site of struggle and contest, where powerful configurations of socio-cultural hierarchies are constantly being challenged and locally reworked. This is particularly the case when universal and detached norms begin to materialise and extend their reach and promises into everyday life. While the young men generally saw the principles of human rights in the Constitution as well-intended, not least in light of the experience of the 1980s, they were nonetheless adamant that rights created more problems than they solved and that the Constitution should be changed. They argued that children, youngsters and women ‘used rights’ to legitimise behaviour that, in the township, was considered socially reprehensible and unlawful, such as disrespect for the authorities, drinking, engaging in sex and drugs, the disrespectful display of sexual bodies and disregard for social obligations. When such behaviour could no longer be punished physically, it was felt, it would spin out of control. In this view, rights had simply become the concrete embodiment of everything that had gone wrong.

The case presented above illustrates how the everyday work of vigilante formations can be concerned with reordering relationally construed forms of identification. They therefore compete with the state for formal control over criminal cases to only a limited extent. As the above case highlights, what they do falls somewhere between criminal and civil codes of law. It is only by going beyond the spectacular emphasis on solving criminal cases – an angle often sustained by the vigilante formation’s founding myths concerning murder, theft and rape – that the moral and ethical domain, so intimately related to the imposition of rights in South Africa, is revealed. While the D-Man S&S structure has certainly dealt with crimes that the police should have taken care of, they are not the only types of crime it has undertaken to deal with. But, as the case also illustrates, the reordering of relationally construed forms of identification has brought the S&S structure into conflict with rights as the
new foundational values. Here, the S&S structure carved out a space where \textit{de facto} sovereignty – such as the right to protect or to kill – was performed in the name of protecting the community against crime. Next I will discuss how this space was enabled in the first instance.

**The Founding Myth: From Disorder to Order**

The founding myth surrounding the events that brought crime to a halt in Kwazakele township in 2000 is a tale about former \textit{Amabuthos} – the Young Lions of the ANC-aligned United Democratic Front, warriors from 1980s township struggles – who awoke from their slumber to protect and save the community, yet again, from danger. The myth tells of excessively violent acts committed by a group of young, armed criminals, many of whom had served prison sentences and were part of the prison gangs known as the 26\textsuperscript{th}, 27\textsuperscript{th} and 28\textsuperscript{th} that terrorised Kwazakele in 1999. One particular incident from that year is telling. A group of criminals broke into an elderly couple’s house, stole everything – television and radio, cutlery, videos, clothes – and shot the old woman dead when she tried to prevent them from raping her daughter. In the community’s eyes, the police were too busy chasing black thieves in Port Elizabeth’s white suburbs to bother about an elderly black couple’s belongings in the township. The ‘politicians are just doing Talk Shops, talking about rights, economy and crime here and there and what they wanted to do, everybody was just sitting and waiting’ as it was explained.

To confront the criminals, a group of old men called a group of trusted former Young Lions – most of them unemployed. They decided that ‘enough was enough when even their womenfolk were no longer safe’. If this could happen to their neighbours, it could also happen to their own families. They felt that they could not remain passive, waiting for the police to react. The Lions managed to track down one of the criminals, although he was armed. After forcing him to reveal the identity of his accomplices, they managed within a week to capture the whole group, except for the leader, whom they apprehended three months later. To the community’s great dissatisfaction, the criminals were released from prison a week later and continued their activities. The police did not like the Lions’ methods and tried to arrest some of the members. A group of elders (all men), led by a prominent ANC member, a former Robben Island prison mate of Mandela himself, called a public meeting at the local primary school in order to prevent the arrest of the Lions, which threatened to rob the community of its protectors. At that meeting, twelve of the most trusted young men were elected as the community’s Concerned Residents Against Crime.

The myth presents an instructive lesson of how a township – forgotten except at election times, as the Lions often pointed out, and existing in the shadow of the city of Port Elizabeth – becomes lawless and morally corrupt. While people in the city have a well-functioning police force to draw on, as I was told again and again, along with ambulances that arrive within minutes and private security paid to fend off crime, township residents can rely only on themselves. As in the 1980s, the Lions must sacrifice their own needs for the sake of a greater cause: from defending the community against apartheid and the township’s internal political enemies to a defence against ‘the onslaught of crime’. This founding myth is not unrelated to the actual history of the crime fighters, nor does it differ significantly from the foundational myths of similar crime-fighting structures that emerged at around the same time in other parts of Kwazakele and adjacent townships such as New Brighton, or elsewhere in South Africa.
What the Lions did not mention in their tale, but was clearly remembered by the police and local ANC officials, was that the Lions of 1999 were extremely violent. Initial events in 1999 involved an ‘orgy of violence that had spun out of control’, according to the members’ own description. The first criminal they captured was tortured severely for five consecutive days in the most gruesome manner: ‘It was bad. I think in the end his mother could not recognise him if she had seen him. He was a gangster and really tough’ (Interview, 2001).

On the sixth morning, the police arrived in a Casspir (an armoured vehicle developed by the apartheid military). Somebody had reported what was going on, and the police freed the criminal. When they wanted to arrest some of the Lions for breaking the law and for public violence, a crowd of several hundred local people surrounded the police:

_We became a mob; it was really wild. The police had to call for assistance, and a helicopter circled the area: it was like in the old days, with people singing and toyi-toying._ When they tried to arrest some of us, the community liberated us and threw stones at them, and they retreated to the Casspir. People were really angry: Why do they come here? Why did they protect the criminals and not the community? It is us who are the victims, not the criminals.

After this incident the group continued, spurred on by community demands to find the remaining criminals, and by the sense of protection they gave the community. After a visit to the girlfriend of the man they had interrogated so brutally, they managed to get the names and addresses of the rest of his group. Large groups of young men and women had then shown up at their houses and hiding places to ‘apprehend them’. In some cases hundreds arrived at a house, and if the alleged criminals did not come out by themselves, the mob would break down the doors and ‘raid the house’. If their families intervened, they were told to leave or risk being stoned and petrol-bombed. When captured, the suspected criminals were severely beaten until they talked, providing enough information for the Lions to locate some of the stolen goods. But it did not stop there.

Over the following months, the Lions continued their ‘work’ and left a trail of beaten-up young men and, in many cases, schoolgirls too. Mere suspicion was enough to unleash their wrath in excessive violence. A young man carrying a bag of goods might be a sign of criminal activity. The Lions would then try to find out if they could get a reward for handing back stolen goods and/or take the goods themselves as ‘a salary’ for good work. Because the young male criminals were considered ‘generic criminals’ (Buur, 2003:34), the indiscriminate use of violence was automatically justified. Parents and grandparents began to hand over their school-age sons and daughters for disciplining, usually by sjambok. The use of violence, however, eventually had costs for the community. Not only were many innocent young men beaten, but the Lions also began to get involved in disputes between neighbours, brawls between both married and unmarried couples and domestic quarrels, where no clear generic criminal or enemy was available to justify the use of violence. Once hailed as the saviours of the township for their vigorous action against crime and for revitalising the declining spirit of the township community, the Lions came to be seen as part of the problem, preying on the vulnerability of the community for whose good they claimed to be working.
Bringing Disorder under Control

In this context of predation and vulnerability, the former Robben Island prisoner intervened, giving shape to what had been a purely *ad hoc* and disorganised arrangement so far, which had become a threat to the community and to the ANC itself. For him, the issues of control and discipline were linked to a correct understanding of ‘direct democracy’ or ‘popular democracy’ inspired by the battles of township dwellers against the apartheid state during the 1980s. In contrast to visions of direct democracy that were vulnerable to manipulation by charismatic leaders and *Amabuthos* who in many instances took control due to their sheer numbers and persistence, proper community action involved the masses taking control of their own lives (see Seekings, 2001) by creating a parallel authority that ‘was seen as part of a process of organising the future society’ (Nina, 1995:7) – a process that linked them to the ANC. This implied a shift away from the people as sovereign (community residents, including the Young Lions as a loosely-organised multitude), to the ANC as sovereign, with the leaders of the ANC standing in for the general will.

As the case discussed previously shows, in the reformed ‘vigilante’ structure that then developed, the young men (s)electected to take care of crime in the community were all trusted, card-carrying members of the ANC and the ANC Youth League. Calling the community together was more in the nature of a symbolic gesture to confirm and approve the initiative and the leadership’s handling of the issue. Selecting ANC members ensured a measure of accountability and control over the crime fighters, because if they should step out of line and become abusive to the community/ANC, the Lions would be accountable to the organisations that had (s)electected them. To fall out with the ANC in Kwazakele would have had dire consequences, because it was through the ANC councillor that scarce, low-income jobs were distributed, and through ANC party networks that one got on shortlists for formal jobs in local and provincial governments. As I was often reminded, ‘without the party you are nothing, you don’t mess with the giants’.4

The rules laid down for their work in the community were simple: do not deal with complaints about well-established money-lenders because it is their business, i.e. of the money-lenders they all relied on! Do not deal with family affairs (between couples) except when it is younger members of the household who are terrorising their parents or grandparents. Also, be as harsh with the criminals as is necessary to make them speak, but do it discreetly so that you do not get into trouble with the police. The last rule contravenes the Constitution’s insistence on respect for the right of all human beings to be free from all forms of violence (Paragraph 12(1c)). Where the Constitution protects all human beings, the law of the community obviously does not. Thus, the Constitution faced the young crime fighters with a moral dilemma: they are expected to act in ways that are forbidden, even criminalised, but which the community concerned sees as both acceptable and desirable within the moral code of the township. As such, the relationship between the formal law and the moral codes of the local township was ambiguous.

Conclusion

The establishment of S&S structures became the state’s response from 2000 onward, when vigilantism emerged as one of the most contentious issues in the media and among law-enforcement agencies in the new South Africa. The official response centred on the challenge that vigilante organisations posed to the state and on the
violence of their methods. Establishing S&S structures at ward level can therefore be seen as an attempt to enforce or establish the state’s legitimacy, because vigilantism had exposed the limits of the new state’s capacity to secure justice for all, as well as the limited reach of the new values of human rights. The response of state agencies was notoriously ambivalent, because vigilantism addresses issues that are pertinent to people living on the margins of the formal state apparatus, people who consistently have voted for the ANC government (see Cherry, 2000). Vigilantism was and is therefore often accepted at local levels of the state and in the communities where attempts were made to set up S&S structures. As E.P. Thompson (1971) has elegantly illustrated, the customs, rules and moral codes people use to legitimise and/or ground their actions are more often than not at odds with the rules and laws promulgated by their rulers. This was also true of human rights as one of the new founding values of the post-apartheid state. Even the statements of some national leaders regarding the primacy of the new values were fraught with bewilderment. As the late Minister of Safety and Security, Steve Tshwete, (in)famously suggested:

*Criminals must know the South African state possesses the authority, moral and political, to ensure by all means, constitutional or unconstitutional, that the people of this country are not deprived of their human rights* (Tshwete, [1999] 2000).

This, of course, illustrates the shallow depth of commitment to rights in many quarters of society, but the public statements of leaders did have consequences. The public discourse on crime in townships such as KwaZakhele functioned as an official blueprint for action for many young as well as not so young men, who saw such statements as a *carte blanche* to take action against any elements they considered destructive of their way of life. Even after becoming an official state structure, the Lions continued to inflict physical punishment. The only difference was that they did it more discreetly in order not to attract the attention of the police. As a consequence, the violence that was unleashed became both more measured and more politically complex. If a vigilante formation turned official could provide stolen goods and confessions before information reached the police about possible abuses, then the violence was disregarded because it bolstered police statistics. Whether by oversight or strategic forgetting, we find state officials and their proxies transcending the simple dichotomy between state and society by engaging in sovereign practices in the grey zone between the laws and procedures that awkwardly maintain the formal sovereignty of the state, and that of alternative normative orders that protect or discipline with impunity.

A common thread in the analyses of vigilantism in South Africa is its apparent function as a privileged entry point for local understandings of political and social change more generally (Crais, 2002). The flip-side of the impressive growth experienced in South Africa after 1994 is the fact that the black underclass is still confined to the townships or the former homelands with little or no access to the opportunities offered by the new South Africa. Exacerbating the socio-economic decline is the fact that poor people are more exposed and vulnerable to crime. By far, fewer state resources are used in the poor areas than in the commercial centres and the gated middle- and upper-class residential areas on, for example, policing. It is partly within this wider framework of socio-economic deprivation that the reasons for the success of vigilantes can be found.

Vigilantism seems to gain prevalence and to emerge or radicalise in times of great social upheaval, when an anticipated future has been abruptly yanked away or is under threat. The ‘work’ of vigilante formations is a way of representing a social
value by the sometimes dramatic and concrete representation of its opposite, be it images of moral decay, loss, chaos, disorder and insecurity.

This continual labour forms the basis for the production of localised forms of sovereignty and authority. This perspective on vigilantism implies that one must explore the relationship between the official forces of the law and the law of the moral community, where practices of everyday policing are constitutive of the production of moral order. Here, ambivalence arises because vigilantism addresses issues of security and the moral order that are pertinent to people living on the margins of the formal state apparatus and state law.

As shown here, local forms of sovereignty are nested within state forms of sovereignty, where they retain a domain with control over life and death. They occupy a strategic position between state institutions and local populations, a position that, seen in the longer history of colonial and post-colonial encounters, is not new and has emerged under many names – ‘indirect rule’ (Mamdani, 1996), ‘private indirect government’ (Mbembe, 2001), ‘twilight institutions’ (Lund, 2006) – and that may be less a sign of the actual weakness of the state than a particular way of incorporating segments of populations and territories, where the state never has been in total control or particularly effective. The biggest difference from earlier forms of governance, rule enforcement and institutional building is that, while different forms of sovereignty co-existed within colonial (including the apartheid regime) territories, there is little evidence to suggest an intention to govern these territories and their people as effectively and with the same commitment as the colonial homeland. From a global perspective, the language of rights seems, at least formally, to want to do things differently, perhaps because of its a priori normative starting point and its discrete move from groups and populations as the targets for registering and monitoring, to the individual self as the new sovereign subject.

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**Endnotes**

1. The S&S structures are organised and established by the wider framework informing Community Policing Forums, as stipulated by the South African Police Service Act (No. 68, 1995), and they remain part of law in terms of the Constitution of 1996. This is an attempt to regulate the relationship between the police service and the general public. S&S structures are elected amongst ward members and can include both female and male members, although they are predominantly male. In Kwazakele there is usually a S&S for each ward and they can be given training organised by a CPF if funds are available; offices are generally provided by the local community.

2. A dance performed either on the spot or while moving slowly forwards, with high-stepping movements that at times seem to ‘lift from the ground’. It is accompanied by chanting, singing and shouting slogans.

3. The Xhosa word for ‘work’ is also used for rituals relating to ancestors and initiation rites.

4. ‘Giants’ was the local term for well known leaders in the struggle against apartheid.
Bibliography


Private Security & Local Politics in Somalia

Stig Jarle Hansen

The use of private security by weak states is often seen to erode state power and prevent national institution building. This article investigates the use of private military force in Somalia and the three different entities that exercise political authority within this geographically defined territory, namely the Transitional Federal Government, Puntland, and Somaliland. All three have contracted private security companies, primarily to prevent piracy and illegal fishing in their coastal waters. The article shows that while the turmoil in Somalia continues to offer lucrative investment opportunities for private security and military companies of various sorts, it cannot be uniformly concluded that private security always serves to weaken already fragile public authorities. On the contrary, in some cases the activities of private military companies have served to strengthen the power of local authorities.

This article addresses the effects of private security companies (PSCs) in a state that has no functioning central authority. Since the fall of Siad Barre’s government in 1991, Somalia has come to be seen as one of the world’s ‘failed’ states. Today, although the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) is internationally recognised as Somalia’s legitimate government, it remains weak and its institutions have a limited geographical reach. Several smaller political entities wield territorial control over large areas; the two most significant are Somaliland and Puntland. Somaliland is located in the north-west of Somalia, and strives for international recognition as an independent state, but to date remains unrecognised by the international community. Since 1991 Somaliland has embarked on a state building project, and now has a relatively democratic political structure, a rudimentary police and coast guard, as well as a legal system that functions in its core areas (Hansen & Linderman, 2003). The Puntland state of Somalia, created in 1998, is located in north-eastern Somalia, and similarly boasts a functioning state-like bureaucracy. Puntland, which never declared independence and nominally accepts the TFG, has weaker governance structures than Somaliland, but has nevertheless created relative stability within its area of control and strives to build state-like institutions.

The TFG, Somaliland and Puntland have all at various points contracted private security or military companies, and this article investigates the role and impact of private force in this fragmented and fluid political environment. The areas of responsibility allocated to PSCs by Puntland and the TFG were very similar in character, and involved coast guard services in the form of protection against illegal fishing, the prevention of piracy and illegal dumping of waste. The private companies were also contracted to train local forces to perform coast guard services. Puntland was the first to employ a private security company, hiring the British
company Hart Security from 2000 to 2001, followed by the Somali (but Emirates registered and based) SOMCAN from 2001 to 2006, and finally the Saudi based Al-Hababi Marine Services in 2006, all with a view to ending piracy and illegal fishing. The Transitional Federal Government initially hired the American firm Top Cat Maritime in order to protect Somali waters from illegal fishing, toxic dumping and piracy. Top Cat forfeited their contract in May 2006, and the Somali cabinet then hired Northbridge Services Group Ltd on 12 May 2006, which in turn withdrew a year later (Northbridge Service Group, 2006). Somaliland’s engagement with private security is interestingly different, in that it is financed by the Norwegian aid agency NORAD and aims to improve security of the territory’s main port in Berbera.

Existing analyses of private security companies variously argue that private force can enhance or weaken local institution building, that they might act as agents for global governance or specific interests of western powers, and/or that they are a part of broader networks that blur the distinction between the public and the private, the global and the local (Small, 2006; Avant, 2005: O’Brien, 1998; Abrahamsen & Williams, 2007). On the one hand, it has been suggested that weak states under some circumstances can benefit from hiring private security (Small, 1998; O’Brien, 1998). As argued by Small, PSCs might help weak states that have ‘legitimate needs, but inadequate capabilities’ to build and defend their territories, institutions, and populations by providing outside resources and transferring skills from countries with more efficient security and military systems (Small, 2006:25), as well as by providing access to international networks otherwise beyond the reach of poor countries. In this view, a private security companies providing services such as anti-piracy patrols and protection of natural resources can allow weak state to exert greater control over their destinies, and may provide a means whereby external actors can contribute to this process even when they are unwilling or unable to engage in direct intervention (see Weiner, 2006; Shearer, 1998b; Brayton, 2002).

At the same time, even proponents of PSCs acknowledge that there might be problems caused by their employment. Small suggests that employing PSCs might prevent weak states from creating their own mechanism for handling security problems, thus preventing a durable solution (Small, 2006:29). In a similar vein, Avant (2005) argues that state capacity is the crucial variable in the ability of states to control private security firms. Weak states may lack the vital administrative resources and skills required to utilise and supervise PSCs effectively, and hiring private forces risks a further fragmentation of authority at the same time that it enhances the power of external actors – whether these be foreign states or private capital – to the detriment of local interests (Singer, 2004; Yeoman, 2004). A further set of concerns involve the charge that PSCs can operate more clandestinely, avoiding democratic scrutiny. President Clinton’s ambassador to Colombia, Myles Frechette, stated that PSCs in Latin America conduct actions ‘that would have been unpalatable for the armed forces’ (Yeoman, 2004). PSC activities thus raise questions of transparency and accountability, and may allow governments to pursue policies that would be difficult or even impossible to undertake through the use of public forces.

This article shows that the employment of PSCs in all three areas of Somalia has important implications for the development of political authority and territorial control. It argues that no a priori conclusion can be drawn about the effects of private force on weak states, but that instead, careful attention needs to be paid to the relationship between the private company and the contacting state. In a fluid and
fragmented political environment such as Somalia, a wide array of international private security firms have had widely divergent impacts, depending in large part on their interaction with decentralised and fragmented local power structures and global actors.

**PSCs in Puntland**

The coastline of Puntland contains some of the richest fishing grounds in Somalia, offering tempting targets for illegal fishing boats, including Yemeni, Spanish, and French vessels. Puntland is also the centre of a lucrative human trafficking and arms smuggling business, as well as hosting several subsistence pirate groups.1 Puntland itself is relatively fragile, and consists of three clans: the Majerteen, who dominate the entity, the Warsangeli, and the Dolbahante. The Majerteen clan is in turn divided into several sub-clans and the struggles for dominance between two of these clans, the Omar Mahamoud and the Osman Mahamoud, have created severe conflict in the region. Perhaps as a result, keeping peace by maintaining a fragile clan balance within the government, and by distributing financial support to local strongmen has been a higher priority for the regional authority than maintaining the coast guard.

The dynamics of PSC activities in Puntland reflect the influence of the area’s complex clan politics. The British company Hart was the first company hired in 2000, mainly to protect Puntland’s maritime resources against illegal foreign fishing by providing training as well as on-ship support to the local Coast Guard. Hart was a relatively new company at the time, having been founded only two years previously by Lord Richard Westbury, a veteran of the PSC sector and a former Chief Executive of Defense Systems Ltd. According to the initial contract, Hart’s operations were to be financed through Puntland’s sale of fishing licenses. The company established its main facilities in Bosasso, a city with a different clan composition that the one that the government of Puntland had at the time, and took great care in maintaining a clan balance amongst its local employees. The company’s force consisted of 70 men, primarily hired locally, as well as one boat. Their task is best described as daunting; not only did international trawlers frequently enter Somali waters, only to escape into international waters once Hart’s coast guard vessels approached, but as Puntland is not an internationally recognised state, the legal status of any vessel caught entering its waters was highly ambiguous.

Initially, the engagement of Hart was very successful: the frequency of piracy declined, and the nucleus of a relatively efficient coast guard was formed, with its spine consisting of British advisors and British-trained Somali militia acting as boarding parties. Perhaps even more significantly, Hart’s networks in the United Kingdom, and their experience in using the UK legal system was to provide Puntland with an important victory in the fight against illegal fishing. Initially the rights of Puntland to curtail illegal fishing had been challenged by ship owners who claimed that Puntland, despite having a relatively well functioning administration, was not a state and thus could not wield sovereignty. The argument was that only a Somali state could determine what constituted illegal fishing, and since no state existed, extensive fishing, even to the extent that it threatened the existence of the local fish stock, was allowed. Several of the most notorious ship owners in fact accused the Puntland coast guard of being mere pirates. Hart, however, contacted a British law firm, Hill Dickinson Legal Services, who examined relevant previous court cases in order to challenge this position. When the Puntland coast guard
brought in the Spanish ship ‘Alabacora Quatro’, Hart, Puntland, and Hill Dickinson managed to get the ship-owners to settle for a legal arbitration agreement following British law. The resulting legally binding agreement remains confidential. However, according to Hart’s director, Richard Westbury, the ship-owners had to pay a substantial compensation (Interview, Westbury, 2008). In this way, the PSC can be seen to have helped strengthened Puntland’s authority in the face of a foreign company.

Yet Hart’s successes were balanced by considerable difficulties, arising primarily from internal conflicts within Puntland. Some pirate groups were virtually untouchable, since acting against them would disturb the fragile clan balance maintaining peace in the area. Hart also suspected some members of the administration of collaborating with the pirates. Recognising the special circumstances, Hart took a careful and relatively successful step-by-step approach to the problems until 2001-2002. At this point, a short Puntland ‘civil war’ erupted when Puntland’s President from the Osman Mahmoud sub-clan, Ali Jama Ali, was elected by the traditional elders, but President Abdullahi Yusuf, of the Omar Mahamoud sub-clan, refused to step down. These local political struggles also divided the Hart trained coast guard, which split into different factions, and when fighting erupted close to Hart’s bases of operation, the company decided to withdraw. Peace was re-established in 2002 (lasting until today), and in 2005 Hart challenged the Puntland authorities in court to re-start the still valid contract for training the coast guard. Initially, Hart was supported by the Supreme Court, but several of the judges were then dismissed by the President and the contract was declared invalid. Any analysis of the cause for the intervention of the Puntland President will inevitably have an element of speculation. However, it seems likely that one important factor was that Hart’s replacement, SOMCAN, was strongly connected to the Puntland political elite. Moreover, SOMCAN had by then established a clear operational structure that would have had to be disbanded if Hart’s contract was reinstated.

SOMCAN had initially been granted a five year contract in 2001. In contrast to Hart, SOMCAN was deeply integrated in Puntland politics, and later encountered serious difficulties because of this. Although being formally registered in the Emirates in 2001, the company’s owners originated from Puntland. SOMCAN was led by Canadian-based Abdiweli Al Taar and represented in Puntland by his brother, fishing entrepreneur and former navy officer Xiif Ali Taar. The Taars were ardent supporters of Abdullahi Yusuf during the clashes of 2001-2002, indeed they were members of Yusuf’s own clan, and Xiif Ali Taar remained a key military advisor for Yusuf, the current President of the TFG. The company promised to generate its own income through the lucrative sale of fishing rights, thus not drawing upon the meager income of Puntland. SOMCAN already had a significant fishing fleet in Puntland waters, and this fleet was heavily armed in order to counter the threat of pirates. In forming the new private coast guard, SOMCAN utilised some of these vessels. During the duration of their contract, the size of the company’s forces varied slightly, but was significantly larger than Hart’s and consisted of about 400 men, one large boat and five smaller (18-20 feet) vessels. The company had some notable successes, and managed to stop an attempt by CARMO Express, a Philippines flagged ship, to dump livestock with infectious diseases in Puntland by actively and successfully tracking the ship over time (Puntland Post, 2003). However, the company faced significant problems arising largely from the fact that the leaders of SOMCAN had a different clan background than many of the local fishermen, who
soon accused SOMCAN of collecting illegal fees from them. SOMCAN also attempted to enforce a licensing system for subsistence fishermen, and as a result, grew increasingly unpopular.

On 8 January 2005, Mohamoud Musse Hersi ‘Adde Mussa’ became President of Puntland. Adde Mussa had a different clan background than the Taars, and the previously close and cordial relationship between SOMCAN and the Puntland administration rapidly crumbled. The relationship was further damaged by what seems to have been a mere accidental clash between SOMCAN and government forces, when local police in Bosasso chased street thugs past the Taar residence, and the noise from the police chase caused the SOMCAN militia to believe that they were under attack. About 200 members of SOMCAN’s force clashed with the police, and two policemen were wounded. The already grave situation escalated when the security forces replied with a massive attack on Xiif’s guards, who worked directly with (or in) SOMCAN’s coast guard. At one point, even the Puntland military forces entered the scene, and the tension was only defused after both President Adde Mussa and traditional leaders in Bosasso intervened. However, the incident seriously hampered cooperation between the local police forces and the firm. It also draws attention to the extent to which SOMCAN was in effect not an independent private security company, but instead more akin to a militia, embedded in local clan rivalry. It thus easily became entangled in local power politics, and subsequent newspaper accusations of improper connections between the company and the Puntland administration significantly damaged SOMCAN’s legitimacy as a bona fide coast guard both domestically and internationally.

The reputation of SOMCAN was also marred by accusations of piracy. In March 2007, three Puntland coast guard officers, trained by SOMCAN, were arrested by an international anti-pirate force led by US naval vessels. The arrest followed a complaint by Vichart Sirichai-ekkawat, owner of Sirichai Fisheries Co. in Thailand, who claimed that 26 crewmen on board his ship had been illegally detained by the three coast guard officers in Puntland waters and that a ransom of US$800,000 had been demanded (SomaliUK, 2007). The three suspects had been sent by the Puntland authorities to provide security to the Thai vessel fishing in the special economic zone under an agreement between Mr Vichart’s firm and Somali authorities. SOMCAN initially claimed that the incident was a product of poor communication and misunderstandings, but failed to provide any help to the three officers, who stood trial in Thailand and were sentenced to 10 years in Thai prisons.

In the end, as a consequence of shifting clan politics and accusations of piracy, SOMCAN failed to get its contract renewed. Ironically, then, what earned the company the contract in the first place, namely clan politics, was ultimately also to end its engagement in Puntland. This in turn points to an important factor in assessing the effect of PSCs on local politics and political authority. Unlike its predecessor Hart, SOMCAN was deeply embedded in local clan politics. While the company did to a significant extent succeed in preventing illegal fishing during the duration of its contract, its effect on political stability and institution building is much more questionable. Certainly, the company was not in a position to bring Puntland the international legal victories that its predecessor Hart had delivered, and it seems that the activities of SOMCAN contributed to instability and had a negative impact on Puntland’s international reputation.

In December 2005 Puntland signed a contract with Al Hababi Marine Services, led by the Saudi entrepreneur Qalid Mohamed Al-Hababi, granting the company
responsibility for guarding its coastal waters, as well as the right to issue fishing licenses and promote fishing in Puntland waters. The company claims to employ some 1,000 soldiers, mostly from the Bosasso area, as well as several Egyptian advisors. Al Hababi has three new coastal patrol vessels, several smaller craft, and is in the process of building nine radar equipped bases on the coast of Puntland. In April 2007, the Al Hababi supported coast guard went on the offensive against illegal fishing vessels, and during a 48-hour intensive patrolling period, 13 Yemeni and Egyptian ships were captured, the first notable success in the company’s effort to curtail illegal fishing.

However, the operations of private security companies in Puntland remain complex and controversial, and are inevitably embedded in local clan politics. Al Hababi employs a member of President Adde’s local sub-clan as a local representative, and works closely with the President. The ownership structure of the company remains hidden, sparking rumours that several members of the Puntland government are shareholders in the company. As such, the borders between the PSC and the Puntland authorities appear blurred, and the President has been accused by his own Minister of Fisheries of spending too much money on Al Hababi. The issue, in other words, has been interpreted locally within a clannish framework, and Al Hababi Marine Services is perceived as tied to the President’s clan, giving rise to accusations the President is giving the company a free rein in order to pursue personal clan interests (Garowe Online, 2007). While it is too early to judge the impact of Al Hababi’s impact on political stability and institution building, the company’s behaviour to date seems to indicate that it is likely to become embedded in local political struggles.

The history of PSCs in Puntland is dominated by the interactions between international networks and highly local politics. The British firm Hart Security had strong international networks, and employed legal advisors from the UK. In this sense, Hart is an example of a PSC acting to empower local governance structures by enabling them to tap into wider international resources well beyond the narrow field of physical security. However, the company’s distance from local elites was also its weakness, ultimately eroding its ability to operate in the complex and often conflictual milieu of Puntland politics. Hart’s two successors were by contrast closely affiliated with the governing elite in Puntland. At one level, this provided a more stable local basis for their activities. Yet changes in political alliances and elites automatically created problems for both SOMCAN and Al Hababi. The companies were perceived as part of local politics, and this damaged both their ability to act effectively locally, and their reputation as legitimate international actors in the effort to combat illegal fishing and piracy. All these companies recorded some, perhaps temporary, success in the prevention of the depletion of the fish stocks adjacent to north-eastern Somalia, but their successes and limitations reflect the complex relationships between private security actors and political authority in the entity.

**PSCs in Central Somalia**

The TFG of Somalia was established during the 2002-2005 peace process in Mgabhati/ Nairobi, a process led by the Government of Kenya under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In 2004 Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was elected as Transitional Federal President of Somalia. A 275 member TFG was formed, as well as the other Somalia Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs). Although being internationally recognised as the sovereign authority of the whole of
Somalia, the TFG was in a much weaker position than Puntland and in 2004 the
government did not control a single city in Somalia. Since the Ethiopian intervention
in Somalia in late 2006, however, the TFG has expanded its control, but it remains
totally dependent on Ethiopian support.\(^4\)

Given its administrative and political weakness, it is perhaps not surprising that the
TFG looked to the private sector to enhance its maritime security. Its original choice
of partner, however, was somewhat surprising. In 2005, an American company, Top
Cat Maritime, approached the government and offered to provide services to the
non-existent TFG coast guard. Despite defining itself as a security company, Top Cat
Maritime had little security experience. Indeed, the head of the company, Mr Peter
Casini, was a speedboat designer, and apart from supplying high power speedboats
to law enforcement departments in the United States, the company appears to have
little, if any, experience in the field of security provision. Nevertheless, Top Cat
actively lobbied the Somali President, the Prime Minister and Minister of Fisheries,
Hassan Abshir, as well as his deputy, Vice-Minister Abdulqadir Nur Harale in
pursuit of a contract (Interview, Harale, 2006). According to Mr Harale, the
government was approached by Mr Casini in late February 2005, who offered the
TFG a five year contract under which Top Cat would provide a number of speed
boats, four ex-Russian helicopters, and five bases, none of which were in areas
militarily controlled by the government.\(^5\) In terms of payment, the suggestion was
that Top Cat’s services would be financed through government collected fees from
fishing rights. Top Cat expected 60% of the collected fees in the first year of the
contract, 40 per cent the following year and thereafter declining to 10 per cent. The
TFG, however, had doubts about the viability of the company’s plan, especially
regarding the ability of the speedboats designed by Casini to survive the harsh
Somali seas. Hence, the government wanted to inspect Top Cat’s facilities in the
United States, a request that was refused by the company. As a result, negotiations
collapsed.

A few months later, Top Cat again approached the Minister of Fisheries regarding
the contract, this time claiming that the TFG would not have to allocate license fees to
the company. Instead, Top Cat claimed that major funds were to be provided by the
Government of the United States (Interview, Harale 2006). The Minister, Hassan
Abshir, subsequently convinced the Somali Cabinet that the deal with Top Cat was
a cheap way for the weak TFG to acquire the means to patrol Somali territorial
waters, neglecting to pursue the issue of the weak boat design further. Importantly,
however, Top Cat did not have the American support they claimed. A senior official
at the US Embassy in Nairobi confirms that it was approached by the company, but
claims the any financial assistance was refused (Interview, anonymous US Embassy
Official, 2006).

The contract, estimated to be worth US$50milllion, created much debate within the
Somali cabinet (Somaliland Times, 2005; BBC, 2005; Daily Nation, 2005). Several
newspapers in Kenya, the US and Somalia also claimed that Top Cat had a troubled
financial past and that its management had gone through a number of bankruptcies
while in charge of other firms (The Post and Courier, 2004; Somaliland Times, 2005;
Daily Nation, 2005). Indeed, Top Cat probably failed to appreciate the extent and
difficulty of the task they were supposed to undertake, and in May 2006, they
declared the contract invalid. The company failed to provide even a single training
facility in Somalia, and importantly, the establishment of several of the bases
suggested by Top Cat seems to have been almost impossible. For example, the
establishment of a base in Merka would at the time have been likely to lead to confrontation with one of the strongest warlords in Somalia, Yusuf Indaadde. Mogadishu was also beyond the control of the government, at the time containing some of Somalia’s strongest warlords, mostly hostile to the government, as well as equally hostile jihadist factions.

The case of Top Cat illustrates the diversity of companies seeking to exploit opportunities in weak states by casting themselves as ‘security’ firms. Top Cat clearly regarded Somalia as a lucrative market, where rules and regulations could be more easily set aside. But the company was not in any clear, recognisable sense a ‘security’ firm. It possessed little or no experience in providing maritime security, let alone in East Africa’s relatively lawless waters. It appears instead to have been a company ‘on the make’ in Somalia’s turbulent and fragmented political environment, one that sought to exploit a weak government and that showed little regard for, or understanding of, the political stability of Somalia.

Top Cat’s replacement was the Northbridge Service Group, a firm infamous for its dramatic public relations strategies, which included an offer to kidnap Liberian President Charles Taylor in 2003. Northbridge signed a US$77 million contract with the TFG, a sum which the TFG was supposed to raise from donors (Interview, Kovacic, 2008). However, Northbridge itself was also actively participating in the fundraising process, attempting to secure financial support from the United States, and later also from a Chinese oil company, but without success (Interview, anonymous Northbridge employee, 2006). Northbridge’s argument in seeking financial support for the contract was that their involvement would protect non-Somali powers against piracy attacks, as well as prevent terrorist groups from using Somali waters. Similarly, a series of development arguments were advanced, with Northbridge maintaining that they would prevent Somali fish stocks from being misused, and that stability in Somali waters would facilitate foreign investment in the country. The company’s plan was to train a force of 900 men as a rapid deployment force for the TFG. According to the company, 200 non-Somalis were ready by 2007, but they were never deployed in the country, nor did the company ever visit the country, instead basing itself in Kenya. Northbridge claimed that they wanted to assert full control over the territorial waters outside Somaliland and Puntland, a plan that could potentially have led to conflict between the weak TFG with its estimated 900 men force, and Puntland’s 3,200 men, as well as Somaliland’s 7,200 strong army.

Although contracts were signed, both Northbridge and Top Cat’s plans never made it beyond the drawing board. Both companies actively tried to raise funds from non-Somali sources, arguing that they could handle tasks that would benefit not only the new Somali government, but also non-Somali powers and the international community. But rather than attracting support from Western governments, the fact that the TFG and Puntland simultaneously hired different PSCs caused some international concern, as the two entities at times refused to acknowledge each other’s rights to natural resources (Hansen, 2006). As relatively ‘freelance’ or entrepreneurial companies lacking clear connections to state structures, neither Top Cat nor Northbridge seem to have been able to convince donor states of the merits of their proposals.

The rise of the Sharia courts of Mogadishu provided the TFG and Puntland with a common enemy, and led to a less conflictual relationship between the two authorities. The rise of the Sharia courts also created new opportunities for PSCs in
Somalia. Believing that the Sharia courts would draw the attention of United States, and that Somalia would become a new frontline in the so-called war on terror, many PSCs expected funding for activities in Somalia. Companies such as the American Select Armour and ATS Worldwide embarked on an active lobbying effort targeting the TFG, the United Nations and the United States, but failed in their efforts to attract funding. Northbridge also mounted a new funding offensive, according to Northbridge’s leader Robert W. Kovacic, sending weekly e-mails to the Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ms Jendayi Fraser, asking for funding, but receiving no replies (Interview, Kovacic, 2008). Given that the UN arms embargo of Somalia had been lifted in late 2006 in order to allow arms support for the TFG forces in their battle against the Sharia courts, the embargo could not have been the reason for the US’s refusal to support Northbridge, as well as the other companies pressing for contracts during the late autumn of 2006 and the winter of 2007.

The continuing failure to gain external state support seems to indicate the reluctance of donor states to fund PSC activities along these lines. The United States is of course no stranger to the use of private security companies in Africa, and has also employed one of its main contractors, DynCorp International in Somalia (see Aning, Jaye & Atuobi, this issue & McFate, this issue). The differences between DynCorp and Northbridge, however, are numerous and important to an understanding of the relationship between states and private security companies. A main difference lies in the task DynCorp was hired to perform. DynCorp was tasked to aid the African Union peacekeepers in Mogadishu, performing logistical tasks such as providing supplies to the forces. In other words, the company was to support an internationally sanctioned operation, as opposed to the more ad hoc contract between the TFG and Northbridge. The Mogadishu peacekeeping mission became operational in March 2007, initially consisting of a Ugandan contingent of around 1,600 soldiers, and later also including a Burundian contingent. Although supposed to be neutral, the AU forces provided de facto support to the TFG as the internationally recognised government, and also to their main allies, the Ethiopian forces based in Mogadishu. The Ugandan forces established perimeter defences around the Mogadishu seaport, Mogadishu airport and the presidential palace in the city, while simultaneously allowing the TFG and its institutions to administer these key strategic areas, which had been the target of frequent rebel attacks. Restricted frequencies of patrols mean that the local population rarely sees the AU forces, and as such the AU operation is in many ways largely irrelevant for local security. It is, however, protecting key installations used by the TFG; a government that is hostile to the more extreme Islamist groups in Somalia, which the United States in turn suspects of protecting Al-Qaeda members (State Department, 2006). As such, there is a clear link between the AU mission, the employment of DynCorp and US national interest in the Horn of Africa.

Another notable difference between Northbridge and DynCorp is the latter’s close relationship with the American state (see McFate, this issue). The State Department has previously hired DynCorp to provide support and training to military forces in more than 11 countries, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Haiti, and Israel-Palestine. In 2004, DynCorp signed an umbrella contract with the State Department for ‘peacekeeping, capacity enhancement and surveillance efforts’ in Africa, worth an estimated US$20-$100million, depending on the number of assignments (Thomlinson, 2007). DynCorp’s Somalia operation was part of this umbrella contract, and a significant percentage of the American support for the AU mission was channelled through the company.7 DynCorp was also a veteran in Somalia,
having provided logistic support for the ill fated UN peacekeeping mission in Somalia (1992-1995) of ‘Black Hawk Down’ fame. In this setting, DynCorp emerges as key component of contemporary US Africa policy in a way that other companies that sought contracts in Somalia have not.

PSCs in Somaliland

Somaliland offers yet a different illustration of the multiple involvements of private security companies in Somalia. Here, the Norwegian Nordic Crisis Management (NCM) is funded entirely by development assistance from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), a directorate under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As such, it is in many ways a unique case, and so far the only private security operation in Somalia to be financed solely from development aid. Somaliland, which strives for independence, has a functioning democratic system, and has held three successful democratic elections. It also has a functioning and well structured army, and, compared to many of the recognised states at the Horn of Africa, a relatively free press. In short, Somaliland is in many ways the strongest political entity within the internationally recognised borders of Somalia.

Nordic Crisis Management describes itself as specialising in ‘security and contingency planning’, and has considerable experience in maritime security and security certification processes, aiding the security certification of more than 300 ports in Norway alone (see www.nordic-crisis.no). As such, the company differs from the PCSs discussed above, in that it provides security planning and crisis management as opposed to active security personnel. NCM was hired by Somaliland in July 2006, and the contract is scheduled to continue until 2010. The main aim of the project is to develop a set of security systems for Berbera port and ensure that the port’s security meets the maritime standards set by the UN and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), thereby reducing the insurance costs for shipping companies whose vessels dock in Berbera port and increasing the number of ships using the port. Nordic Crisis Management was also asked by the Somaliland government to evaluate the area’s future coast guard requirements, including the production of a feasibility and capacity study regarding the future role and equipment needs of the coastguard. As part of the NORAD funded project, the company also trained the harbour’s security forces and Somaliland’s local police forces (Interview, Francke, 2007).

The activities of Nordic Crisis Management are relatively limited compared to the activities of the other PSCs working in Somalia, and the contract involves only four to five advisors (www.nordic-crisis.no). The contract is nevertheless significant, given Berbera port’s vital strategic and economic importance for the region. The port is one of the few large ports serving Ethiopia, and is also of clear strategic importance for the country. Currently, much of the food aid entering land-locked Ethiopia transits through Berbera, and port safety thus has a clear humanitarian dimension. NCM’s involvement could also to have positive economic consequences for Somaliland: In 2006, a large container ship worth US$75 million would normally pay about 0.02 per cent of its worth, or $15,000, for an annual insurance policy, which would cover the vessel for unlimited visits to the world’s safe ports. However, the ship would have to pay the same amount for every single visit made to a port on the ‘enhanced risks’ list, on which Berbera port featured. As a result, shipping companies such as Maersk and Pacific International Line, which visited the port on average 340 times a year, would incur substantial extra costs. More importantly, the
added security expenses would deter other ships from berthing in the port, thus hindering both Somaliland and Ethiopian trade (Norpol, 2006). The perceived economic benefits resulting from improved port security was the motivation for Norway's support of the project, which is seen as enhancing local industrial development and livestock export (Interviews, anonymous NORAD source, 2008). In addition, it was also argued that the project would help prevent piracy, even though piracy is a relatively small problem along the coast of Somaliland.9

The NORAD funded project potentially has significant and positive implications for industrial and trade development in both Ethiopia and in Somaliland. However, it also has military and political implications, in that one part of the project includes examining the future needs of the Somaliland coast guard, a paramilitary organisation consisting of approximately 50 men and nine cabin cruiser-sized boats located at Berbera and three other bases. Politically, it is important to note that through its contract, the NCM provides assistance to a political and administrative structure that most Somalis, as well as all states in the world, have refused to recognise as an independent, sovereign state. Talk of Somaliland independence generally raises anger amongst other Somalis. Norway’s support for Somaliland’s state-like structures can nevertheless be seen as, and de facto is, support for state building in Somaliland, and the project can be seen to indirectly strengthen Somaliland’s claim to statehood. A reduction in the price paid by ship owners to the insurance companies might make Berbera port more significant, perhaps even a rival to the neighboring Djibouti port, and such increased importance might in turn give Somaliland stronger arguments when negotiating for international recognition.

The potential complications arising from the legal status of Somaliland were discussed at the start of the project, and at one point, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) was considered a possible candidate. Both Norway and the company also imposed conditions on the contract so as to avoid provoking foreign reactions, including restricting the operational area of the coast guard to within 12 nautical miles from the coast (Interview, Francke, 2007). However, it seems likely that the company, as well as NORAD, paid little attention to the potential problems the Somaliland coast guard might face when patrolling in the contested border areas with Puntland, where the two entities have overlapping territorial claims. Moreover, Norway is, indirectly through its support of NCM dealing with a non-recognised entity as if it were an independent state. The latter dilemma has to date been dealt with by silence and discretion by Norway and Somaliland, and a low profile has ensured that neither the Somali, nor Somaliland, nor the Norwegian press have gained interest in the project. Nordic Crisis Management and Somaliland have, however, encountered serious problems from the maritime insurance industry which has refused to treat Somaliland independently of the rest of Somalia, and has maintained that ships docking in Berbera should pay the same price as ships docking in Mogadishu, despite Berbera’s internationally recognised and standardised port security system.

Conclusions

This article has demonstrated the difficulty of generalising about the involvement and effects of private security companies in Somalia. While the area is perceived as a lucrative market for private security companies, it is also a difficult and complex operating environment and the record of PSCs is at best mixed in terms of operational success. While the three political entities can be described as ‘weak’
states, no straight-forward conclusion can be made to the effect that the use of private security further undermines public authority and capacity. This may be the case in some instances, but this analysis also illustrates that PSCs can assist aspiring state structures in gaining some de jure aspects of sovereignty. This was most notably the case in Puntland, where Hart Security ensured that the Puntland coast guard was treated as a party in a legally binding arbitration in the United Kingdom, rather than as mere pirates. Similarly, the NORAD financed project to upgrade the security of Berbera port can be said to assist state and institution building in a non-recognised territory.

Overall, it is too early to ascertain the long term effects of the use of private security companies in the three cases. It is clear that the type and professionalism of PSCs operating in Somalia runs the full gamut from large, well-connected companies like DynCorp to small, ‘cowboy’ outfits like Top Cat, which is barely a private security company by any regular definition. There are also significant differences between more risk and consultancy based companies like Nordic Crisis Management and companies like Northbridge or SOMCAN. While some of these companies can facilitate knowledge transfers and access to international expertise, others might be more exclusively concerned with their profit, or lack the expertise and experience to make any positive impact on the security situation. In such cases, the use of private security companies can be counter-productive, further increasing political rivalry and instability. The best example here is probably SOMCAN, which due to its strong local networks came to be seen as a part of local political struggles. Accordingly, it lost both local and international legitimacy as a neutral actor seeking to prevent illegal fishing and piracy.

The case of Somalia thus shows the importance of both local political structures (whether state or ‘quasi-state’) and global connections in determining the impact of private security firms. Somalia’s fluid and complex structures of local authorities, along with their limited capacities, provided both market opportunities and obstacles for private actors. At the same time, the activities and impact of private security companies were often influenced by the extent of their global connections; Hart and NCM, for example, were able to mobilise extensive foreign financial and legal support, which may in turn enhance local capacities and institutions. It is, however, too early to draw firm conclusions about the long-term impact of private security on Somalia’s fragile authorities. Perhaps at this stage the only certainty is that private security will continue to play a significant role in the region.

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Endnotes

1. ‘Subsistence piracy’ is piracy for survival rather than profit. Subsistence pirates do not invest heavily in equipment, and are generally poor.

2. In 2003 they even went so far as selling fishing rights to a Korean firm in return for uniforms to the Puntland forces (Peleman, Johns, Tambi & Sandu 2003:17).

3. Today SOMCAN operates out of the Emirates and sells oil and lubricates.
4. At the time, TFG failed even to control its capital, Baidoa, which was partly controlled by the local Rahanwhein militia.

5. The bases were supposed to be located in Bosasso, Haifun, Mogadishu, Merka, and Kismayo.

6. In early May 2003 Northbridge also controversially deployed two strike teams against Nigerian oil workers that had taken hostages during a strike. The workers resumed negotiations when notified about Northbridge’s presence. The American head of Northbridge, Sadi DePofi, was arrested in 2004 for tax evasion.

7. The initial financial support for the AU mission was $14 million, of which $10 was earmarked for DynCorp. The figures may subsequently have changed.

8. Nordic Crisis Management also plans to expand into airport security, improving the security at Hargeisa airport, but has so far failed to secure funding from NORAD.

9. Pirate groups in Sanaag, a region contested by both Puntland and Somaliland, have been active along the coast of Yemen and have held hostages. However, pirate activities in Somaliland are minimal compared with southern pirate groups. In Puntland there were 17 incidents of piracy in the period from January to April 2008, while Somaliland registered two (UNOSAT, 2008).

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Security for All? Politics, Economy & the Growth of Private Security in Swaziland

Hamilton Sipho Simelane

Like many other African countries, Swaziland has in recent years experienced a rapid growth of various private security initiatives. In urban areas, security privatisation manifests itself in the form of a mushrooming of formal private security companies, while in rural areas, where the majority of people live, informal Community Police groups operating outside the control and recognition of the public police provide protection against crime. This article argues that the growth of private security initiatives in Swaziland cannot be understood only with reference to the ‘weak’ African state, but must also be analysed in the context of the country’s unequal political economy and the utilisation of public security forces for regime security.

Despite relative political stability and low levels of crime, Swaziland has experienced a rapid expansion of the private security sector. While there are no private military companies in the country, commercial private security companies have mushroomed in urban areas as well as in rural settings dominated by agro-industrial enterprises. In rural areas where cattle and small-scale farming form the central part of the local economy, more informal types of non-state security have emerged to provide for everyday protection. This article argues that the emergence of these various private security actors has to be understood in the context of Swaziland’s unequal political economy, as well as the monarchy’s increasing preoccupation with regime security. The state’s abdication of its responsibility to protect citizens, alongside growing corruption and inefficiency among police, have resulted in different responses from urban and rural communities, reflecting in large part their different access to wealth and resources as well as their different security needs. In urban areas, numerous private security companies (PSCs) now serve the relatively wealthy sections of the population, while people in the rural areas have formed so-called Community Police groups consisting of unpaid volunteers.

To date, the growth of private security in Swaziland has received very little attention in scholarly debates, and this article seeks to integrate the country’s experience into the growing body of knowledge about security privatisation. I argue that while existing literature can throw some light on the situation in Swaziland, it is nevertheless crucial to remain attuned to the particularities of the country’s economic, social and political situation. As such, the article proceeds in three parts. First, I provide an analysis of the political economy of private security in Swaziland, showing how the growth of private security actors is intimately connected to the economic disparities that have accompanied economic growth in the country. Second, the article investigates the growth and impact of PSCs in urban areas, showing both its historical roots in the colonial period as well as its contemporary
implications for issues of equality and democratic oversight. Third, I discuss the rural response to the lack of state security, showing how widespread perceptions of corruption and inefficiency in the public police led rural populations to form community security initiatives to combat cattle theft. Crucially, however, the responses of both the urban and rural populations are linked to the lack of adequate state protection, and the article concludes that the growth of private security in Swaziland has a direct relation to the state’s abdication of its duty to provide security to its citizens.

The Political Economy of Private Security in Swaziland

The development of the private security sector is the result of numerous and diverse economic and political factors, and consequently, different scholars have juggled with the reasons behind the emergence of private security companies in different parts of the world. Some have observed that the development of the private security sector has been influenced by a shift in international thinking and practice on security (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2007). Similarly, the marketisation of the public sphere represented by the ‘privatisation revolution’ has played a crucial role in the worldwide growth of the private security sector (O’Brien, 1998). This has gone hand in hand with the principle of globalisation in which it is believed that privatisation can maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of states through comparative advantage and competition, symbolising a belief in the superiority of the marketplace over government in the provision of services. The main result has been a surge in outsourcing of service provision by the state, such that services that were traditionally provided by the state are now increasingly performed by private companies. Security provision has not been immune to these processes, and over the last few decades, private actors have come to occupy an increasingly central role as providers of security services.

While highly relevant to the growth of private security in Swaziland, such general explanations need to be complemented by a more detailed analysis of the specificity of the country’s economic and political history. In the case of Swaziland, several factors help explain the growth of PSCs, all revolving around economic and political issues. In both the colonial and post-colonial periods, security was interpreted through the economic and political interests of those in power and the emergence of private security actors needs to be understood in the context of the country’s unequal political economy.

The Swazi economy experienced a fundamental transformation after the Second World War. This was a product of intensive capitalisation of the Swazi economy through British and South African capital (Booth, 1983; Simelane, 2004), which resulted in the establishment of numerous industries, mainly in the areas of mining and agro-industries (Crush, 1979). This development continued into the post-colonial period as more and more industries were developed in different parts of the country. At independence in 1968, the management of the growing Swazi economy was taken over by the indigenous leadership which was a curious mixture of traditionalists and the middle class under the leadership of the monarchy (Macmillan, 1983). In terms of security, however, their approach was not all that different from their colonial predecessors. Where for the colonial administration security was primarily about ensuring the survival of colonial rule, for the new monarchy it was about protecting their own economic interests, as well as those of their supporting middle class. Thus increasingly, security came to be confined to the
protection of the economic interests of a relatively small elite. The Swazi monarchy owned several economic enterprises, while the emerging middle class also owned businesses and they were the highest accumulators through the state machinery (Simelane, 2006). In this way, policing and security in Swaziland, like in many other African countries, was from the very beginning of independence focused on regime survival rather than the protection of citizens. As the growth of the economy gave rise to social classes demanding political and economic inclusion, the preoccupation with regime security intensified.

These developments were further reinforced by the increasing opposition to monarchical rule, particularly in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As democratisation spread across the African continent, the Swazi monarchy with its tinkhundla system of conservative courts and traditional advisors looked increasingly anachronistic and faced numerous internal and external challenges to its survival. Internally, different groups including students and trade unions were opposing monarchical rule which was deemed to be too dictatorial, and inspired by democratic struggles in neighbouring South Africa, opposition movements such as the People’s United Democratic Movement (Pudemo) and the Swaziland Democratic Alliance posed further challenges to the traditional form of rule. Externally, the Southern African region was turning to democratisation and endorsing free and fair multi-party elections as the only form of legitimate rule (Daniel & Vilane, 1986). To the monarchy and its traditionalist supporters, such forces of transformation appeared as threats to their security and resulted in an intensification of the already strong preoccupation with regime security. What followed in this period was a systematic shifting of national resources away from the security needs of citizens and towards the security needs of the regime. With this shift, urban areas, especially higher class and middle class residential areas began to rely on private security companies, while rural areas and lower class urban residential areas were forced to dig deep into their limited resources to protect themselves and their property.

In addition to the monarchy’s political preoccupations with its own survival, the growth of the private security sector in Swaziland derives its character from the economic disparities that have accompanied the growth of the Swazi economy. Only a decade after independence, Fransman (1978) observed that economic growth had not benefited the majority of citizens, but had significantly contributed to the affluence of the royal family and the middle class. Pervasive inequalities have continued, and economic disparities have reached staggering levels as poverty has become more entrenched while the rich have become richer (Times of Swaziland, 23 September, 2005). It is estimated that about 69 per cent of the Swazi population live below the poverty line, and that 400,000 (about 40 per cent) Swazis depend on food handouts. It has also been shown that 20 per cent of Swazis control about 54 per cent of the country’s wealth, while the poor control only 4.3 per cent (Times of Swaziland, 3 July 2007). Swaziland is therefore a country of huge economic disparities, where the majority of citizens live in poverty and a small section of the population enjoy a life of luxury. Surprisingly, in spite of these limitations Swaziland has not be subjected to the structural adjustment programmes implemented in most African countries.

In this setting of extreme inequality, security has come to mean the protection of the economic interests of the rich and the development of the private security sector is a strategy used to achieve this goal. The state has chosen to focus its resources on regime security, rather than on economic inclusion and the redistribution of wealth.
The poor majority do not benefit from the services of private security companies and thus remain vulnerable to many security threats. In other words, the private security companies have become synonymous with the rich members of society, as these companies are driven by the demands of the rich and have very little relevance to the economic interests and security needs of the poor, whether in urban or rural areas.

Yet another factor accounting for the growth of private security is the rise – and fear – of crime. Like in most countries, the development of the private security sector in Swaziland has a lot to do with the desire by individuals to ensure the safety of themselves, and their families and property. While reliable statistics are hard to obtain, there is a strong sense that crime has escalated in recent years. As expressed by one businessman,

*I have lost thousands of Emalangeni since I arrived here. There have been break-ins in both of my shops. I have experienced two break-ins at Sanibonani and the other one occurred at the main shop. What worries me is that the thugs are granted bail far below the value of the items stolen* (Times of Swaziland, 27 January 2007).

Crime is shaped by the social, economic, and political context of a country, and Swaziland provides a conducive environment for the development of crime as the majority of citizens live in abject poverty, while witnessing the affluence of the few on a daily basis. The country has an unemployment rate of about 29 per cent, and a leadership that is not committed to the principles of good governance and poverty mitigation. To a large extent, crime in Swaziland has become a weapon of the poor to implement a more equitable distribution of wealth. The response of the rich has been heavy reliance on private security companies, thus further reinforcing the sense of social segregation between the rich and the poor.

The influx of small arms and the easy access to unlicensed firearms is another key factor contributing to the rise of crime. In Swaziland, the availability of firearms is often associated with and blamed on the influx of Mozambican refugees who escaped the ravages of the country’s long civil war. Evidence also indicates that a large number of Swazis receive firearms from South Africa through illegal smuggling and trade. The increase in crime and availability of small arms have in turn expanded the market for private security companies, as individuals and companies feel compelled to find means to protect their homes, businesses, and livelihoods. Both local and foreign enterprises hire PSCs to protect their operations and premises, as are the foreign missions and development organisations present in Swaziland. The rise in crime – as well as the fear of crime – is accordingly a key reason for the expansion of Swaziland’s expanding market for private security services.

Holmqvist has observed that the growth of the private security sector in Africa is ‘symptomatic of state weakness and the failure of the state to provide physical security for its citizens through the establishment of functioning law-and-order institutions’ (2005:11). To a certain extent this is highly pertinent for Swaziland, which since independence in 1968 has been characterised by certain administrative weaknesses which rendered the state unable to fulfil its obligation to act as a protective shield for citizens and to deal with the security concerns of both rural and urban areas. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind the extent to which significant resources have been devoted to regime protection rather than the protection of citizens. A focus merely on state weakness is thus not sufficient to capture the dynamics of the relationship between the state and the emergence of
private security actors. For example, Swaziland has a relatively high police to population ratio; with approximately 5,061 public police to a population of 1 million it has a ratio of 1:200 as compared to the UN recommendation of 1:450. The police, however, have a reputation for inefficiency and corruption and are generally distrusted by the public. This sense of abandonment and distrust is expressed with striking clarity by Gawula Sihlongonyane, a community member of Matimatima:

Swaziland has been independent for close to forty years, but she is continuing to fail to look after the well being of the majority of its citizens. The state has failed to come up with appropriate policies to protect the rural dwellers physically and economically. Throughout our borders with Mozambique and South Africa Swazi citizens continue to be vulnerable to different threats that undermine their strategies for survival. The Swazi Government is aware of these problems but nothing has been done. At the same time if you look at the protection given to government officials and members of the royal family you would think the country is under good protection. I now believe that the police force and the military were not meant to protect citizens but those who are in power (Interview, 29 January 2008).

The Growth of Private Security Companies in Swazi Urban Areas

The development of the private security sector in urban Swaziland has its genesis in the colonial period from 1902-1968, and especially in the period after the Second World War until independence. However, most of the growth took place after 1968, and while there were elements of private security in the colonial period, there were no private security companies. The colonial state was organised along more militaristic lines and monopolised the means of coercion. The Royal Swaziland Police (RSP) was the only instrument of law and order, occasionally assisted by the British colonial army in times of intense conflicts. The concept of security under colonialism was defined in terms of the continuation of colonial rule and accordingly focused centrally on the prevention of revolts and opposition by the indigenous population. Thus, while the military and political power of the colonial state was considerable, the protection of the indigenous population was not considered a priority. Instead, the economic and political priorities of the colonial administration defined and shaped the texture of security.

There is, however, evidence to indicate that even in the colonial period individual white settlers and some colonial officials hired guards for their homes and economic establishments, even though it is difficult to reconstruct the extent of this practice. Oral accounts produce different views on why white settlers hired private guards. Jonathan Smith, a white Swazi whose parents came to Swaziland in 1931, said:

During the colonial period in this country white people feared that the indigenous population could perpetrate criminal acts against them. In more general terms crime was one of the most feared threats whether real or perceived. It was felt that it was much safer to hire a private guard for your home during the day and also during the night. The guards could raise an alarm in case of an attack. As a result, most settler houses had guards recruited by individual white home owners. Most whites must have copied this practice from colonial officials whose houses were always under guard. The argument was that the indigenous population was prone to criminal actions (Interview, 7 January 2007).

Although it is difficult to determine the level of crime during the colonial period, evidence suggests that the genesis of the private security sector in this period was motivated by fear of property loss or physical violence. Private security was from the
very beginning a means of protecting the economic interests of white settlers and colonial officials, and its effect on the colonised population was primarily one of exclusion and segregation. In this way, private security can be seen to have contributed to the maintenance of colonial rule, albeit by non-coercive means and through the employment of local guards.

Alternatively, the hiring of guards by white settlers can be seen as related to colonial determinants of status. According to this view, the hiring of guards was more of a social issue than a security issue. Alex Forbes, a white Swazi whose grandparents arrived in Swaziland in the 1870s expresses this:

> We should always be aware that colonial society was very complex. This is the case because it contained dynamics that crafted relations between the colonised and the settlers, and also between the settlers themselves. Some things were not done for financial gain or any other purpose, but for status. The manner in which colonial society was organised, I doubt if whites seriously needed security guards in their homes. Although Swaziland was somehow different from South Africa, it was still extremely difficult to find indigenous Swazis moving up and down white occupied areas. Whites derived prestige and status from hiring security guards. It gave them pleasure and satisfaction to have their home gates opened and closed by hired guards. To a large number of them it bequeathed a better social status. This sense of self-importance was even more gratifying as they called their guards ‘boys’ (Interview, 8 January 2007).

Seen from this perspective, private security was yet another marker of difference in colonial society, a means of distinguishing between the coloniser from the colonised. Taken together these two quotations also draw attention to the subjective nature of security and insecurity; what matters in the consideration of any security decision is not merely the actual level of crime and insecurity but the perceptions, fears and sensibilities of groups and individuals. In the case of colonial settlers, the utilisation of private security guards reflected as much a fear of the ‘native’ as ‘other’ as any objective knowledge of criminal behaviour or crime statistics. It also reflected a desire and need to mark difference in the colonial relationship.

While guards employed by white settlers and colonial officials can be seen as the founding blocks of the private security sector in Swaziland, the sector underwent significant changes following independence in 1968. The post-independence period was marked by numerous social, economic and political transformations, which in turn affected private security provision. Most noticeably, in the first two decades there was a gradual transition from the more informal hiring of individual guards towards the formation of private security companies, providing formal employment for large numbers of guards. There were several reasons for this transition, but they were clearly linked to the end of colonial rule and its accompanying hierarchies. As Alan Fawcett, the owner and director of Swaziland Security Services, explains:

> The coming of independence came with numerous challenges for the employers. While in the colonial period settler employers had a latitude of having their way as far as labour issues were concerned, in the post-colonial period workers received a lot of sympathy from officials and labour laws changed. Security guards were challenging their employers on wages and individual employers were called upon to be conversant with the labour laws of the country. Faced with numerous disputes and having to spend a lot of time attending to these disputes and being called to the labour department created a lot of discomfort for most employers. I am not sure what happened exactly, but it appears that individual employers were ready to give
this responsibility to companies. In this way they were assured that they would no longer worry with all the problems associated with recruiting and attending to the wage disputes by security guards (Interview, 19 January 2007).

The move towards formal PSCs clearly has numerous reasons, which need not detain us here, suffice to say that they are all linked in various ways to the end of colonial rule, the emergence of a more formal and complex political economy, as well as the unequal economic growth discussed above. The first private security company in the country was Swaziland Security Services (SSS), established in about 1970 by Teffy Price, an Irishman who had settled in the country in the 1940s. In 1974, Price sold the company to Allan Fawcett who still runs it today. The second oldest security company is Guard Alert, established in 1981 to provide professional security services to commercial, industrial and residential premises throughout the country. In 1985 the company developed cash-in-transit services, as well as facilities for the transportation of other valuables under armed escort. From there the number of private security companies grew and presently, there are more than fifty active PSCs employing at least 2,500 people. The industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the country. The companies are found mainly in the towns and cities, as well as in rural areas where there are commercial agricultural estates. Today, many leading international companies as well as local businesses depend on PSCs for the security of their investments, premises and employees. As such, PSCs have become a key part of the Swazi economy.

The domestic private security industry in Swaziland is dominated almost completely by the guarding sector. Just as has been the case in other parts of the world (Schreier & Caparini, 2005), these companies are now protecting public and private property in a widening variety of locations, including high-risk areas such as power plants, banks, embassies and airports. Presently, security guards are not empowered by law to carry guns. Instead, they carry knob-sticks and batons irrespective of the environment of their line of duty. This has continued despite the fact that criminals are frequently armed and all too frequently use them against security guards. As observed by the owner of a retail shop in Nhlangano:

_Some of the crimes that have been occurring in this area are shocking. Some of the criminals come brandishing heavy arms and the security guards have to face them with sjamboks and knobkierries. The lives of the security personnel are placed at serious risk. At times the criminals assault and bungle them into the corner before they continue to loot our businesses. This is serious_ (The Swazi Observer, 2 January, 2007).

Such stories of physical violence against security guards abound. For instance, in November 2004 two private security guards were shot at by criminals who intercepted a car transporting money to the bank (The Swazi Observer, 10 November, 2004). Similar cases occur several times a year, leading the business community to call upon the Swaziland Government to allow security personnel to carry loaded firearms. However, if this were to be allowed it would require strong regulation and a mechanism for ensuring that the firearms do not end up in wrong the hands.

Presently, this is an unlikely scenario, as the private security sector in Swaziland, as in many other parts of Africa, is almost entirely unregulated (see Abrahamsen & Williams, 2004; 2005a and b; Wairagu, Kamenju & Shingo, 2004). Anybody can start a private security company in Swaziland. In the words of Mr. Fawcett, the owner-director of Swaziland Security Services, ‘there has never been any guidelines on the formation of private security firms. All you need to do is to register your company
with the Deeds Office and you are in business’ (Interview, 19 January 2007). Presently, there is no regulation or policy framework relating to the legal and procedural operations of PSCs, and the absence of a regulatory framework puts the operations of these companies beyond government scrutiny. As a result, there is no provision for evaluating their service delivery, no standardisation of the quality of service, nor any oversight of their operations. In short, PSCs virtually do as they please, only circumscribed by the general laws of the country. Given their role as protectors of life and assets, this is a potentially worrisome state of affairs, as an unregulated security sector risks becoming a contributor to insecurity rather than security. While there is a strong case for regulation, concerns have been expressed elsewhere that a move for tighter regulation could lead to division within the sector (see Abrahamsen & Williams, 2005b).

Recruitment and training is another issue of concern in the private security sector. Usually, the recruitment of guards is through adverts in the daily newspapers. The recruits are from all segments of the Swazi population, but the majority are between the ages of twenty and forty. The guards are not required to satisfy any level of education upon recruitment, except that they should be able to read and write English. Some owners of PSCs actively opposed the employment of more educated security guards. In the words of Mr. Fawcett: ‘My experience has shown over the years that there is no need for having educated guards. The less educated the better’ (Interview, 19 January 2007). At the moment, there is no clear policy regarding the training of security guards. Whatever training guards receive is on the job, but in general this does not amount to much. A few companies request members of the Royal Swaziland Police to train their staff on certain issues, although such training is not accredited. Other companies have employed retired police officers to be head supervisors and thus provide training through supervision. Recently a suggestion was made that the South African Police Service should provide a short course on crime scene management for local PSCs, following a realisation that physical evidence at crime scenes plays a crucial role in securing the conviction of perpetrators in a court of law. The fact remains, however, that there are no standards for the minimum level of training required by a guard, nor any legal obligation for PSCs to train guards prior to their deployment.

The relationship between the private security companies and the Royal Swaziland Police is characterised by relatively close collaboration, despite the fact that operational areas of interaction are limited. In general, PSCs hand over all evidence and apprehended suspects to the RSP, who in turn integrate the cases into the national justice process. In this sense, the private security companies act as an extension of the public police, but with no powers of interrogation or prosecution. To a significant extent, it could be argued that the growth of PSCs has allowed the state to neglect its social responsibility of providing security to all. Such a development is by no means unique to Swaziland and has been observed in other parts of the world (see Musah, 2002; Sandoz, 1999). Most importantly, research has shown that the growth of the sector ‘alters the capacities of the state’ (Leander, 2004:6). The growth of private security has also allowed the Swazi leadership to divert resources from public security towards regime security and the safeguarding of the privileged classes in society. This has led to an uneven or biased distribution of security, where those who can afford to buy the services of a PSC are rewarded with a measure of security, whereas large sections of the population are left with the inadequate and inefficient protection of the public police. These sections of the population have little option but to devise their own security solutions, and below I examine such non-state policing initiatives in the rural areas of Swaziland.
Non-state Policing in Rural Swaziland

Already at independence, rural dwellers made up more than 70 per cent of the Swazi population (Fair, Murdoch & Jones, 1969). The main response of rural people to the failure of national security institutions has been to form Community Police (CP), that is, independent community-based security agencies that operate outside the context of the Royal Swaziland Police (RSP). The origins of non-state policing can be traced to 1996 when the community of Lamgabhi at Dlangeni formed the first group of Community Police, and from there, the process spread to include all the rural areas of the country. The formation of CP groups began as a protest against the failure of the state to protect rural communities, particularly the inability of the state police to deal with crime that was undermining attempts by rural dwellers to improve their household economies. The escalation of property crime, and especially cattle rustling, was a key problem, and was threatening to undermine the economies of rural communities (Simelane, 2005). The problem of cross-border cattle rustling was particularly severe along the borders in the southern parts of the country, where cattle were driven by thieves into South Africa. Very few cattle are recovered, and as a result many families in the region are now without cattle and their members have been forced into labour migration in search of jobs to support their families.

Loss of cattle is a fundamental issue among rural dwellers in Swaziland because cattle are the basis for their economic survival. In rural Swaziland cattle bestow economic security, prestige and status. As Low, Kemp and Doran (1980:226) have pointed out, ‘cattle are a store of wealth or savings account from which withdrawals are made only for special social or ceremonial occasions or for emergency needs such as payments for education.’ The central position of cattle compelled residents to formulate strategies to protect themselves against cross-border rustlers. The testimonies of rural dwellers indicate the extent to which cattle rustling undermines their livelihoods. In the words of Ntombi Zwane, a victim of cross-border cattle rustling:

My husband was the bread winner in the family but when he died eleven years ago we did not face too many problems because we had cattle to sell in times of need. Our fortunes dramatically changed when thieves came and stole the whole heard of cattle and it became extremely difficult for me to support our seven children. It became impossible for me to pay for their schooling and eventually they were forced to drop out of school (Interview, 26 January 2008).

A similar sentiment is expressed by Nozipho Hlongwa, a community member of Shiselweni in the southern part of the country:

I am not sure what is happening in the urban areas but in our rural area the state provides no security for the protection of our property. The lack of security has made it very difficult for people to redeem themselves from poverty, in fact most of us are becoming more poor. Our cattle are taken by cattle rustlers from South Africa and we lose hundreds of them each year. These are cattle that always play a crucial role in alleviating poverty at household level. Without them we cannot educate children and we cannot provide for the general needs of our families (Interview, 17 December 2006).

The Royal Swaziland Police (RSP) has failed to deal with the problem of cattle rustling. Each time a case of cattle rustling is reported to the RSP no positive results are realised, and the police have continued with their traditional methods of policing even though it is clear that policing strategies that worked in the past are
not always effective today. For instance, the RSP continue with random patrolling, despite the very limited impact of this strategy. And while the police are caught in a state of inertia, rural communities continue to lose their cattle and their livelihoods. Consequently, the residents of the different rural areas became increasingly impatient with the inefficiency and bureaucracy of state security, including both the RSP and Umbutfo Swaziland Defense Force (USDF) (Khumalo, 2004). Commenting on the failure of the state to provide security Hleziphi Shongwe, a member of Ndubazi Community Police said:

_When we are faced with the problem of cattle rustling across the border to South Africa, it stands to reason that the state should protect our property. However, the Swazi state has been a disappointment on this issue and other issues of crime. The state has even failed to engage border patrols using the armed forces to curb the loss of property along the southern border with South Africa. The residents of the area are left to the mercy of South African cattle smugglers and their Swazi collaborators (Interview, 13 December 2006)._

The situation is made worse by community beliefs that state security institutions are corrupt. While in some countries the growth of the private security sector appears to have been linked to the downsizing of the police force, in Swaziland the growth of the sector has to be understood in the context of increased corruption within state security institutions. Citizens feel the police are corrupt and therefore that they cannot be trusted as providers of security. As a result, many prefer not to report cases of cattle loss to state police. Allegations of corruption have become widespread, both among the general public and the business community. The sense that the police can no longer be trusted is clearly expressed by Vusumuzi Ndlela, the chairman of Matimatima Community Police:

_The issue of crime in Swaziland has become a very complicated one and it has become big business in which our police officers fully participate. Today you stand a good chance of recovering your property if you do not report to the Royal Swaziland Police but to the Community Police. We believe that this is because when the police conduct the investigation they also inform the criminals about what is happening and the criminals are always ahead of the justice system (Interview, 15 December 2006)._

The most vocal expressions of such allegations have come from rural communities. In discussing issues of crime prevention and the role of the RSP, Jabulani Ntuli, a community member of Gege in south-east Swaziland said: ‘We soon became disappointed because the police were failing to come up with positive results. It became a waste of time and money to report crime matters to the police because nothing would come out of such reporting’ (Interview, 13 December 2006). The general perception is that members of the RSP are too involved in corrupt acts to be trusted in the prevention of crime and provision of security, and the continuation of cattle rustling has made many rural dwellers conclude that public security institutions have failed.

The Community Police are now present in all the rural areas in Swaziland and are entrusted with the security of their communities. All members are volunteers who are not paid for their services. The communities provide them with torches and whistles and they are always on patrol during the night and alert to happenings in the community during the day. Although no reliable and accurate information exists, anecdotal evidence indicates that the system of CP has had a huge impact on reducing crime in the rural areas. Large parts of the southern parts of the country have reported a significant reduction in cross-border cattle rustling. In this region,
the CP have cemented relations with their South African counterparts to curb cross-border cattle rustling. Due to a lack of statistics, however, it is presently difficult to determine the exact rate of reduction in cross-border cattle rustling.

Despite their relative success, the relationship between the CP and the Royal Swaziland Police is characterised by mutual suspicion and a lack of cooperation. From the perspective of the RSP, the Community Police are performing duties that they are not trained or qualified for. As such, the CP can be understood a vigilante structure that is operating outside the legal structures of the country, deriving their strength from the communities and their methods of operation are presently not integrated into the national security structures.

The poor relationship between the RSP and the CP is highlighted by a general refusal of the latter to hand over suspects to the police. Instead, Community Police have taken it upon themselves to investigate, interrogate and pass judgement. Most of their victims only escape punishment on the recovery of stolen items. On admission of guilt, public flogging becomes the ultimate punishment. In this way, the CP hope to curb crime through instilling fear in community members, believing that force provides the best solution to crime. Their violent methods frequently entail the blatant violation of human rights, as suspects are beaten and sometimes killed, even in instances where they have not been proven guilty. For example, in October 2004 Community Police brutally killed a 22 year-old man at KaKhoza on allegations of stealing a cell-phone. It was reported that:

> Philani was dragged all over the two notorious locations, KaKhoza and Newvillage where he was moved from home to home in search of the alleged stolen items. He was subjected to huge frightening and unbearable torture for the whole night. He cried until his voice could not come out of his mouth. Residents who had a chance of seeing him in this state have revealed that they tried to talk to the community police officers into releasing him but they did not bulge claiming that they wanted to teach him one or two lessons and these lessons qualified him to his death (Times of Swaziland SUNDAY, 17 October, 2004).

What is more worrying is that the violent tactics of the Community Police have sometimes been adopted by other members of the communities. This was demonstrated recently when a man suspected of cattle rustling was brutally killed by a mob. At Tikhuba it was reported that:

> An angry mob poisoned and murdered a man after he was suspected to be part of a cattle rustling syndicate. Gideon Gamedze was forced to drink a syrup of weevil tablets and later strangled to death. The 53 year old’s murder has left 14 children fatherless. It comes at the height of a bitter feud over stolen cattle in the area that has also seen at least two others killed in recent weeks. He was beaten and dragged to the forest by the over 200 mobsters, who were armed with an assortment of weapons. It is alleged that they also had with them a bag filled with weevil tablets, and other poisonous farm inputs (The Times of Swaziland, 12 February, 2008).

Despite such reports of violence and human rights abuse, and despite the tense relationship between the CP and the RSP, many Cabinet Ministers and other prominent government officials continue to encourage communities to combat crime through the structure of Community Police, indicating perhaps an absence of a cohesive state able or willing to implement and uphold its own laws and regulations.
Conclusion
The emergence of private security actors in Swaziland, be they urban PSCs or rural Community Police, has to be understood in the context of the country’s specific economic and political history. While private security has a long history and can be traced back to the colonial period, its recent growth is intimately linked to the failure of the post-colonial state to protect its citizens, choosing instead to focus on a narrow regime security.

Faced with an absence of public protection in the post-colonial period, the development of the private security sector took two separate but interlinked directions. In urban areas, there was a shift from the individually hired guards used by colonial settlers towards a reliance on private security companies. Today, most economic enterprises, foreign embassies as well as wealthy households depend to a significant extent on the services of PSCs for their daily protection. In rural areas, by contrast, there is little business for PSCs as the population is generally too poor to afford their services. In response to the absence of state protection, rural communities have organised Community Police structures to protect themselves against crime and in particular against cattle rustling.

Because of the failure of the state, security is a highly contested issue in Swaziland. The main actors in this contest are the public sector, community security initiatives, and private security companies. This contest may well create conflicts in the future, but presently, Swaziland is characterised by a precarious balance of power between the public security agencies as represented by the Royal Swaziland Police and the Umbutfo Swaziland Defense Force, private security companies, and the Community Police. The state has made several attempts to bring the CP under the arm of the RSP, but this has had very little success as most rural communities are deeply suspicious of the police and prefer to rely on their own local initiatives. In terms of developing a situation where security is equally available to all, however, it is crucial to consider how cooperation and coordination between the various security actors can be improved. One possible solution may be found in adopting a genuine community policing philosophy that will forge partnerships between all the concerned parties, although in other countries such community policing polices have been fraught with difficulties (see Brogden & Nijhar, 2005).

In contemporary Swaziland, a key question concerns the political implications of private security initiatives, whether in urban or rural areas. While PSCs have been an answer to the security needs of a small section of the Swazi population and investors, their growth and development may also have certain implications for the state. As the number of PSCs continues to grow, the state has continued to abdicate its responsibility of providing security to its citizens. An important concern also relates to the Community Police, which operate outside the country’s justice system. Many residents of rural areas have lost their lives as a result of beatings they have received from Community Police. The development of non-state policing has perpetrated violence in rural communities as it encourages mob justice, and a growing concern is increasing incrimination of innocent people and severe assaults by Community Police.

The growth of private security in Swaziland has a close relationship to the economic development of the country. From the perspective of the Government, there is no doubt that the services of PSCs protect commercial establishments against crime, and may thus contribute towards making the country more attractive to foreign
investors and thereby drive the Swazi economy forward. However, the sector does very little to empower the majority of the citizens economically. Instead, the private security sector has contributed towards moving resources away from the poor, and to the growth of inequalities because money buys security in Swaziland. As the rich grow richer they are able to buy more and better security, while the poor majority become more vulnerable to crime, further undermining their quality of life.

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The Role of Private Military Companies in US-Africa Policy

Kwesi Aning, Thomas Jaye & Samuel Atuobi

This article discusses the increasing use of private military companies (PMCs) in United States’ security policy in Africa, and examines this phenomenon in relation to the US’ various military training programmes on the continent. We argue that the increasing use of PMCs in US security policy has evolved due to two critical and mutually dependent developments; African state weakness and resource stringency on the one hand, and the US’s overwhelming security commitments around the world, combined with military downsizing, on the other. The article further argues that the involvement of PMCs is to a large extent informed by US concerns about access to African resources, especially oil, in the face of stiff competition from China. We conclude that the increasing US engagement in Africa is highly militaristic and state-centric, and that it is primarily conditioned by US strategic interests and does not necessarily reflect African security concerns: human security for development.

In discussions of military privatisation in Africa, the mercenary activities of Executive Outcomes (EO), Sandline International, and the likes of Simon Mann continue to figure prominently (see Avant, 2005; Singer, 2003; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007; Foaleng, 2007). Hardly any analysis of private security on the continent is considered complete without dwelling on the role of EO in Sierra Leone and Angola, the links between EO and resource exploitation, or the implications of mercenary involvement for state consolidation (Aning, 2001). These are undoubtedly important issues, politically, economically, and ethically. It is, however, crucial to recognise that there is more to military privatisation in Africa than this focus might suggest, and that the contemporary role of private military actors on the continent differs significantly from that of the late 1990s. While the ‘rogue’ individual soldier, or the company willing to fight for anyone that pays, can still be found, the dominant image of the private military on the continent is considerably different. Today’s private military companies (PMCs) tend to be hired by donor governments to perform training of African state militaries, or to participate in peacekeeping activities or post-conflict reconstruction. More often than not, they are embedded in the military and administrative structures of both the donor and recipient states, and exercise their power and authority within these structures. While this does not necessarily change the political impact of private military actors, it does fundamentally alter the manner in which they need to be analysed. Rather than focusing narrowly on the economic interests of the companies or individual mercenaries, we need to take account of how these companies have become part of broader structures and agendas and how they facilitate the pursuit of foreign policy by key states.
This article explores these issues in relation to US foreign policy in Africa. While the new ‘scramble’ for Africa’s resources, as well as the increased militarisation of US-Africa relations following the attacks of September 11, 2001, is frequently commented upon (see Abrahamovici, 2004; Lubeck, Watts & Lipschutz, 2007), the role of PMCs in US-Africa policy merits further investigation. In this article, our particular focus is on the role of PMCs in the delivery of US military support to Africa. Military assistance has become a key feature of US-Africa relations in recent years, and PMCs occupied a central place in the various programmes of the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) and the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). Their roles in the peacebuilding and peacekeeping processes in Liberia and Darfur respectively are critically examined. We also examine the nexus between US strategic interests in Africa and the employment of PMCs, using Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea as examples. In the light of the above, it is important to stress that one cannot easily separate US employment of PMCs from the pursuit of its overall strategic interests in Africa; it constitutes an integral part of it. This relationship has serious implications for stability in Africa because of its strong links with the scramble for resources and the ‘war on terror’. As will be argued later in this paper, the history of the Cold War period provides examples where Africa suffered because of similar objectives. While recognising that several PMCs operate in Africa, this article focuses primarily on two PMCs – Military Professional Resource Incorporated (MPRI) and DynCorp International – which play a significant role in US security policy in Africa.

This paper is divided into five parts. Part one reviews ACRI as the first expression of US security policy towards Africa after the Cold War. Part two focuses on ACOTA and GPOI programmes that succeeded ACRI. The third part examines the objectives of AFRICOM and speculates about the possible role of PMCs in executing its mandate. The fourth part discusses the roles of PMCs in the peace support operations in Darfur and the peacebuilding process in Liberia after the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). We conclude that PMCs will continue to play a role in delivering US military support to Africa for some time largely because of the relationship between their employment and the pursuit of US strategic interests. US experience in Somalia, its security commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the downsizing of its army are further reasons for the continuation of this type of engagement. We also argue that there is nothing altruistic about US involvement in Africa. On the contrary, the three factors shaping US-Africa relations are the ‘war on terror’, interests in African oil, and finally, competition with China.

From ‘Black Hawk Down’ to ‘African Solutions’

In the early 1990s, US responded to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia by deploying one of the largest forces in Africa (Bah & Aning, 2008:119). In 1992, President G. W. Bush launched *Operation Restore Hope* which was made up of 25,000 troops. Also known as Unified Task Force (UNITAF), *Operation Restore Hope* comprised 24 countries with a mandate to restore security, undertake humanitarian activities and to help relieve the suffering of the civilian population (Ibid.). In place of UNITAF, in 1993, the UN Security Council approved the establishment of the United Nations Operations in Somalia II (UNOSOM II) which consisted of approximately 28,000 military and police personnel. Led by the US, UNOSOM II’s mandate was to restore peace through disarmament and reconciliation of the various parties to the conflict. However, after the ill-fated attempt to capture General Mohamed Farah Aideed,
which resulted in the death of 18 US Rangers, its troops were withdrawn, and subsequently, UNOSOM II was terminated in 1995 (Ibid.).

Since the failed US mission in Somalia and the genocide in Rwanda, US policy towards Africa has been centered increasingly on developing the capacities of African countries to undertake peace operations under the guise of ‘African solutions to African problems’ – a notion that some viewed as a convenient alibi for US inaction. Despite its renewed interest in the continent in the post-9/11, 2001 era, the US remains reluctant to deploy ground troops to Africa (Bah & Aning, 2008).

United States engagement in Africa since the 1990s has therefore centered on bi-lateral training programmes such as the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) and the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) to build the capacity of individual African countries to participate in multilateral peace operations, particularly in Africa. The Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) also has similar objectives of helping to improve the capacity of sub-regional and regional organisations to take part in peace support operations, especially in Africa. Again, the new Africa Command (AFRICOM) launched last year has among its objectives to offer technical assistance to ACOTA and GPOI and partner African states in security sector reform (McFate, 2008:11).

Thus, the increased use of PMCs has to be understood in the context of US reluctance to get embroiled in African conflicts. Some observers would also argue that the policy on the use of PMCs in Africa is linked with the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and US grand strategy to secure access to African natural resources (Ploch, 2007:11). Other important factors include the reduction in the strength of the US army. For instance, in 2003 the US reduced the size of its combined armed forces from 2.1 million in 1990 to 1.4 million (Krane, 2003:1ff). There is also the issue of an overstretched army, as US troops are currently involved in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo (Aning, 2007). Under these multiple demand-driven conditions, the US military has become over-tasked in its involvement in global military affairs and its ability to position adequate troops in theatres of operation around the world has been severely challenged (Ibid.). This is perhaps particularly the case in relation to African conflicts, traditionally regarded as of little strategic relevance by the US. Consequently, in order to address this security deficit, it has become forced to hire the support services of PMCs to provide military training to foreign states. That such an approach in the pursuit of its foreign policy towards Africa has become indispensable to the United States cannot be over-emphasised (Schrader, 2002). In the words of Theresa Whelan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs:

> we wanted to support [peace] operations [in Africa], however we realized that our forces were tied down elsewhere around the globe and they might not be available for the long-term deployments ... Consequently, contractors began to play a larger and larger role particularly in the logistical support of sub-regional peace operations (Whelan, 2003:2ff).

In recent years, PMCs such as DynCorp, the MPRI, and the Pacific Architects Engineers (PAE) have frequently been hired to deliver different forms of US foreign military support including training under ACRI, ACOTA and GPOI programmes. These companies are involved in a varied and differentiated set of activities including but not limited to the post-conflict peacebuilding process in Liberia and the provision of logistics support to the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS)
and the conflict in Darfur with strong emphasis on military security issues. Accordingly, the US Department of State grants such companies contracts to provide services ranging from the training of militaries, provision of logistics to peace support operations and restructuring of national armies. Previously, such functions were the exclusive reserve of the US army. The outsourcing of such programmes to private PMCs is certainly in keeping with US administration’s avowed commitment to the dictates of neo-liberalism and the emphasis on privatisation, ideas which are increasingly also being applied in states where such companies perform (see Abrahamsen & Williams, 2007).

The contracting of PMCs to conduct military training and carry out other security related activities on behalf of the United States raises two fundamental questions. First, what does the involvement of PMCs allow the US to do in Africa, and secondly, does the involvement of PMCs change US-Africa relations from the perspective of African states and peoples? In other words, what does this mean for Africa?

In the following sections we explore these questions in relation to the main training programmes for African militaries conducted by the US since the late 1990s.

**The US, PMCs & African Security Provision: Initiating a New Partnership?**

**ACRI**

During the first half of the 1990s, violent conflicts broke out in Liberia (1990), Somalia (1991), Sierra Leone (1991) and Rwanda (1994) among others. These, as well as subsequent conflicts did not only generate global attention and concern, but addressing them posed a challenge to the international community of states. The most telling case was the massacre in Rwanda in 1994 in which more than 800,000 people lost their lives largely because of the failure of the international community to intervene in the conflict on time. In the face of such challenges, it became imperative to find new, effective and more responsive measures for preventing and resolving conflicts. It is in line with this that the need to build the capacity of African militaries to intervene in such conflicts was examined and stressed. Thus, capacity-building support for African peacekeepers became one of the measures adopted by the US to deal with African conflicts.

Accordingly, the African Crisis Response Force (ACRF) constituted the first initiative by the United States to build and strengthen the capacity of African militaries to participate in peacekeeping in their own backyard. This initiative was launched immediately after the Rwandan genocide in 1994 with the aim that it would provide capacity training and when deployed, it would be made up of African troops primarily providing security for civilians (Bah & Aning, 2008:120). Despite the stated humanitarian objectives of this initiative, it was opposed by some African leaders, among them, the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, who viewed ACRF as a knee-jerk reaction by the Clinton administration after its failure to intervene in the Rwandan crisis and feared that it could be used as an excuse to establish a foothold in Africa. In response to these criticisms and concerns, and due to a change in the political climate in Washington, DC, in 1996 the US created ACRI to provide training to selected African countries for peacekeeping and the delivery of humanitarian aid. It was initially designed to operate on a bi-lateral basis, with the possibility of direct military assistance to sub-regional bodies such as
the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which was involved in peace operations at the time (Ibid. p.121).

During the six years of the implementation of the ACRI, about 9,000 African troops were trained (Berman, 2002:37). Between July 1997 and May 2000, training programmes were organised for soldiers in Senegal, Uganda, Malawi, Mali, Ghana, Benin and Ivory Coast. In order to ensure that soldiers trained under ACRI were well equipped, the US provided some 8,000 soldiers with light equipment, electric generators, vehicles, mine detectors, night-vision gear, and communication gadgets (Abrahamvocivi, 2004).

In spite of the positive sides of ACRI, it had a number of problems. One of the problems was that it was conceived and designed based on a Cold War peacekeeping doctrine, which suited inter-state conflicts. What Africa faced were intra-state conflicts, in which non-state actors such as rebels or insurgents played a crucial role; their utter disregard for international humanitarian law posed a particular challenge in terms of subjecting them to such laws. Importantly, in some cases, the change from inter- to intra-state wars required a doctrinal shift that required a more robust Chapter VII-type peace enforcement doctrine, a challenge that all peacekeeping operations were confronted with (Bah & Aning, 2008:120).

Despite this, several countries embraced ACRI, including Uganda, Ethiopia and Senegal at the initial stages. Others, such as Nigeria and South Africa – the two regional powers – remained opposed to what they viewed as a foreign initiative that did not necessarily address African concerns (Ibid.). An observer of US policy in Africa noted that ‘ACRI had more to do with what the US felt it could provide than what African countries necessarily needed’ (Berman, 2004:134). Worse still, no African country was consulted about the contents of the programme. Such behaviour is tantamount to a medical doctor prescribing drugs even before they can see the patient. One would have thought that US support to Africa would be based on consultation with the beneficiaries but the reverse has been the case.

The programme also failed to provide adequate logistics and military hardware, which were of greater importance to African states than the training of troops. With an annual budget of US$15 million, it was difficult to see how ACRI could address the serious capacity issues facing African countries (Bah & Aning, 2008:121). The limited nature of the programme also made it difficult to see a clear cause-and-effect relationship between the training offered and the overall performance of troops in the field. Nonetheless, troops from Ghana, Senegal, Uganda and Tanzania trained under this initiative served in Liberia as part of the ‘expanded’ Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) (Ibid.). However, in Liberia, the equipment provided was managed by PAE and thus ECOMOG commanders had to go through the process of signing documents before it could be utilised.

Although training exercises under ACRI were conducted by US Special Forces, it also involved PMCs which provided logistical support, including equipment or specialist civil personnel, as well as military training. The main company was MPRI, which incorporated in 1987, has nearly 3,000 employees in the US and in 40 countries overseas. The company considers itself as

*a training, simulation and government services company of highly skilled and experienced military, law enforcement, diplomatic and private sector leaders with uncompromising...*
professionalism who apply integrity, innovative ideas and integrated solutions to defense and national security challenges (www.mpri.org 2008).

The company is comprised of five operational groups: the National, International, Alexandria, Simulations and Technology groups:

1) The **National Group** provides expertise and support to the US Department of Defense and a wide range of governmental agencies, and the corporate sector;

2) The **International Group** provides services to US forces overseas and to foreign governments on behalf of the US government or under license by the US Department of State;

3) The **Alexandria Group** provides education, training, and organisational expertise to law enforcement agencies and corporations worldwide;

4) The **Simulations Group** is considered as a global leader in the supply of driver simulators and maritime simulation products and services as well as critical incident management and emergency response solutions;

5) Finally the **Training Technology Group** provides the patented BEAMHIT Laser Marksmanship Training System (LMTS) to military, law enforcement, and commercial organisations worldwide (Ibid.).

The MPRI has undertaken contracts in Iraq, Colombia and Serbia. For example, in April 2003, MPRI was awarded two contracts by the US Department of Defense to work in Iraq for a total of $2.5 million. Before this contract, MPRI was hired by the Department of Defense in 2000 to assist the government of Colombia in developing long range plans for the war on drugs. The $4.3 million contract was paid largely from the $1.3 billion aid package Congress had approved for Plan Colombia (see Singer, 2003).

In Africa, most of MPRI's operations fall under the democracy and good governance programme and the Department of State and Defense contracts to provide training under US military training programmes such as ACRI and ACOTA (Volman, 2005). Outside ACOTA and ACRI, MPRI has been involved in military training programmes and what the company considers as ‘democracy promotion’ activities in Guinea Bissau and Nigeria.

The most controversial aspect of MPRI's projects in Nigeria was the $8 million project aimed at professionalising the Nigerian army. Under the contract the Nigerian army was to be downsized from 100,000 to 50,000. However, this drew protest from senior members of the Nigerian army, among them, the former Chief of Staff, General Victor Malu. In the ensuing political struggles, General Malu lost his post, allegedly as a result of his opposition to the MPRI project (Dare, 2002:4ff). The departure of Malu reflects the fact that the role of PMCs in African security matters remains contentious. Furthermore, if a strong African state like Nigeria can be dictated to on such matters, then what about the weaker ones? Malu’s departure from office illustrates that US interests are likely to prevail over the interests of the countries they choose to support militarily. Later, in 2007, General Malu stated in an interview granted to the *Daily Trust* that he had opposed the presence of the US military in Nigeria on the grounds that they were there to gather intelligence on the Nigerian army and not to train them for peacekeeping. He argued that the Nigerian
army has a good track record in peacekeeping and did not need the US army [and
MPRI] to train them for peacekeeping.¹

Questions also rise as to whether PMCs can be reliable promoters of democracy and
good governance, and whether democracy and good governance activities should
be privatised? For instance, MPRI boasts that it has been able to improve human
rights records in Equatorial Guinea (www.mpri.org 2008). However, the US State
Department’s Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2007 paints a totally
different picture. It indicates that gross human rights violations still persist in
Equatorial Guinea (US State Department, 2008). The role of PMCs in the promotion
of democracy and good governance raises concerns since most of them have poor
human rights record. Instances of human rights abuse involving PMCs abound in
Iraq, Bosnia and Afghanistan. For example, in Bosnia, employees of DynCorp were
found to be operating a sex-slave ring of young women (Wayne, 2002). Also,
concerns have to be raised with regard to the reason why the US government sub-lets
the ‘promotion of democracy’ to private actors, a function that is performed by the
United State Agency for International Development (USAID) in most developing
countries.

ACOTA/GPOI

In 2004, ACRI was replaced by ACOTA, an initiative of the administration of
President George W. Bush. ACOTA, like its predecessor, is based on bilateral
agreements between the US and recipient states. It also provides support to regional
and sub-regional organisations. The ACOTA programme has five main pillars: (1)
train and equip African militaries to respond to peace support and complex
humanitarian emergencies; (2) build and enhance sustainable African peace
support training capacity; (3) build effective command and control; (4) promote
community and interoperability; and (5) enhance international, regional and sub-
regional peace support capacity in Africa.²

The Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) was launched in 2005 by the United
States, and aims to improve the supply of personnel for peace operations. Its central
objective is to train at least 75,000 personnel globally (with a strong focus on Africa
in the initial stages), and to enhance the ability of countries and regional and sub-
regional organisations to train, plan, manage, conduct, and learn from previous
peace operations. This is done through the provision of technical assistance,
training and material support to enhance institutional knowledge at headquarters.³
The programme also aims to develop the capacities of regional and sub-regional
institutions to ensure ‘sustainability and self-sustainment’. Under GPOI, support is
provided to various centres of excellence for peace support operations such as the
Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center in Ghana, the Peace
Support Training Center in Karen, Kenya, and the Peacekeeping School in
Koulikoro, Mali. Moreover, support is provided for the efforts to operationalise the
African Standby Force (ASF) and regional and sub-regional logistics depots (Bah &
Aning, 2008:123).

Again, private military actors are an intrinsic part of the programme. ACOTA is
linked to training centres known as Joint Combined Armed Training System (JCATS)
rung by MPRI. The JCATS are based on the use of sophisticated computer simulation
software that mimics battlefield conditions and are used to train military officers in
war exercises. According to Colonel Victor Nelson, former US military attaché to
Nigeria, the JCATS are considered to be cost effective because they do not rely on vehicles, ammunition or fuel. The first centre for JCATS was opened in Nigeria on 25 November 2003 (Abramovici, 2004:5ff). Similar to the role it played under ACRI, MPRI claims that it works with the Department of State under the ACOTA and GPOI to inculcate ‘human rights standards into African armed forces and peacekeeping missions’, and that it delivers rapid response services as part of the contract (www.mpri.org 2008).

In 2007, the US Department of State selected MRPI, Blackwater USA and Northrop Grumman4 for the implementation of GPOI. Under contracts with the Department of State, the three PMCs will provide training to militaries and peacekeeping forces worldwide. The contract has a potential value of $200 million, collectively, over five years.5

In addition, in February 2008, ACOTA in collaboration with the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) organised a training programme intended to develop African capacity to meet the peacekeeping needs on the continent in a professional and timely manner.6 Similar to other ACOTA training programmes, the training programme held at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Accra, Ghana involved about seven employees of MPRI.7 One of the contributions of the ACOTA programme is that it has provided training for offensive military operations as well as the provision of weaponry to undertake these operations. With an annual budget of $15 million, training and non-lethal equipment (communications packages, uniforms, boots, generators, mine detectors, field medical equipment and water purification equipment) has been provided to more than 20,000 peacekeepers from thirteen African nations by the beginning of 2006. The countries are Benin, Botswana, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Zambia.8

Certainly, the role of PMCs in ACOTA demonstrates that US military involvement in Africa will largely be pursued through such companies. It does not only suit their strategic interests but creates an enabling environment for the role of these organisations to be accepted and legitimised for employment by African governments. Moreover, the emphasis on military support not only militarises US-Africa relations; it also Americanises African security issues.

**AFRICOM**

As if the limitations of the above programmes were not enough, the US administration has now embarked upon the idea of establishing an Africa Command (AFRICOM). On 6 February 2007, President George W. Bush announced the establishment of AFRICOM, which according to the President will strengthen US security cooperation with Africa (McFate, 2008:10). The decision to create AFRICOM was more than an administrative change within the Department of Defense. It was the direct result of Africa’s increasing strategic importance to the US and represents official recognition that the US can no longer address the region’s security concerns by splitting responsibility among three independent combatant commands (Schaefer & Eaglen, 2008). AFRICOM is projected to become fully operational in October 2008.

As defined by the US Department of Defense, AFRICOM’s mission will be to promote US strategic interest by working with African states and regional organisations to help strengthen stability and security through improved security capability,
professionalisation and good governance (Ploch, 2007:2). As with other combatant commands, AFRICOM will conduct military operations to address US security priorities or respond to crises. Based upon the experiences of the past US military programmes in Africa, it is suggested that to be effective, AFRICOM must be adequately funded and robustly staffed. This view is held by Brett Schaefer and Mackenzie Eaglen who argue that in order to achieve its objectives, AFRICOM would need to

*find qualified personnel to implement the new Command’s broader mission. The Command will need to increase staff levels from the current 320 to about 1,200, including a significant number of civilian personnel* (Schaefer & Eaglen, 2008:2ff).

As important as this may be for the pursuit of US strategic interest in Africa, the effectiveness of such a programme is certainly not the issue. On the contrary, some would argue that AFRICOM is likely to generate more problems than it solves. On the basis of the experiences of the Cold War, there is every reason to believe that this could turn Africa into another theatre of war between the US and the states and non-state actors that are opposed to its interests and policies. Africans do not want to become pawns in proxy wars and this type of relationship only promotes dependency on external powers on security matters. As some observers would argue, AFRICOM and the role of the PMCs could undermine democracy and peace because it is easy for the US to take side on issues occurring inside sovereign states. For example, in Somalia, communications between US PMCs, particularly Select Armour, indicated that the CIA knew about a plot to run a covert military operation inside Somalia with possible involvement of British security firms. These groups were supposed to carry out an operation in support of President Abdullahi Yusuf’s Transitional Federal Government against the Supreme Islamic Courts Council, which is a radical Muslim militia (Barnett & Smith, 2006). Previously, US support to Mobutu Sese Sekou, Siad Barre, Samuel Doe and other dictators provide examples of situations where anti-democratic practices were tolerated and promoted because of strategic interests.

One interesting issue that does not feature in the debates on AFRICOM is the potential role of PMCs. We contend that given the recent history of the role of PMCs in the pursuit of US foreign policy under ACRI, ACOTA, and GPOI, their continued involvement in AFRICOM seems inevitable (see also McFate, this issue). Like the other programmes discussed above, the US Department of State and Department of Defense can justify the use of PMCs in AFRICOM when deemed necessary.

Contrary to the objectives outlined for the creation of AFRICOM, critics of the project argue that it is part of US grand strategy to achieve three inter-connected objectives: ensure US access to African oil, ward off Chinese economic expansionism, and serve the war against terrorism. These are very dear to US national security interests. It is difficult to accept that the US military would be involved in the development of Africa as the apostles of AFRICOM would have us believe. There are also growing fears about African communities being victimised in the Global War On Terror, and that the anti-Muslim sentiments that the ‘war on terror’ generates may lead to inter-African hostilities. Thus, Muslim and Christian communities that once lived in harmony with each other could easily get drawn into conflict against each other. Like the Cold War period, ‘when two [or more] bulls fight, it is the grass that suffers’ *(Wapingapo fahali wawili, ziumiazo ni nyasi).*
Resources

To reinforce a point made earlier, on the surface, it seems as if US bilateral military engagement in Africa is aimed at serving the benevolent purpose of making African states stable, secure and developed. It is an effort aimed at saving Africa from itself. However, behind such professed security benevolence, deeper US national security interests are at stake. Accordingly, the ‘war on terror’ constitutes a real security concern in US–Africa relations, as illustrated by its role in Somalia and the commitment to the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (see Keenan, 2004-2007). Importantly, it has also become apparent that as part of the US grand strategy towards the continent and in response to the scramble and pluder of African resources by the major powers, especially China, successive US administrations are making efforts to ensure that Africa is given the capability to protect and secure itself as a means of serving as a strategic partner to the US. Again, PMCs have a crucial role to play here.

Since the incidents of 9/11, 2001, and the ongoing crisis in the Gulf and Middle East, US national security interests have been closely tied in with African oil, which contributes about 15 per cent of overall US oil consumption. The economy relies on oil and about 55 per cent of the oil consumed by Americans originates from outside the US. This partly explains the need for African oil resources (Authers, 2007; CIA, 2000).

Thus, US military support to Africa through PMCs has strong links with its overall strategic calculations to acquire unlimited access to African oil resources. US engagement with two oil producing African states, namely Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea, illustrates the link between its resource interest and the activities of PMCs. In these two countries, MPRI operates outside the official US military training programme, ACOTA.

In line with the US strategic interest in African oil resources, not long after President George Bush took office in 2001, the National Energy Policy Development Group headed by Vice President Dick Cheney, argued that the United States should look to the West African ‘Oil Triangle’ as a future source of reliable oil supply (Lubeck et al. 2007: 3). The West African ‘Oil Triangle’ supplies about 15 per cent of oil imports to the US and there are plans to increase this to 25 per cent by 2015 (Ibid. p.4).

The argument can be clearly illustrated with reference to Nigeria, the most attractive oil energy giant in the oil triangle. It has Africa’s largest proven oil deposits and the fifth largest supplier of oil to the United States. However, political instability and the general fragility of Nigerian democracy threaten US energy interest (Ploch, 2007:12). US strategy to secure Nigerian oil therefore falls within its overall strategy of partnering with African governments in order to strengthen fragile and failing states. The involvement of MPRI in the training of the Nigerian army should therefore be seen as part of the US government’s policy to use PMCs to further her interest in Africa.

The United States sees a stable and democratic Nigeria as necessary for the continued flow of Nigerian oil to the US market. However, it is questionable whether US democracy promotion can stabilise and democratise African states like Nigeria for one basic reason. Historically, US democracy promotion in Africa has been limited to the procedural aspects of democracy; it has been about elections or ‘quadrennial bonanzas’ to borrow Noam Chomsky’s words. As Steve Smith argues,
'US democracy promotion was aimed at putting in place a form of democracy that would suit US economic interests' (Smith, 2000:78). Because US domestic and foreign policies have always required certain international structures, geo-economic interests have dominated its geopolitics (Ibid. p. 67). Hence, if there is any interest in a democratic Nigeria, the purpose has not been to deepen democracy to include the responsibility of the state to its people. Unfortunately, if the state does not provide for the broader security needs of the people; if you do not address the challenges of poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education and health care, then no amount of military build up can prevent conflicts. At least, this is what the history of conflicts in West Africa has taught us, that all conflict is rooted in underdevelopment.

Equatorial Guinea is another country whose oil resource is of interest to the United States. The US government is ready to support the government of Equatorial Guinea through PMCs. In 2001, MPRI gained permission from the US Department of State to do business in Equatorial Guinea, a country whose President, Retired Brig. Gen. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, the Department of State described as ‘holding power through torture and fraud’ (Wayne, 2002). The contract allowed MPRI to advise the President on ‘building a coast guard to protect the oil rich waters being explored by Exxon Mobile off the coast’ of the country (Ibid.). However, in a further twist to this saga, the Department of State rejected another contract application from MPRI to rebuild the police and military forces of Equatorial Guinea for fear that the forces to be trained by MPRI may be used against the opponents of the government as well as the ‘war on terror’.

Thus, on one hand the US sanctioned the training of the ‘Coast Guard’ but on the other hand, rejected the training of the country’s army and police force. Clearly, such a move has to do with the need to protect the country’s off-shore oil, in which the US has substantial interest. The fact that the US is expanding its naval presence off the coast of Africa, particularly in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea region verifies this assumption (Volman & Tuckey, 2008). In conclusion therefore, it is clear that PMCs are playing a crucial role in securing US access to oil resources in Africa. Thus, the role of PMCs should be understood and explained within the context of growing US interests in African resources, competition with China in the ‘new scramble’, as well as well as ‘the war on terror’.

**PMCs, Peacekeeping & Peacebuilding: Liberia & Darfur**

PMCs have also become involved in African security issues through peacekeeping and peacebuilding. In the past, PMCs such as Lifeguard provided security for the staff of humanitarian agencies during the Sierra Leonan conflict, while PAE and International Charter Incorporated of Oregon (ICI Oregon) provided logistics support for ECOWAS and the United Nations Missions in Liberia (UNMIL) and Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) (McIntyre, 2004:102). Currently, US PMCs are involved in the peacebuilding process in Liberia and the ongoing United Nations/African Union Mission (UNAMID) in the Darfur region of western Sudan.

We begin with US involvement in Liberia. Historically, US engagement with Liberia dates back to the very creation of the state by black Americans in 1847. However, the current engagement was triggered by fourteen years of war and plunder. In the effort to bring the war to an end, the stakeholders to the conflict signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 18 August 2003 in Accra, Ghana. An important component of the CPA was the restructuring of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). To
this end, article VII (1)(b) of the CPA, ‘requested that the US play a lead role in [the] restructuring programme [the disbandment of irregular forces, reforming and restructuring of the Liberian Armed Forces]’. To a large extent, this role has been discharged by the US government through the Security Sector Reform (SSR) programme. The objective of the SSR programme is to train a total planned force of 2,000 men and women for the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) by 2010 (Malan & Teff, 2007). The two PMCs – DynCorp and PAE – are involved in the SSR programme under contract from the US Department of State. Dyn Corp’s contract requires it to provide basic facilities and basic training for the AFL. The company also designed and manages the recruitment and vetting programme for entry into the AFL (see McFate, this issue). PAE on its part, won the contract for building a base, for forming and building the AFL and its component units and for providing specialised and advanced training, including mentoring the AFL’s officers. For the first six months of 2007 alone, the combined expenses of DynCorp and PAE totaled about $18 million (Ibid.).

Similarly, PMCs are also involved in the provision of logistics and security in the Darfur crisis. Just as in other African conflicts, US foreign policy in Darfur has been to contract PMCs to perform its military tasks. Consequently, in 2004, the US pledged more than $200 million in the form of private contracts to support the African Union Mission in Darfur (AMIS). The contract was awarded to DynCorp and PAE, in which the two companies would provide housing, office equipment, and transport and communication equipment in support of AMIS. The State Department awarded the contract in Darfur to DynCorp and PAE ignoring the accusation that the employees of DynCorp exhibited ‘aggressive behaviour’ in Afghanistan while PAE has been accused of ‘allegedly overcharging the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of Congo’ (Chatterjee, 2004). The contract also allows the Department of State to use the two companies anywhere in Africa. In the specific case of Darfur, Sudanese oil and the role of China seem to be dictating US interests in the area. PAE, DynCorp and Medical Solutions Services have also worked for humanitarian agencies in Darfur (Leander & Munster, 2006:2). Moreover, private contractors are taking on roles that were formerly the exclusive reserve of civilian organisations. For instance, the Department of State has contracted PAE to provide staff for its Civilian Protection Monitoring Team to monitor human rights in Darfur (Chatterjee, 2004).

One of the disturbing things about the role of PMCs in Africa is the lack of transparency and accountability to the host countries. Because they are contracted by the US government, they are answerable only to them and not the host government. African states can only deal with them through US diplomatic missions. The activities of PAE and DynCorp in Liberia provide an interesting case study of the problem of transparency and accountability of PMCs. The two companies have been accused of expending over $172 million meant for the training of the army without input from the Government of Liberia. This situation, according the Liberian Minister of Defense, had arisen because the allocation of funds for the project was not done in consultation with the Government of Liberia (Malan & Teff, 2006). This means that the Liberian government may have little influence on how the training of its own military is conducted. This situation will need to change to ensure national ownership of such training programmes no matter the company contracted to undertake it. As of 31 August 2008, DynCorp had completed the training of 2,000 soldiers.

In situations where African countries are kept in the dark over the training of their militaries, there is every reason to be worried over the future of such armies. Not only
may it become extremely difficult for African states to control and influence their armies; they may even be trained in such a way that their interests and perceptions of threats are similar to that of the US rather than their own countries and peoples. Moreover, the type of training they receive may not enable them to deal with the real security threats facing their respective countries, but may instead be more geared towards protecting US geo-strategic interests.

**Conclusion**

Given the number of African troops trained under the United States’ military training programmes, it can be said that these programmes have contributed to building the capacity of the troops of the participating countries and improved their readiness for peace support operations in Africa or elsewhere. While this is encouraging, the limited nature of these programmes makes it difficult to see a clear cause and effect relationship between the training offered and the actual performance of troops trained under them in the field. Also, Africa’s training needs far outstrip the capabilities of these programmes to fill the capacity gap in Africa for the delivery of peacekeeping needs. This calls for the need to widen the scope of such programmes to involve all African countries in order for it to gain a rapid impact on African peacekeeping. Another drawback of US security policy in Africa is its lack of sustained policy engagement with African countries that should be the primary beneficiaries of such programmes. As such, these programmes are viewed as serving the interest of the United States rather than Africa. Thus, it is unclear as to how US security policy imperatives converge with the security concerns of the people of Africa. The concerns of the African people as set out in various policy documents by individual governments, as well as sub-regional and regional organisations such as the African Union, centre on human security issues. Poverty, high levels of unemployment, access to clean water and the HIV/AIDS pandemic are among human security needs of Africans. An important consideration for the US therefore is how to reconcile its interest with that of the African people.

As we have shown, private military actors have become central to US military training initiatives and US military training of African personnel is largely outsourced to private contractors. As such, contemporary private military involvement on the African continent is substantially different from the late 1990s, when companies such as Executive Outcomes were hired by weak or failing African states to defeat their internal enemies in civil wars. The contemporary situation as described above raises a series of important political questions, most notably as regards the relationship between the stated US objective of training and democratising African militaries and the pursuit of US foreign policy objectives on the African continent. While the two are not always and necessarily mutually exclusive, the relationship merits careful and critical analysis. Undoubtedly, many African militaries are in need of professionalisation, and similarly, much is to be gained by strengthening their respect for human rights, civilian oversight and democracy. The ability of African militaries to conduct peacekeeping operations is also of crucial importance.

However, the extent to which private military companies are the best or most suitable teachers of democracy and the values of human rights cannot be passed over in silence. This is because most PMCs do not have good human rights records. More importantly, perhaps, is the lack of transparency that accompanies the use of private contractors, which can make it difficult for African states and for civil society
actors to gain information about their activities and contracts, and hence to challenge their operations. There is also the problem of accountability as most PMCs are accountable to the US government instead of the host government. The increased presence of PMCs in US military assistance to the continent thus poses a series of challenges, and as this article demonstrates, is best understood in the context of the United States’ geo-political interests.

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Endnotes


4. Northrop Grumman Corporation is a $32 billion global defense and technology company whose 120,000 employees provide innovative systems, products, and solutions in information and services, electronics, aerospace and shipbuilding to government and commercial customers worldwide. See details at http://www.northropgrumman.com/about_us/index.html, accessed 1 April 2008.


7. Interview with Lt. Col Todd Coker, Course Director, Department of Peacekeeping Studies at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Centre, 26 February 2008.


Bibliography


Unlocking the Relationship Between the WTO & Regional Integration Arrangements (RIAs)
Fredrik Söderbaum

The relationship between the World Trade Organization (WTO) and regional integration arrangement (RIAs) is problematic. Although RIAs need to comply with WTO rules, there is no fruitful interaction. It is therefore promising that leading economists have made efforts to try to resolve the malfunctioning relationship (Baldwin & Thornton, 2008). Richard Baldwin (2008) states that:

If the WTO is to survive and flourish, it must adapt because regionalism is here to stay. Embarking on a WTO Action Plan on Regionalism would be a strong step towards adapting to the new reality.

This plan is supposed to contribute to enabling the WTO to change from an ‘innocent bystander’ to active ‘engagement’ with RIAs.

Although the proposed Action Plan is laudable, it has two fundamental weaknesses: first, although it acknowledges certain benign aspects of regionalism, regionalism is mainly considered a ‘threat’, in need of regulation and control; second, elevating WTO standards, under which RIAs are subordinated to WTO multilateralism, prevents RIAs from reaching their full potential. Baldwin’s argument for active ‘engagement’ by the WTO appears to require the subordination of regionalism to multilateralism.

The view advanced in this briefing is that there is a need for a more equal balance between the WTO and RIAs. In contrast to the notion of ‘multilateralising regionalism’, there is a need to set regions free and contribute to a more fair and functioning global trading system. Having such a balanced relationship between the WTO and RIAs is necessarily more complicated to achieve than the solution where regionalism is subordinated to the rules and interest resulting from multilateralism. If the regionalist movement continues to deepen in the world system, then it may even be more viable to ‘regionalise multilateralism’, rather than vice versa.

Regionalism as Response to Asymmetric Multilateralism

When the multilateral trading system is analysed through a public goods lens, it appears as a public ‘good in form’, but not in substance. The welfare gains, net benefits as well as the rules of the multilateral trading system are extremely imbalanced and skewed in favour of the industrialised countries (Mendoza, 2003:469). As a consequence, the WTO is neither legitimate nor effective, as illustrated by the failure of the Doha Round of negotiations.

Even if the multilateral trading system is rather successful when viewed in a historical perspective, the GATT/WTO has proved to be not only unfair but also ineffective in dealing with the economic and political challenges since the 1990s. As stated by an authority on economic regionalism in Africa, Percy Mistry (2003:135), the WTO has been ‘hijacked’ by the G8 and OECD governments to protect their interests in a world where
their economic and military power is being challenged by emerging developing countries. It should be recognised that much of today’s regionalism, especially but not only in the South (mainly Africa, Asia and Latin America), has often gained its strength in response to the dominance of WTO and globalisation. Even if multilateralism is seen as a first-best strategy for enhancing the gains from trade from the point of view of economic theory, regionalism is the first-best policy option in practice. Thus, one of the problems with economic theory is that it does not automatically lead to good public policy (Higgott, 2002:22).

Indeed, new regionalism is being embraced because multilateralism no longer works (Mistry, 2003:136). Regionalism has become the best risk-management and coping strategy. The new challenges facing countries cannot be handled through national action, so they are pooling sovereignty. RIAs provide an opportunity of the market access they always wished for but never really extracted from multilateral negotiations. Furthermore, many countries have been helped by the unilateral liberalisation of neighbours and the commitments undertaken in the context of RIAs.

Here it needs saying that there is a proliferation of bilateral as well as regional trading agreements all over the world, especially in the Americas and East Asia where scholars refer to the spaghetti bowl and the noodle bowl respectively, but also in Africa. The proliferation of bilateralism is also happening in the context of frustrated multilateralism and because of low trust in the WTO. One important explanation is that many bilateral trading agreements are emerging because policy makers want ‘to create an illusion of control over one’s own policy processes and policy choices’ (Higgott, 2002:22). There are instances when bilateralism improve the conditions and ultimately converge into regionalism or multilateralism, or both. However, to a large extent bilateral agreements can be seen as statements of sovereignty, and result in a fragmentation not only of multilateralism but also of regionalism. One of the more important problems is that strong states often seek bilateral agreements with weaker states. Regionalism implies a more rule-based order, which is also more inclusive since some countries will not be able to conclude bilateral agreements. For many reasons there is more strength in the regionalist solution.

The Comparative Advantage of Regionalism

There is no doubt about the fact that multilateralism and regionalism needs to strengthen one another in order to create a more functional global trading system. The fundamental question is how regionalism and multilateralism should be related. In accordance with the notion of ‘multilateralizing regionalism’ advocated by Baldwin and colleagues, the rules of the WTO may set the conditions for regional trading arrangements, which may enhance their benign and prevent their malign effects. RIAs may certainly create distortions or be designed by strong regional powers to exploit weaker neighbours. Under such and other circumstances WTO rules and discipline may serve to ‘police’ regional relations and contribute to healthy regional relations (Tussie, 2003). But rather than subordinating regionalism under WTO multilateralism, as Baldwin and colleagues argue, the reversed argument holds more promise: regionalism can be a prerequisite for reconstructing multilateralism on a more equal regional basis – a regional multilateralism.

There is a comparative political advantage of regionalism compared to multilateralism, at least as it is presently being practiced. Regionalism is here to stay and also likely to become a stronger force over the coming decades. Regions are good vehicles for smaller countries to increase their bargaining power and
voice in multilateral trade and in the context of globalisation. Regionalism offers a better approach than unilateralism, bilateralism and even multilateralism. Regionalism will often work more easily and effectively compared to multilateralism, which is dependent on 200 or more unequal nation-states. The most pragmatic and effective solution is a ‘regional multi-lateralism’ compared to a dysfunctional and asymmetric multilateralism based on nation-states. Regionalism will cede to multilateralism only when multi-lateralism is rebuilt on foundations of successful regionalism and a fairer world order (Mistry, 2003:137-8).

Needless to say, there are many risks with regionalism. The case of Africa clearly shows that regionalism can be an instrument for sustaining and reinforcing neo-patrimonialism or even be a strategy in the political economy of violence (Bach, 1999). Hence, a positive regionalism as the one advocated here cannot be built on predatory or neo-patrimonial political regimes. Furthermore, there is a risk that the most powerful regional countries may dominate the regional arrangements in accordance with their myopic national benefits and at the expense of weaker countries. There needs to be a change of attitude towards regionalism and cooperation, away from a westphalian and neo-patrimonial logic towards a post-westphalian co-operative logic.

The history of regionalism in Africa suggests that a fair distribution of costs and benefits is perhaps both the most decisive but also most difficult factor in economic regionalism. Still, regionalism is more effective in dealing with fairness (than multilateral) such as the smaller number of members in RIA; that inequalities and differences of interests are often smaller within a region compared to the global system as a whole; that the redistributive and corrective mechanisms that most regional ventures are able to utilise, and that regional markets can be perceived as single units within the global economy, which will then be beneficial for the region as a whole. Even if the EC/EU must certainly not be copied as a ready-made step of reforms or as an institutionalised template, it serves as a general example or generic model of regionalism when political regimes have learnt to co-operate according to a post-westphalian logic.

The EU Model vs. the WTO Model

The WTO’s ontology is a liberal view of globalisation and multilateralism, which stresses the homogenising influence of market forces towards an open society in a linear perspective. The purpose of political order, according to the liberal tradition, is thus to facilitate the free movement of economic factors (under a rules-based order – seen not only as a natural but also as the most beneficial condition. The optimum size of an economy (and therefore its ultimate form) is the world market. RIA are only second best, but acceptable to the extent that they are ‘stepping stones’ rather than ‘stumbling blocks’ to the world market.

According to a more sceptical view, however, the liberal project of globalism is not realistic; the unregulated market system is analogous to political anarchy, and consequently there is a need to ‘politicise the global’ (Hettne, 2003), or to promote the ‘reinvention of politics’ (Beck, 1997).

This view is congruent with the trend that many scholars and policy-makers have begun to press for: a broader and more ‘political’ approach, which emphasises the need for some intervention by political institutions and for policy manoeuvres to generate innovative development policies, which are ultimately more important than trade liberalisation, left alone (i.e. the WTO’s main emphasis)
For instance, Dani Rodrik (1998) emphasises that the benefits of trade reforms for economic growth and development are often overestimated and ‘can backfire if it diverts the scarce energies and political resources ... from growth fundamentals’, such as human resources, macroeconomics and fiscal policy.

In this context it must be stressed that the benefits stemming from conventional trade liberalisation are much less significant than what they used to be. Somewhat paradoxically, the ‘success’ of GATT/WTO to contribute to the reduction of tariffs and quotas imply that the potential benefits of continued multilateral trade liberalisation have decreased. In response the WTO has now adopted a broader approach, and tried to manage trade-issues related to investments and property-rights and so on. But the WTO is still heavily trade focused and it cannot take a more holistic approach to growth and development, which goes beyond trade per se. This explains the importance of the term regional integration arrangements rather than the more narrow regional trading arrangements.

‘Development’ is a multidimensional phenomenon which depends on positive spillover and linkages between different sectors. The point is that such a comprehensive and multidimensional approach is not viable on the global/multilateral level or within the WTO. It can only work on a regional level where it is possible and viable to link trade with other sectors and issues. The comprehensive approach posits that trade issues and trade integration should be coupled with other forms of economic and factor market integration (such as investment, payments, monetary integration and harmonisation) as well as various types of economic cooperation in specified sectors (such as transport and communications) (Robson, 1993; also see Higgott, 2003). Although the multidimensional approach is more complex than trade liberalisation, it is both fairer and politically more feasible on a regional level. As discussed above, from a political standpoint, it is easier to liberalise towards neighbours than on a multilateral basis, and it is also easier to deal with distribution issues within a region. Regional trade clubs can respond and deal more effectively with non-trade economic and political challenges such as environmental protection and migration (Birdsall & Lawrence, 1999:146).

This line of thinking can be said to be part of the EU model. It has started to have effect in different versions in other parts of the world. The strategy is only possible to manage through multidimensional and comprehensive regional organisations, such as EU, SADC, ECOWAS, UEMOA, ASEAN and increasingly Mercosur, since these regional organisations and polities can exploit spill-over effects and linkages between trade and economic and political sectors, which is much more difficult or even impossible to do in frameworks restricted to trade matters, such as WTO and NAFTA. As already mentioned, it also depends on a change of attitude of involved political regimes, away from old-fashioned westphalian thinking towards a more co-operative post-westphalian political rationality.

**Conclusion**

Insistence on a vertical WTO-led approach will only reinforce competition between multilateralism and regionalism in the global trading system. Likewise, an ideological regionalism that ignores wider multilateralism cannot facilitate a more symbiotic relationship. Thus, some kind of horizontal and more balanced combination of WTO and RIAs, each having its own basis of authority, should provide the predominant future form of global governance in international trade. Both the WTO and RIAs need each other and must assume shared responsibility for resolving economic de-
velopment problems related to international trade. The WTO has suffered a decline in power and authority and therefore needs support from regional bodies. Multilateralism will work more effectively when it is built on interaction among fewer regional blocs that are more equal in economic and political size compared to present-day WTO with 200 nation-states. The WTO would still be needed, but it would be a rather different organisation compared to the present one. Meanwhile, many RIAs are still embryonic and need support from the WTO. A combined multilateral-regional strategy provides the most feasible solution for the future.

It is somewhat difficult to conceive how the WTO can maintain primacy if RIAs continue to deepen and strengthen around the world. As formal macro-regions emerge and take a political actor role, there will necessarily also be a need for more organised contacts between these regions (i.e. interregionalism). The strong regions are likely to be able to manage their own development and trading problems in a similar manner as the EU has done historically. For example, further consolidation of economic regionalism in Africa as well as Asia and Latin America may arguably reduce the relevance of the WTO. If so, it would be more appropriate that WTO serves the needs of RIAs rather than vice versa.

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References


Demystifying Africa’s Security
Jeremy Keenan

This article has had a brief but chequered history. I was initially invited to comment on this issue, partly because of my earlier criticisms (Keenan, 2008b) of Sean McFate’s role and writing on aspects of US militarisation. As he is a contributor to this issue, let me say forthwith, for reasons that will become clear later, that the points he raises in his contribution to this issue (McFate, 2008a) on the likely outsourcing of AFRICOM’s mission, are extremely important. ROAPE’s editors are to be complimented for publishing it. I had also expressed slightly critical views over the way articles in this issue had addressed certain aspects of both the ‘global war on terror’ (GWOT) and the US’s new military command structure for Africa, AFRICOM. If that were not enough, I also raised concerns about the way articles in this issue, and almost everywhere else for that matter, were using the concept of ‘globalisation’!

As these issues digress from the immediate subject of this issue, ‘Africa’s security’, to wider, more ‘global’ issues, I have consequently framed them within the juxtaposition of America’s current crises of imperial over-reach and financial collapse and the implications that both of these have for the immediate and longer term future of Africa.

The four points I address are: 1) The way in which the GWOT has been used by the Bush administration to justify its militarisation of Africa; 2) how and why this justification underwent a ‘paradigm shift’ with the launch of AFRICOM from the GWOT to the ‘security-development’ discourse (Keenan, 2008b); 3) two fundamental misconceptions in the use of the term ‘globalisation’; and 4) the context and implications of McFate’s important briefing on the ‘Outsourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp’.

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1) The Role of the GWOT in the US Militarisation of Africa

In their article on the role of private military companies (PMCs) in US-Africa policy, Aning, Jaye and Atuobi (2008) argue that there is nothing altruistic about the US’s involvement in Africa. US – Africa relations, they say, are shaped by the GWOT, US interests in African oil and competition with China. However, these three concerns, especially the GWOT, need to be contextualized, as Africa’s strategic importance to the US has undergone several significant reappraisals over the last decade or so. I will deal first with oil and China.

Although only rarely admitted by US government spokespersons, the importance of African, especially sub-Saharan, oil has been the dominant of the these three strategic considerations since AFRICOM was first mooted within the US Department of Defense around 1997 (Keenan, 2008b). It was in that year that US dependency on foreign oil reached the psychologically critical 50% mark, leading the neo-conservatives (‘neo-cons’) to make energy security a key election issue in 2000. However, it was the Cheney Report, published in May 2001 (National Energy Policy Group 2001), that singled out sub-Saharan Africa as the key source of future US oil supplies and prompted President Bush to define African oil as a ‘strategic national interest’ and hence a resource that the US might choose to control through military force (Volman, 2003). Since then, the strategic importance of African oil to the US, in terms of percentage of foreign supply, has increased further. In contrast, China’s economic expansionism in Africa was of little concern to the US in 1997, but has tended to move increasingly higher up the radar during the course of this millennium.

References to US concerns about the GWOT in Africa are, however, more problematic and need to be qualified.
Debates: Demystifying Africa’s Security

very carefully. The reasons for this are complex, but I will deal with them only briefly as I have spelt them out frequently in ROAPE (Keenan 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2006a, 2006d, 2008a) and elsewhere. The essence of my argument is that the Bush administration decided to use a military structure to secure access to and control over African oil and opted to use the GWOT as the justification, rather than acknowledging that US military intervention in Africa was about resource control. Indeed, as Deepak Lal, Professor of International Development Studies at UCLA and former advisor to both the World Bank and IMF, affirmed, ‘The war on terror can be seen as merely an extension of defending the capitalist market’ (Hanieh, 2006). However, launching the GWOT in Africa was tricky, as most of the continent, especially sub-Saharan Africa, had hitherto not suffered the atrocities of terrorism. The main terrorist incidents in Africa had been concentrated in Somalia, East Africa and the Maghreb. Beginning in early 2003, the US, in collusion with Algeria, its key regional ally in the GWOT, fabricated a string of false flag ‘terrorism’ incidents in the Algerian Sahara and across much of the Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad) in order to justify the launch of a new or ‘second’ African front in the GWOT.

As this duplicity underpins current US policy towards Africa, all references to US concerns about terrorism and the GWOT in Africa need to be treated with much circumspection, as we are invariably being confronted with facets of the Bush administration’s parallel ‘information war’ (Keenan, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b).

2) AFRICOM’s ‘Paradigm Shift’ from the GWOT to the ‘Security-Development’ Discourse

The fabricated Sahara-Sahelian ‘front’ in the GWOT provided Washington with the justification for its militarisation of Africa as well as the ideological rationales of General James (Jim) Jones, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) and Commander of EUCOM, and other EUCOM commanders in Stuttgart and at the Pentagon as they laid the ground plans for AFRICOM.

However, the authorization of AFRICOM in December 2006 coincided with what, on face value, appears to have been a significant ‘paradigm shift’ in American military thinking in the form of the US military’s adoption, during 2005-6, of the security-development discourse.

How and why has the US military made this paradigm shift? The ‘how’ is very easy to answer: the new ‘security-development’ discourse was shipped more or less wholesale across the Atlantic from Downing Street to Washington, following the publication of the report of Tony Blair’s Commission for Africa in March 2005. In an analysis of ‘New Labour’s’ policies on Africa, Rita Abrahamsen (2005) revealed how Blair’s securitisation of Africa enabled Britain’s (and Europe’s) dealings and interactions with the continent to shift from a discourse of ‘development/humanitarianism’ to one of ‘risk/fear/security’ in such a way that Africa was increasingly mentioned in the context of the ‘war on terrorism’ and the dangers it posed to Britain and the international community. A key element in ‘New Labour’s’ analysis of Africa was the interpretation of poverty and underdevelopment as dangerous (Abrahamsen, 2005). By emphasizing the threat posed by the marginalised and excluded, Africa’s ‘dangerous classes’, and the role of aid and ‘development’ in containing this threat, the British government succeeded in merging the development and security agendas so that the two have become almost indistinguishable. By means of such pronouncements, Africa and underdevelopment have been subtly shifted ‘away from the categories of “development/humanitarianism” and along a continuum of “risk/threat”’ (Abrahamsen, 2005). The securitisation of Africa...
has been further promoted by drawing attention to the association between underdevelopment and conflict and the various discourses on ‘failed states’, which, in no time at all, were linked directly to the 9/11 attacks. It took only a few steps – from ‘poverty’ and ‘underdevelopment’ to ‘conflict’, ‘fear’, ‘failed states’ and the black holes of the ‘ungoverned areas’ – to recast Africa as the ‘Heart of Darkness’ and to transpose the GWOT into its vast ungoverned spaces: the DRC, Sudan, Somalia and EUCOM’s infamous ‘swamp of terror’, the Sahara.

The ‘why’ is also easy to answer: it enabled the US military to substitute the overly aggressive, increasingly less credible, global war on terror-orientated and militaristic image that it had been displaying towards Africa for one that enabled President Bush to announce AFRICOM as a new command that:

> will enhance our efforts to help bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa.7

Such non-aggressive, seemingly un-militaristic and anthropologically seductive language, emphasising AFRICOM’s development-humanitarian aims and stressing its goals of strengthening civilian agencies and civilian capacities, now characterises all US government references to and descriptions of AFRICOM. Sean McFate (2008a) shows how in this discourse, security and development are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing:

> To deny the sanctuary in which armed groups incubate and thereby stave off internal conflict, governments must address the root causes of public grievances. These grievances are development based; therefore, the security solution must be development based.

This shift in Washington’s alleged concern for the ‘development’ of Africa is illustrated nowhere better than in the difference between the EUCOM and AFRICOM websites and associated publications before and after 2006 (when AFRICOM took over most of Africa from EUCOM). Whereas most news stories and pictures prior to 2005-6 reflected the US military’s concerns with the GWOT, counter-terrorism and the associated training of African militaries, AFRICOM’s more recent top stories (4-11 August 2008) cover military involvement in medical training, provision of safe water, care of livestock, civilian capacity-building, etc.

The Hidden Face of AFRICOM

Since 2005-6, justification for the US’s militarisation of the continent has shifted from the GWOT and straightforward counterterrorism to the more humanitarian security-development discourse. The fundamental question with regard to AFRICOM is whether its website news headlines and its ‘peace and development’ oriented mission statements really do reflect a paradigm shift in US military thinking, or whether they are merely good PR, a further twist in Washington’s ‘information war’: a deceptive mystification process that enables AFRICOM to be portrayed as more benign than it really is.

The answer is found on the ground – in Africa. Whether couched in the language of the GWOT or the security-development discourse, local-regional outbreaks of civil unrest and rebellion (‘incursions’) by minority-cum-opposition groups, frequently provoked by local US-supported politico-military elites, continue to help legitimise the US military presence in Africa and are being dealt with by military means. Far from bringing ‘peace and security’ to Africa, AFRICOM is directly instrumental in creating conflict and insecurity. For example, on 7 January 2007, less than three
weeks after President Bush used such soothing words in authorising AFRICOM, US forces killed an unknown number, certainly hundreds, of Somali fighters and innocent civilians trapped in the ‘killing zone’ between US-backed Ethiopian forces to the north and west, US-backed Kenyan forces to the south, and the sea, reminding the world that the US presence sought to resolve conflicts in Africa by brute military intervention. Post-2006 interventions by US troops in the Sahara-Sahel have been widely documented (Keenan, 2006d, 2008b, 2009b). In May 2006, for example, US Special Forces, flown secretly from Stuttgart to Tamanrasset, accompanied Algeria’s secret military services into northern Mali to give support to the Algerian-orchestrated Tuareg rebellion designed to destabilise northern Mali. In February 2008, US Special Forces (possibly contractors – PMCs) accompanied Malian troops on a vindictive raid on a desert town in the same area, at the same time as AFRICOM’s commander, General William ‘Kip’ Ward and US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, Theresa Whelan, were promoting AFRICOM at a RUSI meeting in London and at which Ms Whelan denied the presence of US ‘troops’ in northern Mali. Exactly one month after the Somali killings, the first shots were fired in Niger by Tuareg rebels in what has now escalated into a region-wide conflagration (Keenan, 2008a). The multiple rebellions stem from the US’s destabilisation of the region through its GWOT. In Niger especially, US-trained troops have been responsible for appalling human rights abuses and atrocities in a government-directed ‘ethnocide’ against the Tuareg (Keenan, 2008a, 2009b). The one obstacle to a peaceful settlement of the conflict is Niger’s US-backed President, Mamadou Tandja. One wag of Washington’s little finger would bring Tandja to the peace table. But no such wags have been forthcoming, for the simple reason that the regional insecurity caused by the rebellion has furthered US strategic interests, namely that such insecurity justifies AFRICOM and the US militarisation of Africa.

The Consequences of AFRICOM

Does AFRICOM have any prospect of bringing peace, security and development to Africa? While AFRICOM’s commanders have been preaching ‘security and development’, their operations on the ground have so far created insecurity and undermined democratic expressions of civil society. Indeed, the establishment of AFRICOM reflects the Bush administration’s primary reliance on the use of military force to pursue its strategic interests. The progressive militarisation of Africa since 2002 has three serious consequences for the peoples of Africa. Firstly, it will militarise US relations with Africa and militarise numerous African countries which, in turn, will be more likely to use force in obtaining their own objectives. Secondly, the presence of the US base at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti and military facilitative arrangements elsewhere on the continent, along with the encouragement given to domestic governments to use force in preference to more democratic means will create more militants and hence unrest and insecurity, as we are seeing in most countries of North Africa and the Sahel. Thirdly, the US administration’s primary reliance on its military has effectively usurped the role of the State Department and specialised agencies such as USAID, whose skills and experience are better suited to achieving the ‘peace’, ‘security’ and ‘development’ that AFRICOM claims to espouse.

The Implications of AFRICOM for the Peoples of Africa

AFRICOM is showing signs of serving to protect unpopular, repressive regimes supportive of US interests. In the case of North Africa and the Sahel regions, the
US military intervention of the last 5-6 years has served to reinforce the authoritarian and repressive methods of states in the region, not only through the provision of more high-technology surveillance, weapons and security systems, but also by emboldening the state security services in their abuse of power. One prominent local citizen in southern Algeria expressed the views of many when he said: 'Now that they [the Algerian authorities] have the Americans behind them, they have become even bigger bullies' (Keenan, 2009b). The US intervention is thus prolonging and perhaps even entrenching fundamentally undemocratic regimes, while weakening or delaying the development of autonomous and more democratic civil societies.

Social scientists unfamiliar with the new ‘security development’ discourse may find its emphasis on ‘security’ and ‘development’ seductive. What more does Africa need? However, as Abrahamsen (2005) has already pointed out, London and Washington have used this discourse to link Africa’s underdevelopment with the threat of terrorism. And the regimes of Africa have followed suit: many are now using the pretext of the GWOT to repress legitimate opposition by linking it with ‘terrorism’. US-backed regimes across the Sahel have provoked elements of civil society, usually minority groups of one sort or another, into civil unrest or taking up arms. Indeed, such actions across the Sahel have come close to making the GWOT a self-fulfilling prophecy. Moreover, and as Abrahamsen (2005) also emphasised, the link between underdevelopment and terrorism has served to generate a negative image of fear around the continent, and has created suspicion and hostility towards its people, with a consequent deterioration in race relations, stricter European-wide immigration controls and asylum laws and the erosion of civil liberties in the face of perceived terrorist threats.

Above all, the ‘security-development’ discourse explicitly links Africa’s poor, her ‘dangerous classes’ as Abrahamsen calls them, the marginalised and excluded to international security ‘problems’ and ‘terrorism’ (Abrahamsen, 2005).

3) Misconceptions About ‘Global/Globalisation’

Abrahamsen & Williams (2008) locate their timely focus on Africa’s security governance within the dynamics and structures underpinning and driving the processes of privatisation, which, in turn, are located within the changing nature of contemporary capitalism. The issue is punctuated liberally with references to aspects of both neo-liberalism and globalisation. Indeed, it would be strange if that were not so, as neo-liberalism has been the root cause of many, perhaps most, of Africa’s political-economic and social problems over the last generation or so: weak/’failed’ states, poor governance, underdevelopment, marginalisation, exclusion, poverty, etc., while it is the nature of contemporary capitalism, in its ‘globalised’ form, which enables us to understand much of what I have already said about Africa’s strategic importance to the US.

However, there are two aspects of neo-liberalism and contemporary capitalism to which I would like to draw attention, as they have an important bearing on our understanding of security in Africa and how we address it.

The Implosion of Capitalism

My first problem with the term globalisation, especially in its neo-liberal economic context, is that I believe it is mistakenly associated, almost synonymously, with the idea of the ‘expansion’ of capitalism, both socially and geographically, in some sort of ‘ultimate’, ‘total’ or ‘global’ sense. Globalisation is
understood as meaning literally ‘global’, in the sense that capitalism (now triumphant) has or is in the process of finally permeating or expanding into all corners and to all peoples on the planet. While it is almost certainly true that everybody on the planet is now touched in one way or another by the world capitalist system, being ‘touched’ or ‘affected’ by the world capitalist system is not the same thing as being ‘part’ of that system, either as producer or consumer.

However, what we have been seeing, most noticeably since the early 1980s, during the age of neo-liberalism and the increasingly unfettered march of its destructive forces, is not so much the expansion of capitalism, at least not socially and spatially, but its implosion, as increasing numbers of people in almost all parts of the world have been marginalised and excluded, as neither producers nor consumers, from the capitalist system. Ankie Hoogvelt (1997, 2001), who wrote about this in the mid-1990s, reckoned that as many as 52% of the world’s population was excluded.

Hoogvelt’s exclusion has nowhere been greater than in Africa, where poverty levels and extreme maldistribution of wealth have forced increasing numbers of the continent’s population to resort to the vestigial and transformed elements of their precapitalist formations and other means, which have more than a passing bearing on the rise of the private security companies (PSCs), for survival. It is these social elements, the progeny of a colonial past and neo-liberal present in which those two key agents of western, not global, capitalism – the World Bank and IMF – have played a lead role, that comprise the bulk of Africa’s ‘dangerous classes’ against whom the better off elements of the population are minded to ensure their security. It would have been interesting if the contributors to this issue had been able to show us the correlation between the contribution of PSCs to each African country’s labour market and that country’s Gini coefficient (a measure of wealth distribution). The fact that South Africa\(^1\) has by far the largest PSC market in the world (as a percentage of GDP; Abrahamsen, 2008) as well as one of the world’s highest Gini coefficients, is as much a relic of the apartheid era as it is the outcome of the present government’s pro-business, neo-liberal economic policies. Indeed, the combination of the government’s neo-liberal Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Program (GEAR) combined with government redistribution programmes that have favoured an emergent class of wealthy black entrepreneurs has ensured an increase in the economic and social inequality that was inherent in the apartheid system. Tony Twine, an economist at Econometrix (Johannesburg), claimed in 2006 that South Africa’s distribution of income was worse than anywhere in the world, with the exception of Venezuela and Brazil.\(^2\) Is it any wonder that South Africa leads the world in PSCs?

Security and the security industry need to be located more firmly in the implosion of neo-liberal capitalism since the late 1970s and early 1980s. Two dimensions of this implosion are of critical relevance to global security issues. One, as Hoogvelt and others have noted, is the increasing marginalisation, indeed exclusion, of increasing numbers of the world’s population from the capitalist system. The other is the current crisis caused by western capitalism’s reliance for its profitability on what Walden Bello (2008) has called its ‘financialization’.

**Differential Asset Bases**

This brings me back to the question of the changing nature of contemporary capitalism, especially the notion of its globalisation. As an economic concept, globalisation refers primarily to the removal of barriers to capital flows and is a process which picked up momentum after the 1970s. However, the world
economy is not as ‘globalised’ as our colloquial usage of the term might suggest. Let me explain.

The underlying driver of capitalism is wealth creation, which is ultimately measured in assets, which, we assume, can be converted into capital in the form of money and transferred around the world as capital flows. In practice, things are not as straightforward as that, for the simple reason that the ‘meaning’ of ‘asset’ differs between national/regional markets, making the world’s economic financial system far less globalised than we assume it to be.

The world capitalist system comprises a number of regional/national ‘components’. For simplicity’s sake, I will ignore the Russian and Japanese ‘components’, the ‘global South’ and the ASEAN and deal only with the ‘West’, in which the financial markets and systems are distinguished from those of continental Europe, and the ‘Orient’, which comprises Muslim countries, especially those of the Gulf region, India and China. However, these components are far from ‘integrated’ into one ‘globalised’ economic financial system in so far as they are characterised, amongst other things, by their differential asset bases, which are a function of the different financial instruments used in their national/regional markets which, in turn, are to some extent culturally determined.

What does this mean and what are its implications? Take, for example, Muslim countries whose financial/legal systems are based on the principles of shari’a. Shari’a law precludes ‘making money from money’ as, for example, in the form of interest, with the consequence that many of the financial instruments used in the West, such as ‘shorting’, buying on ‘margin’, hedge funds and derivatives which have an interest component and even fixed income instruments such as bonds, are precluded. There are certain limited, complicated and expensive ways of circumventing these restrictions, such as ‘swaps’ that are arranged outside the region. Thus, to take a hypothetical example, if a speculator wanted to take advantage of his/her knowledge/intuition that housing bubbles in both, say, the USA and Abu Dhabi were about to burst, he/she could use a considerable array of instruments to ‘short’ building, housing, mortgage and other such stocks on the US market and thus contribute to, perhaps even trigger, and certainly profit from the bubble burst. In Abu Dhabi, however, that would be impossible, except perhaps through extreme and expensive ‘swap-type’ arrangements probably made ‘offshore’, as there are effectively no such instruments to manipulate the market in Abu Dhabi in the same way as in the US. The most an investor can do with such knowledge is not to invest in the Abu Dhabi market! The net result is that the Abu Dhabi market is left relatively stable.

The use of many of the instruments used in Western, especially US-UK markets, is also severely limited in both China and India, not because of shari’a compliance (these not being Muslim countries), but because their legal-regulatory systems, which are partly culturally determined, restrict them.

The existence of such differential asset bases means that individual, corporate and sovereign players in these different regional/national markets operate very differently within the supposedly ‘globalised system’. In particular, it means that there are major limits on the extent to which they can financialize their systems as a route to increased profitability.

The world economic system is ‘globalised’ to the extent that what happens in one part of the world has implications in another. But there is nothing very new about that, except for the changes in ‘real time’ afforded by accelerated communications systems. For instance, when the
Phoenicians over-exploited the *Murex* shells of the Levant coast, which were the source of their monopoly on the much sought after Tyrrhenian purple dye, they sought new deposits of the shell at Mogador, on the Moroccan Atlantic coast, thus radically shifting the economic orientations of the known world at the time. The current implosion and threatened ‘meltdown’ of much of the West’s financial system and associated asset base is leading to a similar geographical and socio-political re-orientation in the contemporary world economy. There is a difference, however, in that this current reorientation, broadly from the West to the Orient, is not being facilitated by the ‘globalisation’ of the world economic system. On the contrary, it is a consequence of its fundamentally ‘unglobalised’, differential asset bases.

Western capitalism’s assets are based on, transacted through and measured by a range of financial instruments which simply do not exist, or only in simple form, in other parts of the world, such as the Orient. Asset wealth, the basis of the world’s economic system, is measured essentially in commodities, which are a function of commodity prices. But how are these ‘prices’ derived? The first difficulty is that we are dealing almost entirely with ‘futures’ prices which are largely determined by traders who rely heavily, although not exclusively, on inventories, which, in turn, are notoriously opaque. That is especially true of the hydrocarbons and metals markets; less so in the grain and other such markets. The second difficulty is that most of their purchases, which are in ‘futures’, are bought ‘on margin’ and/or ‘hedged’ through a range of derivative-based financial instruments, which are often extremely complex and which simply do not exist in most Oriental markets. Indeed, the complexity and ‘sophistication’ of the instruments available in the West is such that it has taken traders a matter of metaphorical minutes to devise means of circumventing the recently imposed ban on the ‘shorting’ of financial stocks! The West’s system of financial capitalism is based on financial instruments that have enabled the massive, mind-boggling leveraging of assets. In short, they are bought on ‘borrowed’ money, or rather money (assets) which does not exist. Indeed, the creation of almost unlimited ‘debt’ (as currently seen most spectacularly in the western mortgage markets) has been traded (until the current implosion of the western banking system) as an asset, but through instruments that are so complex and opaque that few banks even know the value of their ‘debt’.

The problem with creating these dubious (‘fuzzy’) financial instruments and using them to invest in the financial sector, as Walden Bello (2008) recently wrote, is that ‘it is tantamount to squeezing value out of already created value. It may create profit … but it doesn’t create new value.’

Even if we try and assess holdings in stock (and commodity) markets, we are likely to find that they have been bought ‘on margin’ and have been so leveraged that they may ultimately be worth little more than the paper the contract was written on. Indeed, this is what we are currently witnessing as central banks, mostly western and notably the US Federal Reserve, try to ease the process of ‘de-leveraging’ and prevent the whole house of cards from tumbling down. In short, western capitalism’s financialization had reached the absurdity of being based increasingly on the creation of debt that became re-denominated and traded as an asset, through derivatives that were increasingly highly leveraged!

In the Orient, such manipulation (leveraging, buying on margin, shorting, etc.) is only possible through comparatively simple instruments and to a very limited extent. For example, Saudi Aramco, the world’s largest oil supplier, does not trade derivatives, insisting on ‘cash only’, except, quite possibly, for a
few highly credit-worthy exceptions. That is true, at least in general terms, throughout most Indian, Chinese and other Gulf markets. If I want to short an Indian or Chinese stock, it is virtually impossible for me to do so.

I have so far limited my argument about the limits of globalisation to the differential use of financial instruments and their impacts on capital flows. What, it might be asked, of ‘cash’ in the form of currencies and their transferability? Without going into depth, let me merely point out that even here, at the most liquid end of the market, global flows are impeded by a surprising number of restrictions in the form of non-convertible currencies and restrictions on the movement of investment capital, especially in the form of limitations on the repatriation of profits.

I have raised these points not merely to ‘nit-pick’ over what I regard as the often analytically meaningless usage of the term globalisation, but to encourage more focus and debate on the contemporary nature of capitalism and the implications that the current implosion of Western capitalism and the reorientation of global assets eastwards has for Africa, especially now that Africa is becoming sandwiched increasingly between the imperial interests of both the US and China. The last thirty years of capitalism, far from being ‘globalised’, have seen the world’s financial markets structured and operating through a quite different array of financial instruments and under quite different legal-regulatory systems. Their respective routes to profitability have therefore differed accordingly, with the outcome, in the form of the collapse of the West’s financialization pathway, likely to have significant implications for the way in which future dealings on the African continent are undertaken.

4) The Lesser of Two Evils

Sean McFate is a well-known proponent of US militarisation and the security-development discourse (McFate, 2008a). However, his Briefing on the ‘Out-sourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp’ (McFate, 2008b) raises what is probably the most important point in this volume.

AFRICOM is faced by two major problems. One is that no African country, apart perhaps from Liberia, is prepared to house its HQ; for the time being, it will therefore remain in Stuttgart. The second and more important problem, addressed by McFate, is that AFRICOM has a huge mandate but is without the means to accomplish it. As McFate confirms, no dedicated or new military units will be created for AFRICOM. Nor will AFRI-COM be able to ‘borrow’ troops because of the huge demand for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. If that is not bad enough for the Pentagon, the House of Representives’ Appropriations Committee believes that ‘traditional U.S. military operations are not an appropriate response to most or many of the challenges facing Africa’ and accordingly wants to cut AFRICOM’s requested budget of $390 million to just $80 million. In the wake of Wall Street’s current implosion, AFRICOM will be lucky to see even $80 million.

We thus have two illustrations of the combination of crises now facing the US: a spectacular case of imperial over-reach combined with the implosion of its financial system.

How then will AFRICOM accomplish its mission? The answer, according to McFate, is what EUCOM and AFRICOM have been doing in Africa since at least early 2004, by outsourcing it to PMCs, whose propensity towards corruption (as seen in Iraq) and disregard of human rights are part of the package. That, as McFate knows from his own personal involvement with PMCs, is exactly what PMCs have been waiting for:
This multi-billion dollar industry is looking for the next US-sponsored conflict market once the Iraq and Afghanistan ‘bubble bursts,’ and they see that market as Africa, a continent of crisis (McFate, 2008b).

If McFate is correct, and all the signs suggest that he is, we are thus facing the likely privatisation of AFRICOM’s mission. While that is in keeping with the US administration’s commitment to neoliberalism, it opens Africa up to the potentially horrific prospect of these mercenary forces, and not only American ones, turning Africa into their own ‘plunder economy’ where their self-interests will be served and their fortunes made through the promotion and maintenance of conflict.

Will it come to that? The crisis currently working its way through western capitalism’s financial system, and quite possibly bankrupting the USA (at least in a technical sense) may mean that future US budgets may not stretch to the luxury of PMCs in Africa. That may, in a sense, let Africa off the imperial hook. But there is also the prospect that US budget constraints will encourage US PMCs to look towards Africa’s ‘plunder economy’ to make themselves more financially ‘self-reliant’. And that also means even more unaccountable.

However, this crisis of western capitalism has other equally serious consequences for Africa. These are that the Orient, with its ‘hard assets’ (cash, arms, commodities, etc.) will become even more attractive to Africa’s rulers (as distinct from their subjects) than the offerings of the West, which are backed by a range of credits, loans, conditionalities and all that ‘fuzzy stuff’ (discredited financial instruments). Indeed, this process is already well under way with the Saudis and Chinese providing hard asset payment for leases/purchases of land in Ethiopia, Sudan, DRC and elsewhere. If that process continues to develop in the way that it has already started, it is conceivable in a few years time that AFRICOM will be looked back on as the lesser of two evils.

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Endnotes
1. The current GWOT was launched after 9/11 and is distinguished from the Reagan administration’s war on ‘international terrorism’ (Paull, 1982).
2. In 1993, 18 US soldiers were killed in Mogadishu. US military sources subsequently and incorrectly defined this incident as an act of ‘terrorism’. In 1998, some 200 people were killed when US embassies were bombed in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. In 2002, a hotel was bombed in Mombassa, allegedly by al-Qaeda ‘terrorists’, and two surface-to-air missiles fired at an Israel-bound airliner. Northern Algeria has been subjected to both Islamist and state terrorism since the early 1990s, while there have been incidents in Morocco (bombings in Casablanca on 16 May 2003) and Tunisia (el-Ghriba synagogue, April 2002).
3. In his State of the Union address of 29 January 2002, President Bush spoke of the expansion of the ‘war on terror’ to new fronts. Since then, the term ‘front’, and especially the term ‘second front’, has become almost synonymous with the attempt to globalise the GWOT. Afghanistan is usually understood to be the first front. The term ‘second front’ has been applied at one time or another to most parts of the world, including SE Asia, Iraq, Latin America (in the context of the election of left-wing presidents in Brazil and Ecuador, and in terms of the FARC campaign in Colombia) and, after 2003, the Sahara. In the latter case the ‘first’ front is sometimes understood to be the Horn of Africa and East Africa; see, for example, Clays (2003).
4. The front’s two major initiatives were the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) of 2004 and the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) of 2005. The later increased the countries involved from 4 (Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad) to 9 with the inclusion of Senegal, Nigeria, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and thus linked Africa’s two largest oil and gas producing states, Algeria and Nigeria, through an architecture that was uniquely American.
5. Much of this section on AFRICOM is taken from Keenan (2008b)


10. On 18 June 2008, the European Parliament voted 369-197 (with 106 abstentions) in favour of the draconian ‘Return Directive’. The measure allows undocumented migrants to be held in detention centres for up to 18 months and banned from EU territory for five years.

11. And surrounding countries such as Lesotho, Botswana and Namibia.


13. For example, by shorting the FTSE 100 Index future and then buying all stocks except the financials!


References


Unlocking the Relationship Between the WTO & Regional Integration Arrangements (RIAs)

Fredrik Söderbaum

The relationship between the World Trade Organization (WTO) and regional integration arrangement (RIAs) is problematic. Although RIAs need to comply with WTO rules, there is no fruitful interaction. It is therefore promising that leading economists have made efforts to try to resolve the malfunctioning relationship (Baldwin & Thornton, 2008).

Richard Baldwin (2008) states that:

*If the WTO is to survive and flourish, it must adapt because regionalism is here to stay. Embarking on a WTO Action Plan on Regionalism would be a strong step towards adapting to the new reality.*

This plan is supposed to contribute to enabling the WTO to change from an ‘innocent bystander’ to active ‘engagement’ with RIAs.

Although the proposed Action Plan is laudable, it has two fundamental weaknesses: first, although it acknowledges certain benign aspects of regionalism, regionalism is mainly considered a ‘threat’, in need of regulation and control; second, elevating WTO standards, under which RIAs are subordinated to WTO multilateralism, prevents RIAs from reaching their full potential. Baldwin’s argument for active ‘engagement’ by the WTO appears to require the subordination of regionalism to multilateralism.

The view advanced in this briefing is that there is a need for a more equal balance between the WTO and RIAs. In contrast to the notion of ‘multilateralising regionalism’, there is a need to set regions free and contribute to a more fair and functioning global trading system. Having such a balanced relationship between the WTO and RIAs is necessarily more complicated to achieve than the solution where regionalism is subordinated to the rules and interest resulting from multilateralism. If the regionalist movement continues to deepen in the world system, then it may even be more viable to ‘regionalise multilateralism’, rather than vice versa.

Regionalism as Response to Asymmetric Multilateralism

When the multilateral trading system is analysed through a public goods lens, it appears as a public ‘good in form’, but not in substance. The welfare gains, net benefits as well as the rules of the multilateral trading system are extremely imbalanced and skewed in favour of the industrialised countries (Mendoza, 2003:469). As a consequence, the WTO is neither legitimate nor effective, as illustrated by the failure of the Doha Round of negotiations.

Even if the multilateral trading system is rather successful when viewed in a historical perspective, the GATT/WTO has proved to be not only unfair but also ineffective in dealing with the economic and political challenges since the 1990s. As stated by an authority on economic regionalism in Africa, Percy Mistry (2003:135), the WTO has been ‘hijacked’ by the G8 and OECD governments to protect their interests in a world where
their economic and military power is being challenged by emerging developing countries. It should be recognised that much of today’s regionalism, especially but not only in the South (mainly Africa, Asia and Latin America), has often gained its strength in response to the dominance of WTO and globalisation. Even if multilateralism is seen as a first-best strategy for enhancing the gains from trade from the point of view of economic theory, regionalism is the first-best policy option in practice. Thus, one of the problems with economic theory is that it does not automatically lead to good public policy (Higgott, 2002:22). Indeed, new regionalism is being embraced because multilateralism no longer works (Mistry, 2003:136). Regionalism has become the best risk-management and coping strategy. The new challenges facing countries cannot be handled through national action, so they are pooling sovereignty. RIAs provide an opportunity of the market access they always wished for but never really extracted from multilateral negotiations. Furthermore, many countries have been helped by the unilateral liberalisation of neighbours and the commitments undertaken in the context of RIAs.

Here it needs saying that there is a proliferation of bilateral as well as regional trading agreements all over the world, especially in the Americas and East Asia where scholars refer to the spaghetti bowl and the noodle bowl respectively, but also in Africa. The proliferation of bilateralism is also happening in the context of frustrated multilateralism and because of low trust in the WTO. One important explanation is that many bilateral trading agreements are emerging because policy makers want ‘to create an illusion of control over one’s own policy processes and policy choices’ (Higgott, 2002:22). There are instances when bilateralism improve the conditions and ultimately converge into regionalism or multilateralism, or both. However, to a large extent bilateral agreements can be seen as statements of sovereignty, and result in a fragmentation not only of multilateralism but also of regionalism. One of the more important problems is that strong states often seek bilateral agreements with weaker states. Regionalism implies a more rule-based order, which is also more inclusive since some countries will not be able to conclude bilateral agreements. For many reasons there is more strength in the regionalist solution.

The Comparative Advantage of Regionalism

There is no doubt about the fact that multilateralism and regionalism needs to strengthen one another in order to create a more functional global trading system. The fundamental question is how regionalism and multilateralism should be related. In accordance with the notion of ‘multilateralizing regionalism’ advocated by Baldwin and colleagues, the rules of the WTO may set the conditions for regional trading arrangements, which may enhance their benign and prevent their malign effects. RIAs may certainly create distortions or be designed by strong regional powers to exploit weaker neighbours. Under such and other circumstances WTO rules and discipline may serve to ‘police’ regional relations and contribute to healthy regional relations (Tussie, 2003). But rather than subordinating regionalism under WTO multilateralism, as Baldwin and colleagues argue, the reversed argument holds more promise: regionalism can be a prerequisite for reconstructing multilateralism on a more equal regional basis – a regional multilateralism.

There is a comparative political advantage of regionalism compared to multilateralism, at least as it is presently being practiced. Regionalism is here to stay and also likely to become a stronger force over the coming decades. Regions are good vehicles for smaller countries to increase their bargaining power and
voice in multilateral trade and in the context of globalisation. Regionalism offers a better approach than unilateralism, bilateralism and even multilateralism. Regionalism will often work more easily and effectively compared to multilateralism, which is dependent on 200 or more unequal nation-states. The most pragmatic and effective solution is a ‘regional multi-lateralism’ compared to a dysfunctional and asymmetric multilateralism based on nation-states. Regionalism will cede to multilateralism only when multi-lateralism is rebuilt on foundations of successful regionalism and a fairer world order (Mistry, 2003:137-8).

Needless to say, there are many risks with regionalism. The case of Africa clearly shows that regionalism can be an instrument for sustaining and reinforcing neo-patrimonialism or even be a strategy in the political economy of violence (Bach, 1999). Hence, a positive regionalism as the one advocated here cannot be built on predatory or neo-patrimonial political regimes. Furthermore, there is a risk that the most powerful regional countries may dominate the regional arrangements in accordance with their myopic national benefits and at the expense of weaker countries. There needs to be a change of attitude towards regionalism and cooperation, away from a westphalian and neo-patrimonial logic towards a post-westphalian co-operative logic.

The EU Model vs. the WTO Model

The WTO’s ontology is a liberal view of globalisation and multilateralism, which stresses the homogenising influence of market forces towards an open society in a linear perspective. The purpose of political order, according to the liberal tradition, is thus to facilitate the free movement of economic factors (under a rules-based order – seen not only as a natural but also as the most beneficial condition. The optimum size of an economy (and therefore its ultimate form) is the world market. RIAs are only second best, but acceptable to the extent that they are ‘stepping stones’ rather than ‘stumbling blocks’ to the world market.

According to a more sceptical view, however, the liberal project of globalism is not realistic; the unregulated market system is analogous to political anarchy, and consequently there is a need to ‘politicise the global’ (Hettne, 2003), or to promote the ‘reinvention of politics’ (Beck, 1997).

This view is congruent with the trend that many scholars and policy-makers have begun to press for: a broader and more ‘political’ approach, which emphasises the need for some intervention by political institutions and for policy manoeuvres to generate innovative development policies, which are ultimately more important than trade liberalisation, left alone (i.e. the WTO’s main emphasis)
For instance, Dani Rodrik (1998) emphasises that the benefits of trade reforms for economic growth and development are often overestimated and ‘can backfire if it diverts the scarce energies and political resources ... from growth fundamentals’, such as human resources, macroeconomics and fiscal policy.

In this context it must be stressed that the benefits stemming from conventional trade liberalisation are much less significant than what they used to be. Somewhat paradoxically, the ‘success’ of GATT/WTO to contribute to the reduction of tariffs and quotas imply that the potential benefits of continued multilateral trade liberalisation have decreased. In response the WTO has now adopted a broader approach, and tried to manage trade-issues related to investments and property-rights and so on. But the WTO is still heavily trade focused and it cannot take a more holistic approach to growth and development, which goes beyond trade per se. This explains the importance of the term regional integration arrangements rather than the more narrow regional trading arrangements.

‘Development’ is a multidimensional phenomenon which depends on positive spillover and linkages between different sectors. The point is that such a comprehensive and multidimensional approach is not viable on the global/multilateral level or within the WTO. It can only work on a regional level where it is possible and viable to link trade with other sectors and issues. The comprehensive approach posits that trade issues and trade integration should be coupled with other forms of economic and factor market integration (such as investment, payments, monetary integration and harmonisation) as well as various types of economic cooperation in specified sectors (such as transport and communications) (Robson, 1993; also see Higgott, 2003). Although the multidimensional approach is more complex than trade liberalisation, it is both fairer and politically more feasible on a regional level. As discussed above, from a political standpoint, it is easier to liberalise towards neighbours than on a multilateral basis, and it is also easier to deal with distribution issues within a region. Regional trade clubs can respond and deal more effectively with non-trade economic and political challenges such as environmental protection and migration (Birdsall & Lawrence, 1999:146).

This line of thinking can be said to be part of the EU model. It has started to have effect in different versions in other parts of the world. The strategy is only possible to manage through multidimensional and comprehensive regional organisations, such as EU, SADC, ECOWAS, UEMOA, ASEAN and increasingly Mercosur, since these regional organisations and polities can exploit spillover effects and linkages between trade and economic and political sectors, which is much more difficult or even impossible to do in frameworks restricted to trade matters, such as WTO and NAFTA. As already mentioned, it also depends on a change of attitude of involved political regimes, away from old-fashioned westphalian thinking towards a more co-operative post-westphalian political rationality.

**Conclusion**

Insistence on a vertical WTO-led approach will only reinforce competition between multilateralism and regionalism in the global trading system. Likewise, an ideological regionalism that ignores wider multilateralism cannot facilitate a more symbiotic relationship. Thus, some kind of horizontal and more balanced combination of WTO and RIAs, each having its own basis of authority, should provide the predominant future form of global governance in international trade. Both the WTO and RIAs need each other and must assume shared responsibility for resolving economic de-
velopment problems related to international trade. The WTO has suffered a decline in power and authority and therefore needs support from regional bodies. Multilateralism will work more effectively when it is built on interaction among fewer regional blocs that are more equal in economic and political size compared to present-day WTO with 200 nation-states. The WTO would still be needed, but it would be a rather different organisation compared to the present one. Meanwhile, many RIAs are still embryonic and need support from the WTO. A combined multilateral-regional strategy provides the most feasible solution for the future.

It is somewhat difficult to conceive how the WTO can maintain primacy if RIAs continue to deepen and strengthen around the world. As formal macro-regions emerge and take a political actor role, there will necessarily also be a need for more organised contacts between these regions (i.e. interregionalism). The strong regions are likely to be able to manage their own development and trading problems in a similar manner as the EU has done historically. For example, further consolidation of economic regionalism in Africa as well as Asia and Latin America may arguably reduce the relevance of the WTO. If so, it would be more appropriate that WTO serves the needs of RIAs rather than vice versa.

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Demystifying Africa’s Security
Jeremy Keenan

This article has had a brief but chequered history. I was initially invited to comment on this issue, partly because of my earlier criticisms (Keenan, 2008b) of Sean McFate’s role and writing on aspects of US militarisation. As he is a contributor to this issue, let me say forthwith, for reasons that will become clear later, that the points he raises in his contribution to this issue (McFate, 2008a) on the likely outsourcing of AFRICOM’s mission, are extremely important. ROAPE’s editors are to be complimented for publishing it. I had also expressed slightly critical views over the way articles in this issue had addressed certain aspects of both the ‘global war on terror’ (GWOT) and the US’s new military command structure for Africa, AFRICOM. If that were not enough, I also raised concerns about the way articles in this issue, and almost everywhere else for that matter, were using the concept of ‘globalisation’!

As these issues digress from the immediate subject of this issue, ‘Africa’s security’, to wider, more ‘global’ issues, I have consequently framed them within the juxtaposition of America’s current crises of imperial over-reach and financial collapse and the implications that both of these have for the immediate and longer term future of Africa.

The four points I address are: 1) The way in which the GWOT has been used by the Bush administration to justify its militarisation of Africa; 2) how and why this justification underwent a ‘paradigm shift’ with the launch of AFRICOM from the GWOT to the ‘security-development’ discourse (Keenan, 2008b); 3) two fundamental misconceptions in the use of the term ‘globalisation’; and 4) the context and implications of McFate’s important briefing on the ‘Outsourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp’.

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1) The Role of the GWOT in the US Militarisation of Africa

In their article on the role of private military companies (PMCs) in US-Africa policy, Aning, Jaye and Atuobi (2008) argue that there is nothing altruistic about the US’s involvement in Africa. US – Africa relations, they say, are shaped by the GWOT, US interests in African oil and competition with China. However, these three concerns, especially the GWOT, need to be contextualized, as Africa’s strategic importance to the US has undergone several significant reappraisals over the last decade or so. I will deal first with oil and China.

Although only rarely admitted by US government spokespersons, the importance of African, especially sub-Saharan, oil has been the dominant of the three strategic considerations since AFRICOM was first mooted within the US Department of Defense around 1997 (Keenan, 2008b). It was in that year that US dependency on foreign oil reached the psychologically critical 50% mark, leading the neo-conservatives (‘neo-cons’) to make energy security a key election issue in 2000. However, it was the Cheney Report, published in May 2001 (National Energy Policy Group 2001), that singled out sub-Saharan Africa as the key source of future US oil supplies and prompted President Bush to define African oil as a ‘strategic national interest’ and hence a resource that the US might choose to control through military force (Volman, 2003). Since then, the strategic importance of African oil to the US, in terms of percentage of foreign supply, has increased further. In contrast, China’s economic expansionism in Africa was of little concern to the US in 1997, but has tended to move increasingly higher up the radar during the course of this millennium.

References to US concerns about the GWOT in Africa are, however, more problematic and need to be qualified
very carefully. The reasons for this are complex, but I will deal with them only briefly as I have spelt them out frequently in ROAPE (Keenan 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2006a, 2006d, 2008a) and elsewhere. The essence of my argument is that the Bush administration decided to use a military structure to secure access to and control over African oil and opted to use the GWOT as the justification, rather than acknowledging that US military intervention in Africa was about resource control. Indeed, as Deepak Lal, Professor of International Development Studies at UCLA and former advisor to both the World Bank and IMF, affirmed, ‘The war on terror can be seen as merely an extension of defending the capitalist market’ (Hanieh, 2006). However, launching the GWOT in Africa was tricky, as most of the continent, especially sub-Saharan Africa, had hitherto not suffered the atrocities of terrorism. The main terrorist incidents in Africa had been concentrated in Somalia, East Africa and the Maghreb. Beginning in early 2003, the US, in collusion with Algeria, its key regional ally in the GWOT, fabricated a string of false flag ‘terrorism’ incidents in the Algerian Sahara and across much of the Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad) in order to justify the launch of a new or ‘second’ African front in the GWOT.

As this duplicity underpins current US policy towards Africa, all references to US concerns about terrorism and the GWOT in Africa need to be treated with much circumspection, as we are invariably being confronted with facets of the Bush administration’s parallel ‘information war’ (Keenan, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b).

2) AFRICOM’s ‘Paradigm Shift’ from the GWOT to the ‘Security-Development’ Discourse

The fabricated Sahara-Sahelian ‘front’ in the GWOT provided Washington with the justification for its militarisation of Africa as well as the ideological rationales of General James (Jim) Jones, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) and Commander of EUCOM, and other EUCOM commanders in Stuttgart and at the Pentagon as they laid the ground plans for AFRICOM.

However, the authorization of AFRICOM in December 2006 coincided with what, on face value, appears to have been a significant ‘paradigm shift’ in American military thinking in the form of the US military’s adoption, during 2005-6, of the security-development discourse.

How and why has the US military made this paradigm shift? The ‘how’ is very easy to answer: the new ‘security-development’ discourse was shipped more or less wholesale across the Atlantic from Downing Street to Washington, following the publication of the report of Tony Blair’s Commission for Africa in March 2005. In an analysis of ‘New Labour’s’ policies on Africa, Rita Abrahamsen (2005) revealed how Blair’s securitisation of Africa enabled Britain’s (and Europe’s) dealings and interactions with the continent to shift from a discourse of ‘development/humanitarianism’ to one of ‘risk/fear/security’ in such a way that Africa was increasingly mentioned in the context of the ‘war on terrorism’ and the dangers it posed to Britain and the international community. A key element in ‘New Labour’s’ analysis of Africa was the interpretation of poverty and underdevelopment as dangerous (Abrahamsen, 2005). By emphasizing the threat posed by the marginalised and excluded, Africa’s ‘dangerous classes’, and the role of aid and ‘development’ in containing this threat, the British government succeeded in merging the development and security agendas so that the two have become almost indistinguishable. By means of such pronouncements, Africa and underdevelopment have been subtly shifted ‘away from the categories of “development/humanitarianism” and along a continuum of “risk/threat”’ (Abrahamsen, 2005). The securitisation of Africa...
has been further promoted by drawing attention to the association between underdevelopment and conflict and the various discourses on ‘failed states’, which, in no time at all, were linked directly to the 9/11 attacks. It took only a few steps – from ‘poverty’ and ‘underdevelopment’ to ‘conflict’, ‘fear’, ‘failed states’ and the black holes of the ‘ungoverned areas’ – to recast Africa as the ‘Heart of Darkness’ and to transpose the GWOT into its vast ungoverned spaces: the DRC, Sudan, Somalia and EUCOM’s infamous ‘swamp of terror’, the Sahara.

The ‘why’ is also easy to answer: it enabled the US military to substitute the overly aggressive, increasingly less credible, global war on terror-orientated and militaristic image that it had been displaying towards Africa for one that enabled President Bush to announce AFRICOM as a new command that:

*will enhance our efforts to help bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa.*

Such non-aggressive, seemingly un-militaristic and anthropologically seductive language, emphasising AFRICOM’s development-humanitarian aims and stressing its goals of strengthening civilian agencies and civilian capacities, now characterises all US government references to and descriptions of AFRICOM. Sean McFate (2008a) shows how in this discourse, security and development are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing:

*To deny the sanctuary in which armed groups incubate and thereby stave off internal conflict, governments must address the root causes of public grievances. These grievances are development based; therefore, the security solution must be development based.*

This shift in Washington’s alleged concern for the ‘development’ of Africa is illustrated nowhere better than in the difference between the EUCOM and AFRICOM websites and associated publications before and after 2006 (when AFRICOM took over most of Africa from EUCOM). Whereas most news stories and pictures prior to 2005-6 reflected the US military’s concerns with the GWOT, counter-terrorism and the associated training of African militaries, AFRICOM’s more recent top stories (4-11 August 2008) cover military involvement in medical training, provision of safe water, care of livestock, civilian capacity-building, etc.

**The Hidden Face of AFRICOM**

Since 2005-6, justification for the US’s militarisation of the continent has shifted from the GWOT and straightforward counterterrorism to the more humanitarian security-development discourse. The fundamental question with regard to AFRICOM is whether its website news headlines and its ‘peace and development’ oriented mission statements really do reflect a paradigm shift in US military thinking, or whether they are merely good PR, a further twist in Washington’s ‘information war’: a deceptive mystification process that enables AFRICOM to be portrayed as more benign than it really is.

The answer is found on the ground – in Africa. Whether couched in the language of the GWOT or the security-development discourse, local-regional outbreaks of civil unrest and rebellion (‘incursions’) by minority-cum-opposition groups, frequently provoked by local US-supported politico-military elites, continue to help legitimise the US military presence in Africa and are being dealt with by military means. Far from bringing ‘peace and security’ to Africa, AFRICOM is directly instrumental in creating conflict and insecurity. For example, on 7 January 2007, less than three...
weeks after President Bush used such soothing words in authorising AFRICOM, US forces killed an unknown number, certainly hundreds, of Somali fighters and innocent civilians trapped in the ‘killing zone’ between US-backed Ethiopian forces to the north and west, US-backed Kenyan forces to the south, and the sea, reminding the world that the US presence sought to resolve conflicts in Africa by brute military intervention. Post-2006 interventions by US troops in the Sahara-Sahel have been widely documented (Keenan, 2006d, 2008b, 2009b). In May 2006, for example, US Special Forces, flown secretly from Stuttgart to Tamanrasset, accompanied Algeria’s secret military services into northern Mali to give support to the Algerian-orchestrated Tuareg rebellion designed to destabilise northern Mali. In February 2008, US Special Forces (possibly contractors – PMCs) accompanied Malian troops on a vindictive raid on a desert town in the same area, at the same time as AFRICOM’s commander, General William ‘Kip’ Ward and US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, Theresa Whelan, were promoting AFRICOM at a RUSI meeting in London and at which Ms Whelan denied the presence of US ‘troops’ in northern Mali.

Exactly one month after the Somali killings, the first shots were fired in Niger by Tuareg rebels in what has now escalated into a region-wide conflagration (Keenan, 2008a). The multiple rebellions stem from the US’s destabilisation of the region through its GWOT. In Niger especially, US-trained troops have been responsible for appalling human rights abuses and atrocities in a government-directed ‘ethnocide’ against the Tuareg (Keenan, 2008a, 2009b). The one obstacle to a peaceful settlement of the conflict is Niger’s US-backed President, Mamadou Tandja. One wag of Washington’s little finger would bring Tanja to the peace table. But no such wags have been forthcoming, for the simple reason that the regional insecurity caused by the rebellion has furthered US strategic interests, namely that such insecurity justifies AFRICOM and the US militarisation of Africa.

The Consequences of AFRICOM

Does AFRICOM have any prospect of bringing peace, security and development to Africa? While AFRICOM’s commanders have been preaching ‘security and development’, their operations on the ground have so far created insecurity and undermined democratic expressions of civil society. Indeed, the establishment of AFRICOM reflects the Bush administration’s primary reliance on the use of military force to pursue its strategic interests. The progressive militarisation of Africa since 2002 has three serious consequences for the peoples of Africa. Firstly, it will militarise US relations with Africa and militarise numerous African countries which, in turn, will be more likely to use force in obtaining their own objectives. Secondly, the presence of the US base at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti and military facilitative arrangements elsewhere on the continent, along with the encouragement given to domestic governments to use force in preference to more democratic means will create more militants and hence unrest and insecurity, as we are seeing in most countries of North Africa and the Sahel. Thirdly, the US administration’s primary reliance on its military has effectively usurped the role of the State Department and specialised agencies such as USAID, whose skills and experience are better suited to achieving the ‘peace’, ‘security’ and ‘development’ that AFRICOM claims to espouse.

The Implications of AFRICOM for the Peoples of Africa

AFRICOM is showing signs of serving to protect unpopular, repressive regimes supportive of US interests. In the case of North Africa and the Sahel regions, the
US military intervention of the last 5-6 years has served to reinforce the authoritarian and repressive methods of states in the region, not only through the provision of more high-technology surveillance, weapons and security systems, but also by emboldening the state security services in their abuse of power. One prominent local citizen in southern Algeria expressed the views of many when he said: ‘Now that they [the Algerian authorities] have the Americans behind them, they have become even bigger bullies’ (Keenan, 2009b). The US intervention is thus prolonging and perhaps even entrenching fundamentally undemocratic regimes, while weakening or delaying the development of autonomous and more democratic civil societies.

Social scientists unfamiliar with the new ‘security development’ discourse may find its emphasis on ‘security’ and ‘development’ seductive. What more does Africa need? However, as Abrahamsen (2005) has already pointed out, London and Washington have used this discourse to link Africa’s underdevelopment with the threat of terrorism. And the regimes of Africa have followed suit: many are now using the pretext of the GWOT to repress legitimate opposition by linking it with ‘terrorism’. US-backed regimes across the Sahel have provoked elements of civil society, usually minority groups of one sort or another, into civil unrest or taking up arms. Indeed, such actions across the Sahel have come close to making the GWOT a self-fulfilling prophecy. Moreover, and as Abrahamsen (2005) also emphasised, the link between underdevelopment and terrorism has served to generate a negative image of fear around the continent, and has created suspicion and hostility towards its people, with a consequent deterioration in race relations, stricter European-wide immigration controls and asylum laws and the erosion of civil liberties in the face of perceived terrorist threats.

Above all, the ‘security-development’ discourse explicitly links Africa’s poor, her ‘dangerous classes’ as Abrahamsen calls them, the marginalised and excluded to international security ‘problems’ and ‘terrorism’ (Abrahamsen, 2005).

3) Misconceptions About ‘Global/Globalisation’

Abrahamsen & Williams (2008) locate their timely focus on Africa’s security governance within the dynamics and structures underpinning and driving the processes of privatisation, which, in turn, are located within the changing nature of contemporary capitalism. The issue is punctuated liberally with references to aspects of both neo-liberalism and globalisation. Indeed, it would be strange if that were not so, as neo-liberalism has been the root cause of many, perhaps most, of Africa’s political-economic and social problems over the last generation or so: weak/‘failed’ states, poor governance, underdevelopment, marginalisation, exclusion, poverty, etc., while it is the nature of contemporary capitalism, in its ‘globalised’ form, which enables us to understand much of what I have already said about Africa’s strategic importance to the US.

However, there are two aspects of neo-liberalism and contemporary capitalism to which I would like to draw attention, as they have an important bearing on our understanding of security in Africa and how we address it.

The Implosion of Capitalism

My first problem with the term globalisation, especially in its neo-liberal economic context, is that I believe it is mistakenly associated, almost synonymously, with the idea of the ‘expansion’ of capitalism, both socially and geographically, in some sort of ‘ultimate’, ‘total’ or ‘global’ sense. Globalisation is
understood as meaning literally ‘global’, in the sense that capitalism (now triumphant) has or is in the process of finally permeating or expanding into all corners and to all peoples on the planet. While it is almost certainly true that everybody on the planet is now touched in one way or another by the world capitalist system, being ‘touched’ or ‘affected’ by the world capitalist system is not the same thing as being ‘part’ of that system, either as producer or consumer.

However, what we have been seeing, most noticeably since the early 1980s, during the age of neo-liberalism and the increasingly unfettered march of its destructive forces, is not so much the expansion of capitalism, at least not socially and spatially, but its implosion, as increasing numbers of people in almost all parts of the world have been marginalised and excluded, as neither producers nor consumers, from the capitalist system. Ankie Hoogvelt (1997, 2001), who wrote about this in the mid-1990s, reckoned that as many as 52% of the world’s population was excluded.

Hoogvelt’s exclusion has nowhere been greater than in Africa, where poverty levels and extreme maldistribution of wealth have forced increasing numbers of the continent’s population to resort to the vestigial and transformed elements of their precapitalist formations and other means, which have more than a passing bearing on the rise of the private security companies (PSCs), for survival. It is these social elements, the progeny of a colonial past and neo-liberal present in which those two key agents of western, not global, capitalism – the World Bank and IMF – have played a lead role, that comprise the bulk of Africa’s ‘dangerous classes’ against whom the better off elements of the population are minded to ensure their security. It would have been interesting if the contributors to this issue had been able to show us the correlation between the contribution of PSCs to each African country’s labour market and that country’s Gini coefficient (a measure of wealth distribution). The fact that South Africa has by far the largest PSC market in the world (as a percentage of GDP; Abrahamsen, 2008) as well as one of the world’s highest Gini coefficients, is as much a relic of the apartheid era as it is the outcome of the present government’s pro-business, neo-liberal economic policies. Indeed, the combination of the government’s neo-liberal Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Program (GEAR) combined with government redistribution programmes that have favoured an emergent class of wealthy black entrepreneurs has ensured an increase in the economic and social inequality that was inherent in the apartheid system. Tony Twine, an economist at Econometrix (Johannesburg), claimed in 2006 that South Africa’s distribution of income was worse than anywhere in the world, with the exception of Venezuela and Brazil. Is it any wonder that South Africa leads the world in PSCs?

Security and the security industry need to be located more firmly in the implosion of neo-liberal capitalism since the late 1970s and early 1980s. Two dimensions of this implosion are of critical relevance to global security issues. One, as Hoogvelt and others have noted, is the increasing marginalisation, indeed exclusion, of increasing numbers of the world’s population from the capitalist system. The other is the current crisis caused by western capitalism’s reliance for its profitability on what Walden Bello (2008) has called its ‘financialization’.

**Differential Asset Bases**

This brings me back to the question of the changing nature of contemporary capitalism, especially the notion of its globalisation. As an economic concept, globalisation refers primarily to the removal of barriers to capital flows and is a process which picked up momentum after the 1970s. However, the world
economy is not as ‘globalised’ as our colloquial usage of the term might suggest. Let me explain.

The underlying driver of capitalism is wealth creation, which is ultimately measured in assets, which, we assume, can be converted into capital in the form of money and transferred around the world as capital flows. In practice, things are not as straightforward as that, for the simple reason that the ‘meaning’ of ‘asset’ differs between national/regional markets, making the world’s economic financial system far less globalised than we assume it to be.

The world capitalist system comprises a number of regional/national ‘components’. For simplicity’s sake, I will ignore the Russian and Japanese ‘components’, the ‘global South’ and the ASEAN and deal only with the ‘West’, in which the financial markets and systems are distinguished from those of continental Europe, and the ‘Orient’, which comprises Muslim countries, especially those of the Gulf region, India and China. However, these components are far from ‘integrated’ into one ‘globalised’ economic financial system in so far as they are characterised, amongst other things, by their differential asset bases, which are a function of the different financial instruments used in their national/regional markets which, in turn, are to some extent culturally determined.

What does this mean and what are its implications? Take, for example, Muslim countries whose financial/legal systems are based on the principles of shari’a. Shari’a law precludes ‘making money from money’ as, for example, in the form of interest, with the consequence that many of the financial instruments used in the West, such as ‘shorting’, buying on ‘margin’, hedge funds and derivatives which have an interest component and even fixed income instruments such as bonds, are precluded. There are certain limited, complicated and expensive ways of circumventing these restrictions, such as ‘swaps’ that are arranged outside the region. Thus, to take a hypothetical example, if a speculator wanted to take advantage of his/her knowledge/intuition that housing bubbles in both, say, the USA and Abu Dhabi were about to burst, he/she could use a considerable array of instruments to ‘short’ building, housing, mortgage and other such stocks on the US market and thus contribute to, perhaps even trigger, and certainly profit from the bubble burst. In Abu Dhabi, however, that would be impossible, except perhaps through extreme and expensive ‘swap-type’ arrangements probably made ‘offshore’, as there are effectively no such instruments to manipulate the market in Abu Dhabi in the same way as in the US. The most an investor can do with such knowledge is not to invest in the Abu Dhabi market! The net result is that the Abu Dhabi market is left relatively stable.

The use of many of the instruments used in Western, especially US-UK markets, is also severely limited in both China and India, not because of shari’a compliance (these not being Muslim countries), but because their legal-regulatory systems, which are partly culturally determined, restrict them.

The existence of such differential asset bases means that individual, corporate and sovereign players in these different regional/national markets operate very differently within the supposedly ‘globalised system’. In particular, it means that there are major limits on the extent to which they can financialize their systems as a route to increased profitability.

The world economic system is ‘globalised’ to the extent that what happens in one part of the world has implications in another. But there is nothing very new about that, except for the changes in ‘real time’ afforded by accelerated communications systems. For instance, when the
Phoenicians over-exploited the *Murex* shells of the Levant coast, which were the source of their monopoly on the much sought after Tyrrhenian purple dye, they sought new deposits of the shell at Mogador, on the Moroccan Atlantic coast, thus radically shifting the economic orientations of the known world at the time. The current implosion and threatened ‘meltdown’ of much of the West’s financial system and associated asset base is leading to a similar geographical and socio-political re-orientation in the contemporary world economy. There is a difference, however, in that this current reorientation, broadly from the West to the Orient, is not being facilitated by the ‘globalisation’ of the world economic system. On the contrary, it is a consequence of its fundamentally ‘unglobalised’, differential asset bases.

Western capitalism’s assets are based on, transacted through and measured by a range of financial instruments which simply do not exist, or only in simple form, in other parts of the world, such as the Orient. Asset wealth, the basis of the world’s economic system, is measured essentially in commodities, which are a function of commodity prices. But how are these ‘prices’ derived? The first difficulty is that we are dealing almost entirely with ‘futures’ prices which are largely determined by traders who rely heavily, although not exclusively, on inventories, which, in turn, are notoriously opaque. That is especially true of the hydrocarbons and metals markets; less so in the grain and other such markets. The second difficulty is that most of their purchases, which are in ‘futures’, are bought ‘on margin’ and/or ‘hedged’ through a range of derivative-based financial instruments, which are often extremely complex and which simply do not exist in most Oriental markets. Indeed, the complexity and ‘sophistication’ of the instruments available in the West is such that it has taken traders a matter of metaphorical minutes to devise means of circumventing the recently imposed ban on the ‘shorting’ of financial stocks.

The West’s system of financial capitalism is based on financial instruments that have enabled the massive, mind-boggling leveraging of assets. In short, they are bought on ‘borrowed’ money, or rather money (assets) which does not exist. Indeed, the creation of almost unlimited ‘debt’ (as currently seen most spectacularly in the western mortgage markets) has been traded (until the current implosion of the western banking system) as an asset, but through instruments that are so complex and opaque that few banks even know the value of their ‘debt’.

The problem with creating these dubious (‘fuzzy’) financial instruments and using them to invest in the financial sector, as Walden Bello (2008) recently wrote, is that ‘it is tantamount to squeezing value out of already created value. It may create profit … but it doesn’t create new value.’

Even if we try and assess holdings in stock (and commodity) markets, we are likely to find that they have been bought ‘on margin’ and have been so leveraged that they may ultimately be worth little more than the paper the contract was written on. Indeed, this is what we are currently witnessing as central banks, mostly western and notably the US Federal Reserve, try to ease the process of ‘de-leveraging’ and prevent the whole house of cards from tumbling down. In short, western capitalism’s financialization had reached the absurdity of being based increasingly on the creation of debt that became re-denominated and traded as an asset, through derivatives that were increasingly highly leveraged!

In the Orient, such manipulation (leveraging, buying on margin, shorting, etc.) is only possible through comparatively simple instruments and to a very limited extent. For example, Saudi Aramco, the world’s largest oil supplier, does not trade derivatives, insisting on ‘cash only’, except, quite possibly, for a
few highly credit-worthy exceptions. That is true, at least in general terms, throughout most Indian, Chinese and other Gulf markets. If I want to short an Indian or Chinese stock, it is virtually impossible for me to do so.

I have so far limited my argument about the limits of globalisation to the differential use of financial instruments and their impacts on capital flows. What, it might be asked, of ‘cash’ in the form of currencies and their transferability? Without going into depth, let me merely point out that even here, at the most liquid end of the market, global flows are impeded by a surprising number of restrictions in the form of non-convertible currencies and restrictions on the movement of investment capital, especially in the form of limitations on the repatriation of profits.

I have raised these points not merely to ‘nit-pick’ over what I regard as the often analytically meaningless usage of the term globalisation, but to encourage more focus and debate on the contemporary nature of capitalism and the implications that the current implosion of Western capitalism and the reorientation of global assets eastwards has for Africa, especially now that Africa is becoming sandwiched increasingly between the imperial interests of both the US and China. The last thirty years of capitalism, far from being ‘globalised’, have seen the world’s financial markets structured and operating through a quite different array of financial instruments and under quite different legal-regulatory systems. Their respective routes to profitability have therefore differed accordingly, with the outcome, in the form of the collapse of the West’s financialization pathway, likely to have significant implications for the way in which future dealings on the African continent are undertaken.

4) The Lesser of Two Evils

Sean McFate is a well-known proponent of US militarisation and the security-development discourse (McFate, 2008a). However, his Briefing on the ‘Out-sourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp’ (McFate, 2008b) raises what is probably the most important point in this volume.

AFRICOM is faced by two major problems. One is that no African country, apart perhaps from Liberia, is prepared to house its HQ; for the time being, it will therefore remain in Stuttgart. The second and more important problem, addressed by McFate, is that AFRICOM has a huge mandate but is without the means to accomplish it. As McFate confirms, no dedicated or new military units will be created for AFRICOM. Nor will AFRI-COM be able to ‘borrow’ troops because of the huge demand for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. If that is not bad enough for the Pentagon, the House of Representatives’ Appropriations Committee believes that ‘traditional U.S. military operations are not an appropriate response to most or many of the challenges facing Africa’ and accordingly wants to cut AFRICOM’s requested budget of $390 million to just $80 million.14 In the wake of Wall Street’s current implosion, AFRICOM will be lucky to see even $80 million.

We thus have two illustrations of the combination of crises now facing the US: a spectacular case of imperial over-reach combined with the implosion of its financial system.

How then will AFRICOM accomplish its mission? The answer, according to McFate, is what EUCOM and AFRICOM have been doing in Africa since at least early 2004, by outsourcing it to PMCs, whose propensity towards corruption (as seen in Iraq) and disregard of human rights are part of the package. That, as McFate knows from his own personal involvement with PMCs, is exactly what PMCs have been waiting for:
This [PMC] multi-billion dollar industry is looking for the next US-sponsored conflict market once the Iraq and Afghanistan ‘bubble bursts,’ and they see that market as Africa, a continent of crisis (McFate, 2008b).

If McFate is correct, and all the signs suggest that he is, we are thus facing the likely privatisation of AFRICOM’s mission. While that is in keeping with the US administration’s commitment to neoliberalism, it opens Africa up to the potentially horrific prospect of these mercenary forces, and not only American ones, turning Africa into their own ‘plunder economy’ where their self-interests will be served and their fortunes made through the promotion and maintenance of conflict.

Will it come to that? The crisis currently working its way through western capitalism’s financial system, and quite possibly bankrupting the USA (at least in a technical sense) may mean that future US budgets may not stretch to the luxury of PMCs in Africa. That may, in a sense, let Africa off the imperial hook. But there is also the prospect that US budget constraints will encourage US PMCs to look towards Africa’s ‘plunder economy’ to make themselves more financially ‘self-reliant’. And that also means even more unaccountable.

However, this crisis of western capitalism has other equally serious consequences for Africa. These are that the Orient, with its ‘hard assets’ (cash, arms, commodities, etc.) will become even more attractive to Africa’s rulers (as distinct from their subjects) than the offerings of the West, which are backed by a range of credits, loans, conditionalities and all that ‘fuzzy stuff’ (discredited financial instruments). Indeed, this process is already well under way with the Saudis and Chinese providing hard asset payment for leases/purchases of land in Ethiopia, Sudan, DRC and elsewhere. If that process continues to develop in the way that it has already started, it is conceivable in a few years time that AFRICOM will be looked back on as the lesser of two evils.

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Endnotes

1. The current GWOT was launched after 9/11 and is distinguished from the Reagan administration’s war on ‘international terrorism’ (Paull, 1982).
2. In 1993, 18 US soldiers were killed in Mogadishu. US military sources subsequently and incorrectly defined this incident as an act of ‘terrorism’. In 1998, some 200 people were killed when US embassies were bombed in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. In 2002, a hotel was bombed in Mombassa, allegedly by al-Qaeda ‘terrorists’, and two surface-to-air missiles fired at an Israel-bound airliner. Northern Algeria has been subjected to both Islamist and state terrorism since the early 1990s, while there have been incidents in Morocco (bombings in Casablanca on 16 May 2003) and Tunisia (el-Ghriba synagogue, April 2002).
3. In his State of the Union address of 29 January 2002, President Bush spoke of the expansion of the ‘war on terror’ to new fronts. Since then, the term ‘front’, and especially the term ‘second front’, has become almost synonymous with the attempt to globalise the GWOT. Afghanistan is usually understood to be the first front. The term ‘second front’ has been applied at one time or another to most parts of the world, including SE Asia, Iraq, Latin America (in the context of the election of left-wing presidents in Brazil and Ecuador, and in terms of the FARC campaign in Colombia) and, after 2003, the Sahara. In the latter case the ‘first’ front is sometimes understood to be the Horn of Africa and East Africa; see, for example, Clays (2003).
4. The front’s two major initiatives were the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) of 2004 and the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) of 2005. The later increased the countries involved from 4 (Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad) to 9 with the inclusion of Senegal, Nigeria, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and thus linked Africa’s two largest oil and gas producing states, Algeria and Nigeria, through an architecture that was uniquely American.
5. Much of this section on AFRICOM is taken from Keenan (2008b)


10. On 18 June 2008, the European Parliament voted 369-197 (with 106 abstentions) in favour of the draconian ‘Return Directive’. The measure allows undocumented migrants to be held in detention centres for up to 18 months and banned from EU territory for five years.

11. And surrounding countries such as Lesotho, Botswana and Namibia.


13. For example, by shorting the FTSE 100 Index future and then buying all stocks except the financials!


References


Briefings

Outsourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp International as Sovereign Agent

Sean McFate

After over 150 years of troubled history, fourteen years of civil war, war crimes and horrific abuses of power, Liberia stands at the precipice of history. The war came to a merciful end in 2003, when Charles Taylor fled into exile, but the war’s ravages were complete. The United States Agency for International Development characterised Liberia’s post-conflict landscape this way:

> over 250,000 people, most of them civilian non-combatants, have lost their lives in the civil war. More than 1.3 million have been displaced, including hundreds of thousands who fled the country. Abductions, torture, rape and other human rights abuses have taken place on a massive scale. It is estimated that at least one in ten children may have been recruited into militias at one time or another. A similar percentage has been traumatized by seeing their families and friends murdered and raped (US Agency for International Development, 2004).

Liberia remains dependent upon one of the world’s largest United Nations peacekeeping forces for its survival, and fears are mounting over the looming departure of peacekeepers. Who will provide security then? Will spoilers plunge the country back into violence? How will Liberia ward off potential spillover effects from violence in neighbouring Sierra Leone, Guinea, or Côte d’Ivoire?

Security sector reform (SSR) is a crucial element of peacebuilding, especially in post-conflict settings. SSR is the wholesale transformation of indigenous security organisations into effective, legitimate, apolitical, and accountable institutions that uphold the rule of law and maintain the state’s monopoly on force. At a minimum, the security sector comprises three categories of actors: those directly involved in the protection of civilians and the state from violent harms (e.g. law enforcement or military); institutions that govern these actors (e.g. Ministries of Interior, Defense, Justice); and executive and legislative oversight bodies.

Failure to successfully implement SSR can seriously compromise peacebuilding efforts for several reasons. First, unaccountable and/or unprofessional security forces can become spoilers, which can hold the entire peacebuilding process hostage to their narrow interests under threat of violence. This can lead to a relapse of armed conflict. Second, it can also prolong peacekeeping missions, as security is a precondition of development. Last, SSR is a prerequisite for the exit strategy of costly peacekeeping missions, since it allows countries to secure themselves.

The central question of SSR in a country like Liberia is how to transform the military from a symbol of terror into an...
instrument of democracy. The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) was complicit in human rights atrocities and the descent into civil war. Hence, the objective of the Joint US-Liberia SSR programme was to demobilise Liberia’s armed forces and reconstitute the AFL and Ministry of Defence (MOD) in toto.¹

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of this innovative programme was the United States’ decision to completely outsource this critical task to private military companies (PMCs). Rarely in modern history has one sovereign nation hired a private entity to raise a military for another sovereign nation. This briefing outlines some of the key elements and outcomes of this prototypical programme, as seen from one of its early architects which may augur future US engagement in Africa. This is especially relevant given the new US military’s Africa Command (AFRICOM), which will likely outsource similar missions to private companies in the future.

The Decision to Outsource

Following Taylor’s departure, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) on 19 September 2003. At the time, it was the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world, growing to 15,000 ‘blue helmets’ with a robust civilian component. Jacques Paul Klein was appointed as the Special Representative of the Secretary General and UNMIL officially took over peacekeeping duties on 1 October 2003. Two months later it began the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) process of approximately 100,000 people.

From 4 June to 18 August 2003 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brokered the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), also known as the ‘Accra Accords’. In Part Four of these Accords on Security Sector Reforms,² the UN and US agreed to share responsibilities, with the UN agreeing to transform the Liberian National Police and the US the AFL. The US’s commitment was managed by the US Department of State (DOS), which organised an initial assessment trip in January 2004. This was followed by a subject matter expert assessment in May, consisting of personnel from US Department of Defense (DOD) and two companies: DynCorp International (DynCorp) and Pacific Architects and Engineers (PA&E). The purpose of this assessment mission, during which time one of the DOD civilian staff members was murdered, was to determine the operational requirements for SSR of the AFL.

Following the assessment mission, DOD concluded it could not conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints, driven in part by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consequently, the DOS decided to wholly ‘contract out’ the task of reconstituting the AFL and MoD to the private sector. Not long after the assessment trip, DOS tendered a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E. Only these two companies were allowed to submit bids as they had earlier won the five-year Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract from DOS to support peacekeeping and security efforts in Africa. IDIQ contracts essentially act as umbrella contracts between the US government and select companies for a fixed period of time, and are meant to streamline the contracting process. After reviewing both proposals, DOS decided to divide the duties between the two contractors. DynCorp was responsible for demobilising the legacy force and then recruiting, vetting and training the AFL and MoD. PA&E was responsible for fielding the AFL and providing mentorship once the units were in place. Both firms were required to engage in construction of military bases and other facilities as necessary, with authorisation from DOS.
Designing the Force

The SSR process began by informally identifying and engaging key stakeholders, which included the legacy force, former rebels, the host government, civil society, and the international community. To their credit, DynCorp eschewed ill-fitting templates of the US military for the new AFL, and sought to craft – in partnership with the Liberian government – a more appropriate security force, which is discussed below. After a full year of conversation, a vision of the AFL’s mission, composition, and desired end state was reached. It would be a mistake to assume that there was uniform consensus or that all stakeholders were engaged fully. The prominent voices in the discussion were the US government, which was sponsoring the programme, and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL).

Ultimately the vision entailed a small all-volunteer force (approximately 2,000 persons) that could be scaled upwards in time. It was acknowledged that a 2,000 person force would be insufficient to defend all of Liberia, should a full-scale war erupt. But it was also acknowledged that the size needed to be constrained by the government’s ability to pay soldiers’ salaries on a regular basis, as history suggested that unpaid soldiers were a greater threat to Liberia’s security than threat of an invading army.

It was also agreed that the AFL should have a defence-oriented force posture and light infantry organisational structure that was strong enough to repel cross-border militant attacks but not so strong as to threaten Liberia’s neighbours. This force would maintain a 12th grade functional literacy level, balanced ethnic and gender mix within the ranks, and foster an apolitical professional ethos, especially in the leadership, that respects the rule of law, cultivates a public service ethos, and accepts civilian control of the military. Finally, the AFL and ideally the entire Liberian security sector should embrace a ‘human security’ model.

DynCorp officially proposed the initial force structure and ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ – the blueprint for the new AFL – to the State Department in July 2005. In military parlance, a ‘force structure’ is the wire-diagram of units in the AFL and MoD, from the General Staff down to the basic infantry squad. A ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ is a spreadsheet inventory of personnel and equipment, delineating for each unit the exact rank, title, and military occupational specialty of each soldier and every piece of equipment authorised for the unit. The original blueprint for the AFL totalled 1,928 soldiers: a brigade headquarters company (103 personnel), two light infantry battalions (663 personnel each), an engineer company (162 personnel), a military police company (114 personnel), a training company (180 personnel), and three military personnel at the Ministry of Defense, which was overwhelmingly civilian in composition. Although this blueprint has changed over time, the original concept for the AFL remains consistent.

Establishing the Programme

It is impossible to truncate a multi-year, highly complex process, with more than a few surprises, into a single article. In brief, the AFL SSR programme was originally envisaged to proceed in several phases. Phase I was political consultation with stakeholders and sensitising the public to the creation of a new AFL. The key issues were: identifying and engaging stakeholders; the composition and mission of the AFL; and overcoming the legacy of atrocities it inherited from the civil war. Phase II was safely demobilising the legacy force. The key issues included: who is eligible for demobilisation benefits; finding donor money to pay for those benefits; controls to prevent...
fraud during the demobilisation process; public sensitisation to the programme; and fears that disgruntled demobilised soldiers would incite political violence. At the same time, construction of training facilities commenced. The primary concerns were: negotiating site selection; finding competent construction companies; theft of materials; and significant delays caused by the six-month rainy season.

Phase III was recruiting and vetting the force. The primary concern for recruiting was attracting women and minority ethnic groups to serve in what was traditionally an ethnically Krahn-dominated institution. As for vetting, it is difficult to establish mere identity in post-conflict Liberia, to say nothing of a full background check. Creating a competent vetting programme was a key challenge.

Phase IV was military training and equipping. The chief concerns were lack of literacy, leadership selection and instilling a professional, apolitical ethos that placed service to the country above tribe or individual. Simultaneously, MoD transformation began, which included hiring and training all civilian personnel, as well as the creation of all AFL policies. Here the challenges were finding qualified mentors and synchronising the development of the MoD with interdependent government institutions.

Phase V was fielding the new force, which meant deployment of soldiers to their permanent duty station. At the time of publication, the programme remains mired in Phase IV due to several reasons, including sensitivity and uniqueness of the task, erratic programme funding by the US, and irregularities of DynCorp management (see Malan, 2008). Last, almost every aspect of this programme is sui generis, as there are no textbooks on comprehensive SSR, and this made progress problematic.

Programme Timeline

2003 August: Charles Taylor flees Liberia and ECOWAS peacekeepers and US troops arrive. The interim government and rebels sign the CPA. Gyude Bryant is chosen to head the interim government (NTGL). September–October: US forces pull out, and UNMIL begins the peacekeeping mission. December: UNMIL begins DDRR for non-statutory (non-AFL) combatants only. AFL personnel are disarmed, but not demobilised, rehabilitated and reintegrated, leaving that to the US government, as agreed to during CPA negotiations.

2004 January: The US Department of State sends a small contingent to Liberia to begin a preliminary assessment. The US is responsible for Part IV, Article Seven of the CPA, which covers SSR for the AFL. DOS is the lead agency within the US government for this task. February: International donors pledge more than US$500 million in reconstruction aid. May: DOS organises a ten-day assessment of SSR for the AFL. The assessment team consists of US personnel (mostly from the military) and two contractor teams: DynCorp and PA&E. A member of the assessment team is murdered in his hotel room during a robbery. June: DoD decides it cannot conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints. DOS decides to contract the SSR programme, and tenders a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E. July: DOS decides to split the contract between the two contractors, making DynCorp responsible for selecting and training the force and PA&E for fielding the force. However, DOS does not officially initiate the programme or release funds until programme preconditions are met (e.g., political support of the NTGL to demobilise legacy AFL veterans). October: Riots in Monrovia leave 16 people dead; UNMIL says former combatants and AFL veterans were behind the violence.
2005  

February–March: Consultations with major stakeholders regarding the mission and composition of the future AFL. This includes civil society, the standing AFL, former warring parties and political factions, the NTGL, UNMIL, and other entities. A comprehensive recruiting and vetting plan is devised intended to screen out human rights abusers from joining the AFL.  

March–May: Consultations with stakeholders continue. Discussions include the problem of safely demobilising the legacy force without provoking political violence, mission and force structure of future AFL, location of training bases, sensitisation campaign for civil society, and arrears owed AFL veterans. The demobilisation plan is drafted and presented to Chairman Bryant, who signs Executive Order 5, authorising the full demobilisation of all legacy AFL units. DOS officially initiates the SSR programme and releases funds to DynCorp to begin recruiting and building. PA&E will begin its programme once training commences.  

July: The demobilisation and reintegration of 13,770 legacy soldiers commences. DynCorp builds a demobilisation site outside Monrovia. The US government approves the initial blueprint for the new AFL’s force structure. Construction of AFL training facilities commences but is slowed by the monsoon rainy season. September: The NTGL agrees that the international community should supervise its finances in an effort to counter corruption. October: Recruiting and vetting for the new AFL begins. Over 12,000 applicants will be processed in the two years to come.  

2006  

January: The demobilisation of the AFL is successful completed, the first time in modern African history that an entire standing military was safely demobilised without significant incident.  

February: A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is set up to investigate human rights abuses between 1979 and 2003. Tensions transpire between the TRC and SSR programme, when the TRC’s request for access to SSR vetting records is denied by the SSR team on account that it might compromise sources and methods, possibly resulting in reprisal killings of witnesses who spoke to the SSR vetting team on condition of anonymity about human rights abuses of some AFL candidates.  

April: MOD transformation begins. Former President Charles Taylor appears before the UN-backed Sierra Leone Special Court on charges of crimes against humanity. In June the International Criminal Court at The Hague agrees to host his trial. May: Brownie Samukai, the Liberian Minister of Defence, spends a week in Washington, DC collaboratively formulating the Liberian National Defence Strategy, modelled on a human security paradigm.  

June: A first draft of the National Defence Strategy is written, seeking to align the AFL’s mission with the goals of development for durable stability. Progress is limited because the Government of Liberia, UNMIL, the US government and others are delayed with the National Security Strategy. The UN Security Council eases a ban on weapons sales so that Liberia can arm newly trained security forces. An embargo on Liberian timber exports is lifted shortly afterwards. July: The first class of AFL basic training begins. It is a pilot programme of about 110 candidates, mostly selected for their leadership potential in order to fill the leadership ranks first. DynCorp begins the process of purchasing and importing arms into Liberia for the AFL. President Johnson-Sirleaf switches on generator-powered streetlights in the capital, which has been without electricity for 15 years.  

August: The first major shipment of arms arrives in Monrovia for the AFL. It is the first legal shipment in 15 years. November: The first AFL basic training class graduates. Training of future classes is halted owing to US budget constraints.
2007  September: 630 recruits have graduated from the Initial Entry Training (IET) course. Owing to cost overruns, IET was shortened from eleven weeks to eight weeks by cutting three weeks that were devoted to human rights, civics, and laws of war training.  March: 119 civilian MOD employees graduate a 17-week of SSR programme training course.  April: The UN Security Council votes to lift its ban on Liberian diamond exports. The ban was imposed in 2001 to stem the flow of ‘blood diamonds,’ which helped fund the civil war.  June: The start of Charles Taylor’s war crimes trial at The Hague, where he stands accused of instigating atrocities in Sierra Leone.

2008  January: 485 soldiers graduated from IET.

Surprises
As with any complex peacebuilding mission, few things went as planned. Some of this was due to the difficulty of the task and environment; however, some was due to the unique relationship between DynCorp, the US government, and Liberian government. To be clear, this trifecta produced both positive and negative results, many of which were unexpected.

Irreconcilable Differences
Profit-motive and public policy can be conflicting interests. DynCorp, like most private companies, is naturally profit-seeking and is guided by market forces in the search for more demand for its services. Government institutions, on the other hand, are primarily interested in achieving public goods through public policy. Profit versus policy can be conflicting goals in public-private partnerships, such as the US and DynCorp, where the government utilises private means to achieve public goods. To resolve this, governments can shape companies’ interests and behaviour through market regulation that incentivise the private sector to realise responsible outcomes. However, current regulation and oversight in the US of this multi-billion dollar industry is diminimus. With a few notable exceptions, there has yet to be a serious discussion within the US government defining the appropriate spheres of activity for private contractors and government personnel in the security sector, much less effective regulatory oversight and concrete accountability mechanisms. Owing to this, the PMC industry behaves like an unguided missile, seeking profit wherever the market will bear it, even if it means a loss for society as a whole (see Avant, 2005).

Another deleterious side effect of this public-private partnership is the evolving co-dependency between government and the industry based on the asymmetries of information that exist between them. This industry has boomed from a multi-million to a multi-billion dollar market since 9/11, owing to the US government’s need of ‘wartime’ muscle. Unfortunately, the US bureaucracy that governs this industry was unable to grow at a commensurate rate, as the public sector is generally less nimble at growth than the private sector. Consequently, there is a paucity of government administrators to oversee these large companies, and those that exist are generally unqualified, ill-equipped and/or over-tasked. In Liberia for example, DynCorp’s contract overseer was a US Navy officer with absolutely no experience in building armies, especially given his background as a sailor. Nor was he a Certified Public Accountant or fully trained contract officer, skilled in managing a multi-million dollar contract with a large, savvy multinational company. Although his efforts were laudable and tireless, the US government simply did not equip him with the requisite tools he needed to achieve his assignment.

Consequently, there was a substantial knowledge gap between the officer in charge of overseeing the contract and the
company, which DynCorp could exploit for profit. He was largely dependent upon DynCorp’s technical opinions in order to make relevant programmatic decisions on behalf of the US government. The problem was that DynCorp have a vested interest in steering the government towards profitable outcomes rather than good public policy. This might include inflating the need for more staff than is required or purchasing more equipment at the government’s expense. DynCorp, like many government contractors, makes its profit on ‘time and materials,’ meaning that they charge the government a premium for every hour an employee works or for every item (no matter how small) that is purchased. How much a premium they charge largely constitutes the company’s profit margin.

There are other ways that DynCorp had the opportunity to manipulate public outcomes for private gains. For example, DynCorp occupied a unique position during the consultations: impromptu facilitator. Achieving some modicum of consent from myriad stakeholders regarding the SSR programme was vital. Ideally, it would have fallen to the US government to drive this conversation. However, US embassy staffing was thin and over-burdened. As a result, the task of engaging stakeholders unofficially fell to DynCorp. Although DynCorp had no ‘vote’ in the outcome of these informal stakeholder consultations, it occupied the privileged position of agenda setter: identifying and sequencing the issues to be discussed; shaping outcomes by strategically proposing solutions for stakeholders to react to; and the de facto selection of stakeholder leadership by choosing whom to engage and when, regardless of whether their opinions represented the group as a whole. Consequently, the company could partly shape outcomes.

In my earlier experience, programme managers at DynCorp did not deliberately manipulate stakeholder consultations for a wider profit margin and instead focused solely on achieving the mission as outlined in the US government’s issued Statement of Work. However, this public-private partnership was patently vulnerable to exploitation and warrants concern: the lack of industry oversight combined with the lethal nature of the work could have explosive consequences for Africa.

Principal-Agent Issues

However, not every aspect of this public-private partnership is negative. These companies can act as institutional ‘free-agents’ who are not beholden to entrenched viewpoints, agendas, interests, budget battles or turf-wars. Consequently, they can propose and implement practical solutions without regard to bureaucratic dogma. This is not to suggest that DynCorp was able to act autonomously in Monrovia: it was not. But DynCorp managers did enjoy a modicum of latitude that US government bureaucrats could not, especially along the interagency fault lines between DOD and the US Department of State. Moreover, given the ‘whole of government’ nature of SSR, DynCorp could act as a cross-cutting agent throughout the government (see OECD-DAC, 2007).

In fact, DynCorp could even advocate for the raw interests of Liberians in back offices of the Pentagon and State Department in Washington, DC. For example, it became evident during the consultations that Liberians were strong advocates of gender equality in the ranks while the US government was not. Although this SSR programme was managed by the State Department, it would frequently confer with DOD on technical issues regarding the AFL. Certain elements in DOD opposed the idea of women serving in ‘front line’ combat units, such as the infantry, which is the practice of the US army. Acting as a third-party facilitator, DynCorp was, in some ways, an unwitting arbiter in a debate between the
defence establishment in Washington, DC and the stakeholders in Liberia. As a structural ‘other’ in the process, which was nominally dispassionate on the issue, DynCorp managers could credibly present ideas and recommendations to stakeholders without the burdens of institutional loyalty or prejudice. This helped drive the argument for gender parity, since key managers in DynCorp were persuaded by the Liberians’ case, championing it within the walls of the Washington, DC bureaucracy and effectually giving voice to Liberian interests. Ultimately, DOS opted for gender parity, overturning DOD’s desire to utilise US military templates – such as no women in infantry units – for other nations’ militaries.

Consequently, Liberian women now enjoy greater equality in the ranks than do American women. This remarkable outcome was partly driven by DynCorp’s position as a comparative ‘free agent’ in the US bureaucracy and facilitator in the consultation process. It was also largely driven by individual personalities on the ground rather than any corporate philosophy, demonstrating once more the vulnerability of the process to manipulation, either positive or negative.

Innovative Solutions

Another positive facet of this private-public partnership is innovative thought. As mentioned above, the DOD is often tempted to utilise ill-fitting US templates for foreign militaries, whether they are appropriate or not. US ‘train and equip’ programmes typically overlay US strategy, procedures, doctrine, and other US ‘best practices’ on foreign forces that receive the training. Examples of ‘train and equip’ programmes include: Joint Combined Exchange Training; International Military Education and Training; and Foreign Military Financing. Recently, the US government greatly expanded this capability through ‘1206 funding,’ named for the section of the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act in the 2006 defence budget. This authority allows the DOD, in consultation with the State Department, to spend up to $200 million a year to train and equip the militaries of strategic partners in the US’s global ‘war on terror’.

The problem is that military templates that might work well for the US may not work well for Liberia. Liberia needs a Liberian solution. This requires more than a ‘train and equip’ mentality, which only provides better shooters in newer equipment. These programmes are necessary but insufficient for wholesale SSR, as they fail to address the underlying causes of why security sectors fail: corruption, human rights abuse, incompetent leadership, culture of impunity, lack of ethnic balance, etc.

For instance, during the initial SSR assessment mission to Liberia in May, 2004, the US military proposed a 4,020-person AFL, including a 412-person combat engineer battalion that would conduct tasks such as mine laying, constructing field fortifications, and digging tank traps. However, Liberia is not in danger of a World War Two-style blitzkrieg from Sierra Leone. Instead, its engineer needs are basic infrastructure repair such as roads, bridges and buildings, to ensure the logistical resupply of bases and humanitarian relief. Also, conspicuously absent from the briefing was any plan to transform the Ministry of Defense and build institutional capacity for the AFL. Also absent was a recruiting, vetting and training plan for the AFL. Last, even though this was only a concept briefing based on a quick trip to Liberia, it lacked significant input from indigenous stakeholders or experts in West African security. In fact, the majority of officers who served on the assessment mission had never set foot in Africa before.

These and other problems were addressed a year later by DynCorp – in
partnership with the NTGL and US government – after consultations with stakeholders and non-US experts, a practice not usually employed by DOD in ‘train and equip’ programmes. This led to innovative recommendations and a more tailored force for Liberia. For example, the force was ‘simplified’ greatly. DynCorp opted for a basic motorised infantry brigade that was not dependent on expensive technologies that are difficult to source and maintain in Africa, no ‘elite’ units such as Taylor’s former ‘Special Anti-Terrorist Unit (SATU)’ which could terrorise the population, or high-caliber weaponry such as tanks or artillery that could threaten neighbours. By eschewing the DOD’s penchant to create miniature US-militaries around the world, Liberia enjoys a more sustainable force that is better tailored for the needs of the country.

There were other significant innovations, three of which warrant further analysis. The first is the creation of a rigorous human rights vetting model for AFL candidates to ensure past human rights abusers do not enter the AFL. This is an enormous challenge in a post-conflict environment where credible public records and other instruments of background checks are utterly lacking (McFate, 2007). The second is the institutionalisation of a special ombudsman-like office within the Ministry of Defense to address issues of tribal and gender equality. During Samuel Doe’s reign, the AFL devolved into a sectarian institution dominated by his Krahn tribe, which at times used the military as a tool for ethnic cleansing. It was important to prevent this from happening again.

The third example was placing human rights, ‘laws of war,’ and civics training equal to combat related training, such as shooting. Given the AFL’s troubled past, stakeholders urged that every soldier must understand that knowing when to pull the trigger was as important as hitting what you were aiming at. Accordingly, three of the eleven weeks of Basic Training (also called Initial Entry Training) were devoted to civics training, an unprecedented development in military training in Africa or elsewhere.

Tragically, DynCorp later opted to cut this training, shortening Basic Training to eight weeks, thus saving money. This is a mistake. As Mark Malan recommends in a recent report on Liberia’s SSR:

Congress should insist on more credible measures to ensure that civics and human rights become a central element of the US training program for the AFL (Malan, 2008:xi).

Prelude to Future US Engagement in Africa?

The US-Liberia SSR Programme may prove a good indicator of future US engagement in Africa, especially given the newly established US military Africa Command or AFRICOM. AFRICOM will likely outsource a good portion of its capabilities to PMCs given the complementary interests of supply and demand. AFRICOM has a huge mandate yet will not be given dedicated military units to accomplish its mission. In fact, no new military units will be created for AFRICOM at all, save the headquarters itself currently located at Stuttgart, Germany. Worse, it cannot expect to ‘borrow’ existing units elsewhere because of the huge demand for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. How will it accomplish its mission? By outsourcing it to PMCs.

Which is exactly what PMCs are waiting for. This multi-billion dollar industry is looking for the next US-sponsored conflict market once the Iraq and Afghanistan ‘bubble bursts,’ and they see that market as Africa, a continent of crisis. Thanks to the wars in the Middle East and opportunities like the US-Liberia SSR Programme in Africa, this industry has honed its services in the areas that
AFRICOM most needs: training and equipping; war-zone logistics; humanitarian response; post-conflict reconstruction; infrastructure repair; and SSR. The symmetry of supply and demand between PMCs and AFRICOM are exquisite.

Conclusion

The US-Liberia SSR Programme is an excellent prism into the future of US engagement on the continent, especially vis-à-vis AFRICOM. The complex outcomes that stem from outsourcing core military tasks, such as making militaries, to PMCs augur insights into how AFRICOM might engage Africa. This article briefly charts some of these outcomes, both positive and negative, from an ‘insider’s’ perspective.

However, larger concerns loom on the horizon. The utilisation of PMCs in Africa is more sensitive than in the Middle East given Africa’s lamentable past experiences with colonialism and mercenaries. This will prove a public diplomacy challenge for AFRICOM, which will seek to win ‘hearts and minds’ for the American cause. Moreover, consistent with the rule of ‘unintended consequences,’ the reliance by AFRICOM on PMCs may unwittingly generate a wider market for force on the continent, attracting future PMCs from Russia or elsewhere, in addition to the possibility of African PMCs. Will demand diversify to encompass multinational companies, NGOs, opposition groups, and private individuals? What will happen if market forces demand greater combat-oriented services? Could, for example, an NGO hire a PMC to conduct an armed humanitarian intervention in Darfur to ‘save lives’ in the name of human rights and the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ doctrine? What are the second, third and fourth order repercussions of this action? Could it exacerbate on-the-ground conflict? Draw the US into a war with Sudan? Trigger a UN Chapter 7 intervention? The implications of this on global security governance are terrifying, and few would welcome the development of an industry vested in conflict in Africa. Yet these critical questions remain scarcely examined.

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1. The author was a principal architect of this programme; he does not claim credit for its management.

Bibliography

The Dynamics of Private Security in Senegal

Cyrus O’Brien

The privatisation of security has recently attracted much attention, particularly in light of abuses by private military companies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of this attention sensationalises private security by focusing on private armies unbounded by national boundaries and unencumbered by international law. Recently, however, less dramatic forms of private security such as private guarding, surveillance, alarm systems, and patrolling have become more prevalent worldwide. These more mundane forms of private security are central to the daily operations of many societies.

The expansion of private security in the developing world is nearly always attributed to high levels of insecurity and general instability. Senegal, by contrast, is relatively safe and stable, but nevertheless has a rapidly expanding private security sector. The country is home to more than 150 private security companies that employ between 25,000 and 35,000 people, making Senegal’s private security sector relatively larger per capita than those of more violent countries like Nigeria and Kenya. The vast majority of these companies operate in the informal sector where they avoid taxation and governmental regulation, and like in many other countries, working conditions in the sector are poor. Unlike many other countries, however, Senegal has made significant and successful efforts to prevent international security companies like Group4Securicor from gaining a foothold.

This briefing is based on research conducted on behalf of the gun control organisation Le Mouvement Contre les Armes Légères en Afrique de l’Ouest (MALAO) in Senegal in the spring of 2007. It describes the private security sector, concentrating particularly on Dakar, where international businesses and international organisations (IOs) provide the largest sources of demand for private security. It includes an examination of the economic and political circumstances that have enabled the growth of private security and a discussion of the relationship between private security companies, the government, and business.

The Growth of Private Security Amidst Stability & Peace

In the worldwide proliferation of private security companies (PSCs), Senegal represents a unique case: the private security sector is growing despite political stability and a low crime rate. Previous briefings in this journal have attributed the growth of private security in other countries to ‘high crime rates, combined with the inability of the public security services to provide adequate protection’ (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2005). Indeed, general insecurity has been a key factor driving the sector’s growth in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Nicaragua, and Guatemala (Ibid; Lilly & von Tangen Page, 2002). The situation in Senegal demonstrates that the expansion of private security is not limited to countries where instability and insecurity prevail.

Senegal has the reputation of being West Africa’s most stable country. Since its independence from France in 1960, it has maintained a democratic system of government and regularly holds relatively fair elections. The Senegalese armed forces are firmly under civilian control and have never intervened in politics, making Senegal one of the few African countries to avoid a coup d’état since independence from colonial rule. The Casamance, a breakaway southern province separated from Senegal proper by the Gambia, is the only major source of instability in the country. However, since 2000 the situation has calmed, resulting...
in only occasional violence. Violence has been confined to the Casamance, leaving the majority of Senegal free from political strife.

This climate of political stability has enabled Senegal to maintain a remarkably low crime rate. Winslow (2008), relying on data from Interpol, reported the total crime rate to be 64.29 crimes for every 100,000 people, compared with 1,709.88 for Japan and 5,955.05 for the United Kingdom. The same study showed Senegal’s murder rate to be 0.33 per 100,000 people, or roughly one fifth that of the UK. Although the general crime statistic is surely underreported, the given murder rate is roughly accurate; because murders are rare in Senegal, the press thoroughly reports them. Though not completely reliable, these figures show that Senegal is not a country plagued by crime.

With little else to offer – peanuts are the biggest contributor to the GDP – Senegal markets its stability and peace to attract foreign businesses and organisations. Dakar, the capital, hosts the West African headquarters for many international non-governmental organisations, research institutions, and IOs. Particularly since the war in Ivory Coast, business and organisations have flocked to Senegal. In January of this year, Dubai World paid US$800 million for the rights to administer a free trade zone within Senegal, joining the flow of businesses that see Senegal as a ‘gateway’ into the region (Flynn, 2008).

It is primarily the presence of these businesses and organisations that generates demand for PSCs. Because demand is almost entirely fuelled by foreigners and expatriates, private guards are an almost entirely urban phenomenon. International mining activities, heavily guarded despite their rural location, are the exception. Throughout Dakar, private guards stand in front of nearly every sizable business or organisation guarding everything from banks to bookstores to offices and schools. Nearly every location an expatriate might visit is under private guard. Foreign businesses and organisations contract PSCs to provide security not only for the businesses themselves, but also for the homes of their employees. Paradoxically, then, peace, stability, and a low crime rate fuel the growth of the private security sector because they attract international businesses and organisations.

The police are widely viewed as inept and corrupt, prompting the wealthy to turn to the private sector for security. The majority of the population, however, continues to rely on traditional methods for security. Typical neighbourhoods are some of the safest places in the country, as residents keep a watchful eye on suspicious persons and come quickly to each other’s aid. While usually advantageous, at times such security networks become vigilante groups and occasionally escalate a situation. While statistics are hard to obtain, evidence suggests that vigilante groups account for most of Senegal’s (low) murder rate; upon identifying a thief or criminal, mobs may beat the suspect to death. On the whole, however, traditional security methods help to preserve overall security, making most of Senegal’s villages, neighbourhoods, and towns safe.

**Inequality, Exploitation & Unions**

The private security sector in Senegal mushroomed in the aftermath of the 1994 economic reforms promoted by the IMF and World Bank. Although the first private security companies were founded in the late 1980s, they did not become prevalent until the economic reforms resulted in greater levels of inequality. There are currently over 150 private security companies in Senegal, all but a few created since 1994. The sector’s rapid rate of expansion makes it difficult to estimate the exact number, as new PSCs are formed with incredible frequency.
The 1994 neo-liberal reforms involved the lifting of subsidies and price controls, a steady deregulation of the economy, and a 50% devaluation of the currency. The reforms positively affected Senegal’s macroeconomic outlook; inflation was brought under control, government finances were balanced, and the economy turned around. After contracting in the early 1990s, Senegal’s economy has steadily grown at an annual rate of around 5%.

The economic gains of the 1990s were not distributed across the Senegalese economy. Living conditions for most of the population declined as prices for food and other basic goods were deregulated. The number of street peddlers exploded at this time, as unemployment forced large numbers of people into the informal economy. Today, nearly a quarter of the population survives on less than $1 a day, and more than three-fifths on less than $2 each day. Thus, despite the economic influxes caused by the arrival of international business, intense poverty and inequality are on the rise, and may potentially destabilise the prevailing security environment. As one director of a PSC remarked, the private security sector depends ‘not on a lack of security, but instead on a lack of wealth’.

With nearly half of the workforce unemployed, private guards face a strikingly soft labour market. A typical guard is paid between US$70 and $120 each month, while the most professional companies pay their employees up to $180. In some cases, guards are given monthly transport stipends, but these almost never meet actual costs. Guards work exceedingly long hours and face very high exploitation, taking home only 35-50% of what clients pay for their services.

In my research, I found not one private security company in Senegal that did not violate national regulations in some way. The most common abuses were paying below the minimum wage, demanding that guards work for unreasonable hours, and employing guards on temporary contracts. Senegalese labour codes stipulate that after one temporary six-month contract, employers must hire a worker permanently or dismiss the employee. Even the most professionalised and the highest paying PSCs in Senegal violate this provision in the work code.

There are no strong unions of security guards, although many guards express a desire for one. Many guards are reluctant to establish a union because they fear being laid off when their six-month contract expires. The lack of permanent contracts in the sector increases the vulnerability of guards and prevents them from taking strong positions relating to working conditions.

Cooperation Between PSCs & the Government

Most PSCs are managed or owned by former police and military officials. In some cases, officers will found private security companies while still holding public office, usually passing the day-to-day management responsibilities to a family member. Tightening the relationship between the state security forces and private sector, nearly all security guards in Senegal have completed military service and, for most companies, military or police service is an explicit prerequisite to employment.

One-third of Senegal’s military is comprised of conscripts, each of whom serves two years without the possibility of extension. Although conscription exists, it is not enforced against one’s will. The droves of unemployed find such relatively well-paying vacancies in the military desirable, and the positions are easily filled. After serving two years, conscripts are released from the army and many find jobs in the private security sector. Many guards lament their discharge from the state security forces and some eventually find more lucrative
employment with the police or gendarmerie.

Despite the overlap in personnel, there is little overt cooperation between PSCs and state security forces. Police and private security guards hold positive views of each other but, in contrast to the situation in many countries, the police do not rely on the private sector. The government of Senegal has no contracts with PSCs and all state security functions remain under the purview of the army and police. Public-private partnerships, such as water treatment plants, La Poste, and Senelec (the national electric company), are exceptions and hire PSCs to guard their facilities.

Two private military companies, Northrop Grumman Technical Services (NGTS) and Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), train the Senegalese armed forces as part of the US State Department’s African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) programme. The ACOTA programme, created after the US debacle in Somalia, seeks to train and equip African militaries to conduct peacekeeping missions, thereby minimising the responsibilities of the West. The US Government supplies Senegal with the bulk of its military equipment and hires NGTS and MPRI teams to conduct eight two-month training programmes, focusing primarily on peacekeeping tactics. Senegalese soldiers trained under ACOTA have served as peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Darfur.

In addition to ACOTA, Senegal is a partner in the so-called ‘war on terror’ and currently receives aid through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, a counter-terrorism effort to track activity from the Atlantic Ocean to Chad. The role of private military companies in this programme is unclear.

Regulation & Corruption

The most significant problems facing the private security sector in Senegal result from their poor regulation. More than 80% of PSCs are not registered with the government, do not pay taxes, and operate completely in the informal sector. In 2003, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade issued a decree mandating that all PSCs be owned and operated by Senegalese citizens or companies. At the time, Senegal’s largest private security company, the American owned Sagam Sécurité, was forced to sell. This decree has kept the private security sector entirely in domestic hands and prevented multinationals like Group4Securicor from making inroads in Senegal.

Only registered PSCs are permitted to have armed guards. Despite this requirement, some guards in the informal sector are armed. Senegal has largely succeeded in keeping guns out of the country, but steadily grants around 120 licenses each year (Agboton-Johnson et al. 2004). Private security companies win a sizable majority of these licenses, although as licenses are awarded to individuals and their affiliations are not listed, no exact figures are available. Personal ties are important, as companies that have the strongest ties to the state security system or to the state bureaucracy are more likely to win licenses. That said, this research found no evidence of corruption in the form of bribes at the governmental level.

In the private sector, however, corruption is rampant. In order to be paid the amount stipulated by the contract, the manager of a PSC must frequently bribe the contracting company. Only after a bribe of $50-100, is the contracting company likely to pay the PSC. This form of corruption is worst in public-private companies, particularly La Poste.
In 2000, the computer system that the Ministry of the Interior used to track gun licenses failed, evidently one of the few victims of the computer virus Y2K. Since then, licenses have been recorded in piecemeal fashion, and the system is largely disorganised. Every year, the Ministry of the Interior sends the possessor of a gun license a notification of the tax that is owed for each firearm. Several PSC managers reported that the lists from the government omit many of their guns, in some cases up to half of the firearms they actually own. In effect, the government has lost track of many of the arms it has licensed. The absence of state control or records of arms is a dangerous contributor to the growth of private security companies.

The growth of private security in Senegal has been remarkably uncontroversial and has faced little criticism in the press. The majority of the population views private security as the domain of international business and as a form of employment in a struggling economy. The government should be commended for its 2003 efforts to bring the private security sector into domestic hands and under the purview of the Ministry of the Interior. Despite such efforts, however, the private security sector remains largely unregulated.

Private security is likely to play an even more prominent role as increasing economic inequality makes the political situation more volatile. Additionally, the influx of people and arms from Senegal’s war-torn neighbours threatens an already fragile stability. Dakar’s riots in November 2007 are a reminder of how quickly a situation can deteriorate. Nevertheless, Senegal’s stability will likely continue to attract international businesses and international organisations, and the government’s adoption of neoliberalism makes it unlikely that economic inequalities will subside. These conditions virtually guarantee the continued growth of the private security sector, which already rivals or exceeds the state security forces in terms of number of personnel. The size and projected growth of private security, and its corresponding rise in influence, mandate a continuing re-evaluation of the role and scope of private security in Senegal and throughout Africa.

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Prison Privatisation in the African Context
Andrew Coyle

The use of prison as a direct punishment of the court is a relatively modern phenomenon. It began in the 17th and 18th century, principally in Western Europe and North America, and over the succeeding centuries its use has spread to virtually every country in the world. In Africa prior to colonial times there was no indigenous concept of imprisonment as a form of punishment. The idea of taking substantial numbers of predominantly young men, who would otherwise be economically and socially active, locking them behind high walls and making them and their dependants a burden on the rest of society made no economic or cultural sense. As elsewhere in the world the first prisons were built as a tool for the colonial powers to subdue the local populace. Today one can still visit some African towns and see prisons which reflect their French colonial past, while in a number of countries in West and East Africa many prisons are built on a common British model. One suspects that the original construction plan might still be found somewhere in the Public Records Office in Kew near London.

The rate of imprisonment in any country is usually quoted per 100,000 of the total population. On that basis, the average rate of imprisonment around the world is about 140. Rates vary dramatically from country to country. The United States, with about 23% of all the world’s prisoners, has a rate of 751, while India has a rate of 32 (ICPS, 2008). This is not the place to enter into an analysis of what leads to such variations; suffice to say that there is little evidence that they can be explained by differing rates of crime but are more likely to be explained by a variety of economic, cultural and social factors.

Imprisonment rates within the African continent also vary widely. The Republic of the Congo has the lowest rate of imprisonment in the world, with 22 prisoners per 100,000 of its population, closely followed by Burkina Faso with 23. The median rate for West African countries is 37, while that in southern Africa is 267, with South Africa having the highest rate at 348.

Prisons which are properly constructed and humanely managed are very expensive on the public purse and conditions in many developed countries have been severely criticised by independent bodies such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and Human Rights Watch. In a number of countries in Africa conditions for those held there can only be described as inhuman and degrading. On 5 March 2005 the East African Standard newspaper reported on conditions in one prison in Kenya:

[The prison], built in 1962 to hold about 350 prisoners, is congested with more than 1,450. The jail is a hallmark of neglect and abuse. Child offenders mingle with suspected murderers, violent robbers and rapists. Hardcore convicted criminals share halls with remandees accused of misdemeanours. In the women’s section, infants accompanying their mothers sleep in the same cells with mentally unsound murder suspects.

At one corner in the sickbay, a patient, deeply asleep, snores loudly beside a plastic bucket full of human waste. Another prisoner sits beside the bucket, his eyes wide open as if in a trance. Patients say they use the bucket at night and empty it in the morning for use during the day. The room is crawling with vermin.

In Ward Four, John Ndichu and 235 others spend most of the day and night squatting. This is because if they sit, they would have to stretch their legs and there is no space for that.
In 2006 the Vice-President of Kenya announced plans to free 15,000 prisoners by the end of July, noting that prisons built to hold a total of 16,000 people were then holding 48,000 inmates country-wide. 'Most of the prison facilities date back to colonial times, when Kenya’s population was less than 10 million (it is now over 30 million)', he said adding that the congestion was now posing a health hazard to inmates. This story could be repeated many times in other African countries. Governments recognise the need to improve prison conditions but simply lack the resources to improve them.

Prison Privatisation

It is generally accepted that, even in an age of reducing government direct delivery of services and increasing private control of services which are essential for the common good, there are some responsibilities which the state cannot delegate and which it must carry out itself. An example would be defence of the nation from external enemies. All armed services remain under the direct control of the government in democratic countries and private or mercenary armies are not permitted, although as shown in several articles in this Special Issue, private military companies are increasingly integrated into and support national militaries in various ways. The judiciary is another example where private enterprise is eschewed. Protection of the public has become a slightly greyer area in recent years. Private security firms now abound and in some countries outnumber the police but the core responsibility for public order and for investigation of crime still lies with state officials.

Until thirty or so years ago the task of depriving citizens of their liberty was another function which was regarded as a state monopoly for similar reasons. Individual freedom was so sacred that only the state could take it away after due process and only the state could administer the punishment passed by its own courts. That is a position which is still maintained in the majority of democratic countries, but not in all.

The modern phenomenon of prison privatisation can be traced back to 1979 when the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service began contracting commercial companies to detain illegal immigrants who were awaiting deportation hearings (Wood, 2003). By the mid-1980s the number of people in prison in the US was increasing to such an extent that a number of states turned to these private detention companies to provide quick build prisons and detention centres. An added advantage for the state jurisdictions was that the resultant costs could be recorded against revenue or operating budgets rather than as capital costs.

In the course of the following decade governments entered into contracts for private prisons in a number of other countries, including the UK, Australia and New Zealand. This came to be seen increasingly as a lucrative business with the small number of companies involved each chasing its share of 'the market'. In 2004 one of the companies described the UK as 'the second largest private correctional market in the world' (GEO Group, 2004).

In respect of prisons the term ‘privatisation’ covers a wide spectrum. This starts with marginal areas such as issuing commercial contracts for the prison shops or canteens, where prisoners are able to purchase items for personal use. The next stage in privatisation is that in which specific services, such as drug treatment or other programmes for prisoners, are delivered by commercial companies or not-for-profit organisations. Moving along the spectrum, in some cases contracts are issued for the central services within the prison; these can include catering, health care, education...
and work for prisoners. The most advanced example of this is in France where a number of prisons are run under a system of dual management, with prison service personnel carrying out what are described as the public service duties (supervision, rehabilitation, registration and management) and commercial companies being responsible for all other functions (maintenance, transportation, accommodation, food service, work and vocational training).

A further phase of privatisation is that in which the entire operation of a prison is contracted to a commercial company or a not-for-profit organisation. In this case the state builds and continues to own the prison buildings and enters into a contract with a company for the management of the prison. Thereafter the state takes no part in the daily management. A number of the earliest examples of prison privatisation in England and Australia followed this model. The ultimate stage of privatisation, so far, is that in which a commercial company takes a prison from drawing board to final operation. This includes its design, construction, financing and management. This is the model now generally followed in the UK and, as we shall see, in South Africa. The mechanism for implementing the private construction and management of new prisons, as with other public institutions, has been the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) or Public Private Partnership (PPP).

Technically, none of these models should be described as privatisation. The legal responsibility for the prisoners who are held in them remains with the state, which contracts out their daily management to the differing degrees described above. Full privatisation would exist only if the state handed over complete responsibility for the citizens sentenced to prison to a commercial company. However, as far as the prisoner in the prison which is managed by a commercial company is concerned, this is a semantic distinction. For all practical purposes, such a prisoner is in the hands of a commercial company. The best of these companies may well set out to treat the prisoners under their control in a decent and humane manner. A few of them succeed better than their counterparts in the public sector. Despite this there is no escaping the fact that the final responsibility of these companies is to their shareholders; they must deliver a profit or they will cease to trade. This is the ultimate difference between a private prison and a public one.

Prison Privatisation in Africa

In 1993 the prison population in South Africa stood at 111,000. By 2002, it had risen to 182,000. At the end of January 2008 it had fallen back to 166,000, while the system had beds for 114,500. The rise in numbers in the decade after 1993 placed intolerable strain on the system and there was international criticism not only of levels of overcrowding but also of corruption and violence inside the prisons. In an attempt to deal with these problems the government turned to prison privatisation.

The issue of prison privatisation in South Africa was discussed at a seminar in Cape Town in 2003 (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003). The introduction to the report of the conference refers to findings by Professor Julia Sloth Nielsen that,

the privatisation of state assets was explicitly part of the government’s overall economic programme in the period following 1996, and indeed remains part of government’s chosen strategy. Correctional Services decided to explore the possibility of privatisation as part of a new prisons building programme, one key aim of which was to address overcrowding, inter-alia through the more rapid construction of new facilities.
One of the speakers at the conference, Stephen Nathan, placed this in a wider context when he said,

*The backdrop to prison privatisation is the economic restructuring – including privatisation of state assets and services – being imposed on countries by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.*

At the time of writing South Africa is the only country in Africa which has private prisons. The government initially planned to tender for four private prisons but in the end restricted itself to two tenders for financial reasons. Mangaung Prison, with 3,024 places and now operated by GSL, was opened at Bloemfontein in July 2001 and Kutama-Sinthumule Prison, with 2,928 places and operated by the South African Custodial Services, a subsidiary of the GEO Group, opened in Louis Trichardt in 2002. These are the two largest private prisons in the world. The GEO Group describes itself as a world leader in privatised correctional and detention management, with operations also in the US and the UK.

According to Prison Privatisation Report International (2003), these two prisons have proved to be extremely costly to the Department of Corrections. As early as 2002 the government set up a task force to investigate the prisons’ financing, costs, outputs and risk allocation; to establish a comparison with public sector prisons; and to identify features for renegotiation to address the department of correctional services’ affordability restraints. In November 2002 the task force reported that returns on the company’s investments in Mangaung prison could be as high as 29.9% while returns on Kutama-Sinthumule were as high as 25%. Construction and operating fees at Bloemfontein had increased from R154.41 per prisoner per day at the outset to R215.70, while at Louis Trichardt costs had increased from R139.31 to R160.36. The task force recommended that the contracts for the two prisons should be renegotiated. This proved to be impossible.

The contracts provide for both capital repayments and daily per prisoner costs, adjusted annually for inflation, but based on what have been described as exceedingly unrealistic ‘input specifications’, including a limit of two prisoners per cell and extensive educational and vocational training requirements, to levels which are not available in any publicly managed prison. It has been reported that the two prisons will over the next three years consume between 5.1 and 5.4% of the total Correctional Services Budget (R642,235 million in 2008/9), for facilities housing around 3% of the prison population (Sloth-Nielsen, 2006).

A senior adviser in the South African Treasury is reported to have commented, ‘We ordered a Rolls Royce but we should have ordered a Toyota’ (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003).

In his Budget Vote speech in late 2007 the Corrections Minister announced his intention to invite tenders for the construction of five new prisons on a public-private partnership model ‘once national treasury agrees to cover the project management costs.’ It is by no means clear that the Treasury will give its agreement to this.

The problems faced by a country such as South Africa are compounded if one looks at the situation of its impoverished neighbour, Lesotho. In 2001 the prison population of Lesotho was less than 3,000. The government acknowledged that the conditions in its prisons were appalling and had to be improved yet it lacked the resources to realise its ambition. Enter Group 4 Corrections Services SA (Pty) Ltd. with a solution which was completely alien to the traditions of the country. It offered to build a prison with 3,500 places which would be of a high
physical standard. The price to be paid was that all the prisoners in the country would be located in this single mega prison, very far from their homes and in an environment which would be completely at odds with the culture of the country. Group 4 apparently developed its proposal at the request of the Lesotho Department of Justice, Human Rights and Rehabilitation. Later the Minister who had invited Group 4 to develop its proposal was replaced and the government decided not to pursue the proposal. In May 2008 Group 4 Securicor, the successor company to Group 4 and the largest private security company in the world, announced that it had taken over GLS, the contractor for Mangaung Prison, thus making it a player in private prisons in South Africa. This amalgamation reinforced the increasing tendency to reduce the extent of competition among the companies involved in this field.

Conclusion

In the UK there is increasing concern about the long term financial costs of private prisons. In addition, the respected independent Chief Inspector of Prisons has issued extremely critical reports on the operation of several of these prisons. In 2001 the National Audit Office published a generally positive report on PFI prisons (National Audit Office, 2001). However, a further report in 2003 (National Audit Office, 2003) was much more cautious and concluded that the use of private prisons ‘is neither a guarantee of success nor the cause of inevitable failure’.

The situation in South Africa is much more problematic, not least because of questions about the competence of the entire system. For example, in 2001 President Thabo Mbeki appointed a Commission of Inquiry to investigate and report on corruption, maladministration, violence, and intimidation in the Department of Correctional Services. The Commission handed its final report to President Mbeki on 15 December 2005, but it took nearly a year and last minute pressure from the Correctional Services Portfolio Committee Chairperson and Judge Jali, the Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry, before the Minister of Correctional Services released the full report to the public in November 2006. The report of the Jali Commission makes very uncomfortable reading for the Department of Corrections and the Government of South Africa. Of the Commission’s seven focus areas, none were found to have been immune to corruption and in all nine management areas that were investigated, evidence of corruption, maladministration, and the violation of prisoners’ rights were found. In such an overarching climate one would have to be very cautious about the expansion of commercially managed privatisation.

South Africa is a case study in the way that prison privatisation may well proceed in the coming years. Faced with the reality that profit margins in the developed world are likely to be restricted in future and the fact that returns on investment have to be balanced against greater levels of public scrutiny and potential for embarrassment, the small number of companies involved in the business of prison privatisation are beginning to turn their attention to developing countries. Many of these countries are faced with rising prison populations and with terrible prison conditions. Governments are under increasing pressure to improve the conditions of their prisons, while knowing that they have no resources to do so. These are fertile grounds for private prison companies, who can come into a country, promising to relieve the government of unbearable commitments to capital funding in exchange for a revenue commitment which is attractive in the short term but which will have crippling implications in the longer term. This often suits the wishes of politicians who have short term agendas rather than long term ones. A further attraction for private prison companies is that in
such countries it will often be possible to prepare a contract which meets the needs of the private contractor much better than those of the contracting state in both financial and operational terms. In many developing countries there is a real problem with corruption in the public and private services at an institutional and at an individual level. When prisons are operated on a for-profit basis the danger of this happening is likely to be considerably increased. In addition, the strict monitoring arrangements which exist in some developed countries will be absent, leaving the contracting company free to interpret the conditions of the contract to its own advantage.

There is a more fundamental issue which exists in developed as well as in developing countries. It is that the real issue is not about whether private prisons are cheaper than public ones, nor whether they are managed more effectively and efficiently. The fundamental change which has come about with the introduction of privatisation is the concept of prison as a ‘market-place’ and a business which will inevitably expand. Private prisons have been introduced as a short term response by governments to rising prison populations, to shortage of prison places and to limited public funding to maintain existing prisons and to build new ones. As a result, the financial and social costs of an increasing use of imprisonment have not been subject to public scrutiny. Many of the costs of increased imprisonment are hidden in the short term. In fiscal terms, high capital expenditure can be converted into long term revenue expenditure, which reduces current financial costs term while increasing future costs to the public purse. In social terms, governments have not encouraged public debate about why so many additional prison places are needed, being content to argue that they will provide as many places as are necessary to protect the public. This is an even more dangerous phenomenon in developing countries than it is in developed ones.

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Endnotes

Bibliography
The Nigerian Feminist Movement: Lessons from Women in Nigeria, WIN*

Bene E. Madunagu

In Nigeria, as in other societies, there is, and there has always been a women’s movement or more correctly women’s movements. These existed before, during and after colonialism. Many of these may probably not fit into the conventional definition of a movement. Various forms of interest groups see themselves as movements. I admit that all of these do serve interests that in many ways attempt at addressing inequalities between women and men in society. While this is an acceptable criterion of minimising disagreements in the characterisation of women-based organisations, the reality is that there are still substantial differences in the forms of movements that call themselves ‘women’s movements’. Some movements may or may not have clear objectives, mission or vision but exist as ad hoc bodies, useful when the need arises but with little or no coordination, continuity or sustainability. Some may just be limited to specific local struggles.

In Nigeria, the oldest and largest women’s movement can be said to be the National Council of Women’s Societies (NCWS) founded in 1958. Basu’s (1995) definition clearly suits the NCWS.

The Nigerian women’s movement is an unarmed movement. It is non-confrontational. It is a movement for the progressive upliftment of women for motherhood, nationhood and development.

This movement is ‘at home’ with the protection of our culture and tradition as well as with the supremacy of men. It will not rock the boat. It essentially accepts what the tradition has been and what religion sanctions.

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There are sectors of this movement that are more radical than the status-quo and that would raise the struggle to a higher level but are still afraid of what the men would say or do. There are gender activists who would rather not be associated with feminism, publicly or privately. Again there are women ‘activists’ in the larger women’s movement who call themselves feminists when they are in the midst of feminists but will quickly condemn ‘those crazy people’, a reference to those who publicly admit and declare that they are feminists. There are yet those who are feminists, ‘but’; these are women who want to be seen truly as feminists but become uncomfortable with discussions on such questions as the totality of who a feminist is and the extent of feminism in terms of core values, principles and praxis. They are satisfied with declaration and participation in meetings and conferences where the term feminism gets mentioned, but are generally silent when issues of sexual rights are discussed. For them, feminism has limits. They are, for instance, totally homophobic.

Feminism in Nigeria

There is no denying the fact that some forms of feminist struggles existed in Nigeria before what was clearly acclaimed and identified openly as a feminist movement: Women in Nigeria (WIN). However such struggles were largely undocumented. I make bold to state that feminism in Nigeria in its present form – consistent, organised, with clear objectives and ideology – came into being with the inauguration, in 1983, of the organisation Women in Nigeria (WIN) following the 1982 national conference on the same theme. WIN was a direct outcome of the conference, envisioned as a feminist movement and named as such.

During its first ten years WIN facilitated the development of many of the self-
identified feminists in Nigeria today. WIN started off with a clearly stated rights-based approach to issues about women in Nigeria and was very clear on the issues of gender and social justice. However, the open policy of WIN of ‘come one – come all’, where anyone, male or female, was accepted as long as such a person accepted the provisions of our Constitution, carried a danger of WIN including persons who have contempt for feminism but come into WIN with their own agenda. There was no punishment for anyone who played no active roll as long as such a person showed up once in a while at meetings. In spite of the inherent weaknesses in the nature of membership criteria for WIN, one must always pay tribute to WIN as training ground for the emergence of organised feminist struggles in Nigeria. WIN’s open policy of membership led to the entry of many persons who had no clue about feminism and gender justice and its core values and principles. Many enthusiastic members equated feminist struggles to abstract class struggle, with total disdain for gender issues. Internal conflicts generated by ignorance and opportunism as well as male chauvinistic understanding of social struggles as not including gender equality and equity as key components of social justice became a cankerworm that progressively weakened WIN as a movement for social transformation – a core focus of feminist struggles.

The Uniqueness & Contribution of WIN to the Nigerian Feminist Movement

From the onset, WIN engaged in research, policy advocacy and activism aimed at transforming the conditions under which women and other underprivileged classes in Nigeria lived. WIN’s further uniqueness was its consciousness of both class and gender in the struggle for the emancipation of women. WIN acknowledged that, although the majority of women, suffered from the exploitative and oppressive character of the Nigerian society, women suffer additional forms of exploitation and oppression – as women. Thus WIN recognised the double forms of exploitation and oppression of women as members of the subordinate class and as women. WIN set out to struggle against both class and gender oppression through promoting the study of conditions of women, disseminating the outcome for policy formulation, defending the rights of women and taking actions to transform the conditions of women.

WIN’s Strategies

WIN started off with the strategy of research, analysis and documentation of conditions of women in various situations in the society. The outcome of this strategy provided the much needed data for advocacy and mobilisation of women to demand their rights. This strategy also led to the practice of holding annual conferences as a means of public education and the creation of awareness, using research data and gender analysis as convincing tool for demanding women’s rights. We may also mention the adoption of a clear Constitution that emerged from the involvement and participation of all members, the establishment of WIN as an institution with basic feminist principles and values, the emergence of well-defined organisational structures of leadership and representation at national and in the state branches, and clearly defined roles, responsibilities and obligations.

During these first ten years, WIN never received subvention from government and so was able to maintain its independence. It could therefore take actions without compromising since, as the saying goes, ‘the person that pays the piper dictates the tune’.
WIN’s Publications

As stated earlier, one of the strengths of WIN’s strategies, was documentation of research and analysis from a gender perspective. A research theme was chosen each year by consensus and the outcome was published. The first major publication of WIN was the book, *Women In Nigeria Today* (Zed Books, 1985) that came out of the conference that gave birth to WIN. This inaugural publication was followed by:


These publications became invaluable in the understanding of gender issues in Nigeria. There is no way a collection of persons from different backgrounds, cultures and different experiences could be in serious actions together without conflicts. This would have been unnatural.

However, WIN had its in-house policy of conflict resolution, and the principles on which the feminists worked helped in the process of constructive criticism a healthy practice for movement building. WIN succeeded as a training ground for many Nigerian feminists who are still committed in many ways to feminist struggles.

Beyond WIN

A lot has happened since the transformation of WIN from its initial focus and content to the present period when in almost every feminist gathering, questions arise that raise doubts. The Nigerian feminist movement has a forum – Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) – which is larger and more coherent than WIN.

The NFF was launched in January 2008 after an incubation period that started with the launching of the African Feminist Forum (AFF) in Accra, Ghana in 2006. As a chapter of the African Feminist Forum, the Nigerian Feminist Forum is bound by the values and principles of the AFF. The NFF has effectively replaced WIN as the Nigerian Feminist Movement, and it has gone beyond the historical stage of isolated country movements to become part of the continental (Pan African) feminist movement. AFF documents clearly state the content, context, values and principles of the present vibrant Nigerian feminist movement. Let me quickly point out that we in the NFF know that there are many self-identified Nigerian feminists within Nigeria and in the diaspora who are yet to be part of the NFF, which is still very young. Hence NFF is not a closed club nor is it a ‘come one, come all’ club. We have learned from the past. There are clear guidelines and conditions for becoming a part of the NFF. The secretariat of both the AFF and the NFF are ever ready to furnish potential, interested feminists who wish to be members with information on how to do join.

The information is contained in the Charter of the Feminist Principles for African Feminists clearly states how African and Nigerian feminists alike define themselves, the understanding Feminism and Patriarchy, our identity as African and Nigerian feminists, our ethics as individual and institutional African and Nigerian feminists, and our understanding of feminist leadership. The charter of the feminist principles of the AFF is binding on all the country level feminist forums including Nigerian Feminist Forum.
From WIN to NFF

WIN’s lessons and experiences for the NFF as a new formation include the need for the adoption of basic principles of organisation and action. There is also the need to agree on responsibilities as well as structures for coordination and leadership to ensure organised actions and sustainability. This is already being practised in the NFF with a central organising committee serviced by a joint secretariat of two feminist organisations, both located in Lagos.

Two recent events have tested the strength of NFF. One was the rallying of Nigerian feminists and many other progressive sectors of Nigerian society to put an end to attempts by a private university to force virginity and HIV testing on Nigerian girls entering the institution. Another was the mobilisation against a state attempt to ban the use of condoms. Nigerian feminists along with various institutions caused the state to annul the policy, thereby putting an end to the matter. The most recent had to do with a proposed federal bill, introduced by the female chairperson of the Nigerian Senate Committee for Women and Youths, to institutionalise a dress-code for women. The NFF, together with several women organisations, put an end to the proposed bill through several press conferences and the weight of Nigerian women’s mobilisation to fill the hall where the public hearings on the bill took place. There are many other situations that show the resurgence and revitalisation of feminist activism in Nigeria.

We celebrate these victories. It is gratifying that this can happen in present primitive neo-colonial Nigeria (and Africa), where laws are imposed by the imperialist ‘International Community’; our leaders have kept us in the backyard of that global community to serve as the dustbins or refuse dump for what does not work or what is dangerous to the community of the G8 countries. Our leaders are prepared to sign imperialist conditionalities drafted by the ailing IMF and the World Bank. These conditionalities for unequal trade agreements and perpetual indebtedness of the developing or retrogressing world where we are located, create and deepen poverty with women bearing the greatest burden imposed by culture and tradition and reinforced by the new forms of imperialist-driven religious evangelism. To worsen this already bad situation from present-day globalisation policies of re-colonisation of Africa (in particular, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, etc.), the United States and the rest of the West have come with poverty alleviation strategies and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to divert our attention from the cruel poverty imposed by their policies and the excruciating challenges women in particular face from the new importation of imperialist style of democracy. Hence, if in spite of these burdens, feminists, the larger women’s movement, and our allies have been able to challenge effectively these offshoots of imperialist-directed democracy in our country, we have cause to celebrate – with our eyes open, of course, to see when they try other gimmicks.

This is the present state of the Nigerian feminist movement and its relationship with the larger Nigerian Feminist Movement, an offshoot of the Pan-African Feminist Movement (AFF).

I FORESEE A SUSTAINED ACTIVE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA THAT WILL PLAY A STRONG ROLE IN THE AFRICAN FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND IN THE GLOBAL FEMINIST MOVEMENT AS A FORCE TO BE RECOGNISED AND RESPECTED. THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!!
APPENDIX: Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists

The African Feminist Forum took place from 15-19 November 2006 in Accra, Ghana. The meeting brought together over 100 feminist activists from all over the region and the diaspora. The space was crafted as an autonomous space in which African feminists from all walks of life, at different levels of engagement within the feminist movement such as mobilizing at local levels for women’s empowerment to academia, could reflect on a collective basis and chart ways to strengthen and grow the feminist movement on the continent.

A key outcome of the forum was the adoption of the Charter of Feminist Principles, which was agreed by the Regional Working group for the Forum, to be one of its principle aims. It was felt that we need something to help us define and affirm our commitment to feminist principles, which will guide our analysis, and practice. As such the Charter sets out the collective values that we hold as key to our work and to our lives as African feminists. It charts the change we wish to see in our communities, and also how this change is to be achieved. In addition it spells out our individual and collective responsibilities to the movement and to one another within the movement.

With this Charter, we reaffirm our commitment to dismantling patriarchy in all its manifestations in Africa. We remind ourselves of our duty to defend and respect the rights of all women, without qualification. We commit to protecting the legacy of our feminist ancestors who made numerous sacrifices, in order that we can exercise greater autonomy.

PREAMBLE: NAMING OURSELVES AS FEMINISTS

We define and name ourselves publicly as Feminists because we celebrate our feminist identities and politics. We recognise that the work of fighting for women’s rights is deeply political, and the process of naming is political too. Choosing to name ourselves Feminist places us in a clear ideological position. By naming ourselves as Feminists we politicise the struggle for women’s rights, we question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated, and we develop tools for transformative analysis and action. We have multiple and varied identities as African Feminists. We are African women – we live here in Africa and even when we live elsewhere, our focus is on the lives of African women on the continent. Our feminist identity is not qualified with ‘Ifs’, ‘Buts’, or ‘However’s’. We are Feminists. Full stop.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF FEMINISM & PATRIARCHY

As African feminists our understanding of feminism places patriarchal social relations, structures and systems which are embedded in other oppressive and exploitative structures at the centre of our analysis. Patriarchy is a system of male authority which legitimizes the oppression of women through political, social, economic, legal, cultural, religious and military institutions. Men’s access to, and control over resources and rewards within the private and public sphere derives its legitimacy from the patriarchal ideology of male dominance. Patriarchy varies in time and space, meaning that it changes over time, and varies according to class, race, ethnic, religious and global-imperial relationships and structures. Furthermore, in the current conjunctures, patriarchy does not simply change according to these factors, but is inter-related with and informs relationships of class, race, ethnic, religious, and global-imperialism. Thus to challenge patriarchy effectively also requires challenging other systems of oppression and exploitation, which frequently mutually support each other.

Our understanding of Patriarchy is crucial because it provides for us as feminists, a framework within which to express the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations which affect African women. Patriarchal ideology enables and legitimizes the structuring of every aspect of our lives by establishing the framework within which society defines and views men and women and constructs male supremacy. Our ideological task as feminists is to understand this system and our political task is to end it. Our focus is fighting against patriarchy as a system rather than fighting individual men or women. Therefore, as feminists, we define our work as investing individual and institutional energies in the struggle against all forms of patriarchal oppression and exploitation.

OUR IDENTITY AS AFRICAN FEMINISTS

As Feminists who come from/work/live in Africa, we claim the right and the space to be Feminist and African. We recognise that we do not have a homogenous identity as feminists – we acknowledge and celebrate our diversities and our shared commitment to a transformative agenda for African societies and African women in particular. This is what gives us our common feminist identity.
Our current struggles as African Feminists are inextricably linked to our past as a continent – diverse pre-colonial contexts, slavery, colonization, liberation struggles, neo-colonialism, globalization. Modern African States were built off the backs of African Feminists who fought alongside men for the liberation of the continent. As we craft new African States in this new millennium, we also craft new identities for African women, identities as full citizens, free from patriarchal oppression, with rights of access, ownership and control over resources and our own bodies and utilizing positive aspects of our cultures in liberating and nurturing ways. We also recognise that our pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories and herstories require special measures to be taken in favour of particular African women in different contexts.

We acknowledge the historical and significant gains that have been made by the African Women’s Movement over the past forty years, and we make bold to lay claim to these gains as African feminists – they happened because African Feminists led the way, from the grassroots level and up; they strategised, organised, networked, went on strike and marched in protest, and did the research, analysis, lobbying, institution building and all that it took for States, employers and institutions to acknowledge women’s personhood.

As African feminists, we are also part of a global feminist movement against patriarchal oppression in all its manifestations. Our experiences are linked to that of women in other parts of the world with whom we have shared solidarity and support over the years. As we assert our space as African feminists, we also draw inspiration from our feminist ancestors who blazed the trail and made it possible to affirm the rights of African women. As we invoke the memory of those women whose names are hardly ever recorded in any history books, we insist that it is a profound insult to claim that feminism was imported into Africa from the West. We reclaim and assert the long and rich tradition of African women’s resistance to patriarchy in Africa. We henceforth claim the right to theorise for ourselves, write for ourselves, strategise for ourselves and speak for ourselves as African feminists.

**INDIVIDUAL ETHICS**

As individual feminists, we are committed to and believe in gender equality based on feminist principles which are:

- The indivisibility, inalienability and universality of women’s human rights;
- The effective participation in building and strengthening progressive African feminist organizing and networking to bring about transformative change;
- A spirit of feminist solidarity and mutual respect based on frank, honest and open discussion of difference with each other;
- The support, nurture, and care of other African feminists, along with the care for our own well-being;
- The practice of non-violence and the achievement of non-violent societies;
- The right of all women to live free of patriarchal oppression, discrimination and violence;
- The right of all women to have access to sustainable and just livelihoods as well as welfare provision, including quality health care, education, water and sanitation;
- Freedom of choice and autonomy regarding bodily integrity issues, including reproductive rights, abortion, sexual identity and sexual orientation;
- A critical engagement with discourses of religion, culture, tradition and domesticity with a focus on the centrality of women’s rights;
- The recognition and presentation of African women as the subjects not the objects of our work, and as agents in their lives and societies;
- The right to healthy, mutually respectful and fulfilling personal relationships;
- The right to express our spirituality within or outside of organised religions;
- The acknowledgment of the feminist agency of African women which has a rich *Herstory* that has been largely undocumented and ignored.

**INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS**

As feminist organisations we commit to the following:

- Advocating for openness, transparency, equality and accountability in feminist-led institutions and organisations;
- Affirming that being a feminist institution is not incompatible with being professional, efficient, disciplined and accountable;
- Insisting on and supporting African women’s labour rights, including egalitarian governance, fair and equal remuneration and maternity policies;
• Using power and authority responsibly, and managing institutional hierarchies with respect for all concerned. We believe that feminist spaces are created to empower and uplift women. At no time should we allow our institutional spaces to degenerate into sites of oppression and undermining of other women;

• Exercising responsible leadership and management of organisations whether in a paid or unpaid capacity and striving to uphold critical feminist values and principles at all times;

• Exercising accountable leadership in feminist organisations, taking into consideration the needs of others for self-fulfillment and professional development. This includes creating spaces for power-sharing across generations;

• Creating and sustaining feminist organisations to foster women’s leadership. Women’s organisations and networks should be led and managed by women. It is a contradiction of feminist leadership principles to have men leading, managing and being spokespersons for women’s organisations;

• Feminist organisations as models of good practice in the community of civil society organizations, ensuring that the financial and material resources mobilised in the name of African women are put to the service of African women and not diverted to serve personal interests. Systems and structures with appropriate Codes of Conduct to prevent corruption and fraud, and to manage disputes and complaints fairly, are the means of ensuring our organisations;

• Striving to inform our activism with theoretical analysis and to connect the practice of activism to our theoretical understanding of African feminism;

• Being open to critically assessing our impact as feminist organisations, and being honest and pro-active with regards to our role in the movement;

• Opposing the subversion and/or hijacking of autonomous feminist spaces to serve right wing, conservative agendas;

• Ensuring that feminist non-governmental or mass organisations are created in response to real needs expressed by women that need to be met, and not to serve selfish interests, and unaccountable income-generating agendas.

FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

As leaders in the feminist movement, we recognise that feminist agency has popularised the notion of women as leaders. As feminist leaders we are committed to making a critical difference in leadership, based on the understanding that the quality of women’s leadership is even more important than the numbers of women in leadership. We believe in and commit ourselves to the following:

• Disciplined work ethics guided by integrity and accountability at all times;

• Expanding and strengthening a multi-generational network and pool of feminist leaders across the continent;

• Ensuring that the feminist movement is recognised as a legitimate constituency for women in leadership positions;

• Building and expanding our knowledge and information base on an ongoing basis, as the foundation for shaping our analysis and strategies and for championing a culture of learning beginning with ourselves within the feminist movement;

• Nurturing, mentoring and providing opportunities for young feminists in a non-matronising manner;

• Crediting African women’s labour, intellectual and otherwise in our work;

• Creating time to respond in a competent, credible and reliable manner to other feminists in need of solidarity and support whether political, practical or emotional;

• Being open to giving and receiving peer reviews and constructive feedback from other feminists.

References


Endnote

* This briefing was originally published in 1986: A. Mohammed & Bene E. Madunagu (1986), ‘WIN: A Militant Approach to the Mobilisation of Women’, ROAPE 13:37, 103-105. Many thanks to Bene for this very timely up-date (editors).
Angolans Vote for Peace

On 5 September 2008 Angola held its first election since its protracted conflict was put to an end in April 2002. MPLA’s victory in the 1992 legislative elections was contested by UNITA and the subsequent crisis resulted in the resumption of the civil war. This historical precedent triggered a degree apprehension vis-à-vis the electoral process amongst most Angolans. The organisation of the 2008 legislative elections was managed by the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Election Process. Both bodies were largely made up of elements of the ruling party albeit the CNE had some representatives from opposition parties. The government developed a sophisticated and costly electoral system including electoral materials produced by the multinational company INDRA based in Spain.

The organisation of the elections began in 2006. The voter registration process was a paramount undertaking due to the absence of a census list of the Angolan population since 1975. The survey was carried out by several registration brigades and was observed by party agents; as a result over 8 million Angolans were registered. Nonetheless, the process was not absent of controversy since the opposition parties denounced that the traditional authorities, the so-called Sobas, in connivance with the barrios (neighbourhood) coordinators collected voters ID cards in order to elaborate a parallel register list of voters. According to the main opposition party UNITA, this was a strategy to coerce villagers into voting for MPLA. In addition, UNITA accused the CNE of recruiting polling staff members mainly amongst members of MPLA. Nevertheless, these alleged irregularities did not outweigh opposition parties’ eagerness to participate in the electoral process. In addition, the government put in place a program to induce civilian disarmament for the purpose of fostering people’s confidence in a peaceful electoral outcome.

Since May 2008 MPLA and UNITA ran a pre-election campaign leading up to the electoral campaign which started officially on 7 August 2008. According to electoral law, the 14 parties that were registered were to receive $1.1 million each for the electoral campaign three months before E-day. However, these state funds were only distributed to the political parties at the beginning of August. Opposition parties had meagre private means of financing the campaign and lacked propaganda materials and even means of transport to reach their constituencies. Hence, opposition parties mainly conducted a door to door campaign. Meanwhile, MPLA was accused by the opposition parties of using state resources for its campaign (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement). MPLA used a wide range of means of transport (small airplanes, school buses, 4x4 vehicles, motorbikes, bikes, etc.) and displayed generous campaign resources including the distribution of a wide range of electoral materials. In addition, MPLA conducted a very well orchestrated electoral propaganda campaign in the national mass media, namely the National Angolan Radio (RPA), the National Angolan TV (TPA) and the governmental Jornal de Angola. Media opposition such as the weekly journal O Novo Jornal enjoyed limited distribution and the church run Radio Igreja could only be broadcasted in Luanda. The opposition parties struggled to get their message across to the population in the provinces due to limited means and poor organisational planning in some cases.

The MPLA campaign focused on the government’s role in sustaining 6 years of peace, social progress and economic development. José Eduardo Dos Santos, MPLA’s president and Angola’s Head of State for the last 30 years was described...
in mass meetings and rallies as a successful peacemaker. Governmental achievements made recurrently the headlines of national news programs i.e. inauguration of hospitals, schools, running water plants, infrastructures or new branches of the state-owned network of supermarkets *nossa super*. The Angolan media generously publicised China’s leading role in re-building the country’s infrastructures in exchange for oil supplies.

In recent years, the Angolan economy has had an annual real growth rate over 15%, its inflation stays in double digits and revenues result mainly from the booming oil industry and the extraction of minerals and diamonds. In 2008 Angola became Africa’s largest oil producer overtaking Nigeria. The Angolan Finance minister José Pedro de Morais received the prize of Best African Finance Minister in 2007 from the *Financial Times* magazine *The Banker* and he was also recently nominated among the Personalities of the Year by the *Foreign Direct Investment* Magazine (FDIM). The country attracts international investment and duly pays back its foreign debt to international creditors. Angolan companies linked to the Government of Angola are also striving to take control of the banking sector traditionally dominated by Portuguese firms.

The booming economy has been cleverly exploited by MPLA campaigners as being the engine for social progress to address deficits in health, education, clean water, electricity and infrastructures. Despite MPLA’s optimistic vision, Angola is still amongst the world’s least developed nations and occupies the 162nd position in the 2007-2008 UNDP development index rankings. Individuals closely connected to the MPLA leadership manage the main sources of the country’s capitalist development such as oil, construction, telecommunications and hotel industries whilst most Angolans live in precarious conditions, in shanty towns or in small villages in the rural countryside, below minimum hygiene standards, often without easy access to clean water resulting in outbreaks of contagious diseases such as cholera and chronic diarrhoea among children who suffer also from nutritional disorders. Malaria remains the most common cause of infant mortality. Despite a widespread social perception of corruption amongst certain elements of the ruling party, MPLA’s landslide victory in the elections was determined by the Angolan people’s desire to maintain peace and their expectations on the development prospects resulting from country’s emerging role in the energy sector.

In the era of globalisation, MPLA is the only game in town. Since pre-campaigning began, significant members of UNITA: some of them concerned about maintaining their positions as administrators of the current Government of National Unity: defected from UNITA and subsequently expressed their support to MPLA. Their move to the ruling party was widely publicised by state media on E-day week. Despite questions raised on the confusion between state structures and the MPLA party, elections have been deemed by all international observation missions as transparent, and all opposition parties have accepted the results, whilst allegations of vote rigging have almost been non-existent. Seemingly, international observers highlighted the process was hampered to some extent by organisational pitfalls such as delays in the distribution of materials which then obliged many polling stations to re-open in Luanda on E-day + 1, delays in the accreditation of opposition party observers and inconsistencies in the interpretation of counting procedures (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement).

MPLA obtained a landslide victory receiving 81% of the votes. UNITA and
PRS received respectively 10% and 3% of the votes. UNITA’s resounding defeat has been aggravated by its sharply declining influence in its traditional strongholds. On the other hand, PRS slightly improved its 1992 results by focusing its campaign on the promotion of federalism, i.e. provincial management of revenues as the recipe to address corruption and shorten the gap between a rich urban elite based in Luanda and poverty-stricken peasants living in the provinces; significantly, PRS obtained over 40% of the votes casted in diamond-rich province of Lunda Sul.

Needless to emphasise that MPLA’s main challenge ahead is to maintain these excellent electoral results; the electorate gave credit to the leadership who managed to sustain 6 years of peace but in future contests the government’s capacity to deliver socio-economic development will be scrutinised more closely. These elections have been conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner and Angola has taken a step forward towards political stability; as in 1992, most Angolans voted for MPLA but the country’s path towards development could benefit from governmental efforts to enable constructive criticism in the public arena. Opposition parties and independent civil society organisations are irreplaceable assets in the priceless business of sustaining Angola’s hard-won peace.

Endnotes
2. Oil in Angola is a state subsidised product. Super oil price is less than .50 cents per litre.
3. The Portuguese Bank BPI sold 49.9% of Banco de Fomento Angola, the southern African country’s largest private sector bank, to Angola’s mobile phone operator, Unitel. For further information see Peter Wise, Financial Times.com (15 September 2008).

Angola Election: 2008: Final Results

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<th>Party</th>
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<tr>
<td>MPLA</td>
<td>81.64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNITA</td>
<td>10.39%</td>
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<td>PRS</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
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The Full Cabinet List

President: José Eduardo dos Santos
Prime Minister: António Paulo Kassoma
Minister of National Defence: Kundi Paihama
Minister of Interior: Roberto Leal Ramos Monteiro
Minister of Foreign Affairs: Assunção Afonso dos Anjos
Minister of Economy: Manuel Nunes Junior
Minister of Territory Administration: Virgílio Ferreira de Fontes Pereira
Minister of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security: António Domingos Pitra
Costa Neto
Minister of Justice: Guilhermina Contreiras da Costa Prata
Minister of Finance: Eduardo Leopoldo Severin de Morais
Minister of Planning: Ana Afonso Dias Lourenço
Minister of Commerce: Maria Idalina de Oliveira Valente
Minister of Hotel and Tourism: Pedro Mbuti
Minister of Agriculture: Afonso Pedro Canga
Minister of Fisheries: Salamão José Luete Chirimbimbi
Minister of Industry: Joaquim Duarte da Costa David
Minister of Oil: José Maria Botelho de Vasconcelos
Minister of Geology and Mining: Makenda Ambroise
Minister of Environment: Maria de Fátima Monteiro Jardim  
Minister of Science and Technology: Maria Cândida Teixeira  
Minister of Urbanisation and Housing: Diakumpuna Sita José  
Minister of Public Works: Francisco Higino Lopes Cameiro  
Minister of Transport: Augusto da Silva Tomás  
Minister of Energy: Emanuela Afonso Viera Lopes  
Minister of Telecommunication and Information Technology: José Carvalho da Rocha  
Minister of Health: José Viera Dias Van-Dünen  
Minister of Education: António Buriti da Silva Neto  
Minister of Culture: Rosa Maria Martins da Cruz e Silva  
Minister of Social Welfare: João Baptista Kussumua  
Minister of Family & Women Promotion: Genoveva da Conceição Lino  
Minister of Former Combatants and War Veterans: Pedro José Van-Dünen  
Minister of Youth and Sports: Gonçalves Manuel Muandumba  
Minister of Social Communication: Manuel António Rabelais  
Minister without portfolio: António Bento Bembe  
Minister without portfolio: Francisca de Fátima do Espírito Santo de Carvalho Almeida  
Secretary of State for Rural Development: Maria Filomena de Fátima Lobão Telo Delgado  
Secretary of State for Higher Education: Adão Gaspar Pereira do Nascimento

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**Chris Allen**  
8 December 1942 – 29 September 2008

Chris, one of the founding editors of this journal, died in Coulestrine, France on the 29th of September. We will be publishing tributes and a selection of his writing in the March 2009 issue of ROAPE. Our love to Frances and their daughters, Kate and Jude.

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Outsourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp International as Sovereign Agent

Sean McFate

After over 150 years of troubled history, fourteen years of civil war, war crimes and horrific abuses of power, Liberia stands at the precipice of history. The war came to a merciful end in 2003, when Charles Taylor fled into exile, but the war’s ravages were complete. The United States Agency for International Development characterised Liberia’s post-conflict landscape this way:

Over 250,000 people, most of them civilian non-combatants, have lost their lives in the civil war. More than 1.3 million have been displaced, including hundreds of thousands who fled the country. Abductions, torture, rape and other human rights abuses have taken place on a massive scale. It is estimated that at least one in ten children may have been recruited into militias at one time or another. A similar percentage has been traumatized by seeing their families and friends murdered and raped (US Agency for International Development, 2004).

Liberia remains dependent upon one of the world’s largest United Nations peacekeeping forces for its survival, and fears are mounting over the looming departure of peacekeepers. Who will provide security then? Will spoilers plunge the country back into violence? How will Liberia ward off potential spillover effects from violence in neighbouring Sierra Leone, Guinea, or Côte d’Ivoire?

These questions were presaged in the peace talks leading up to Taylor’s departure, and it was decided that wholesale transformation of the security sector was required so that Liberia could secure itself and not be forever reliant on international peacekeepers.

Security sector reform (SSR) is a crucial element of peacebuilding, especially in post-conflict settings. SSR is the wholesale transformation of indigenous security organisations into effective, legitimate, apolitical, and accountable institutions that uphold the rule of law and maintain the state’s monopoly on force. At a minimum, the security sector comprises three categories of actors: those directly involved in the protection of civilians and the state from violent harms (e.g. law enforcement or military); institutions that govern these actors (e.g. Ministries of Interior, Defense, Justice); and executive and legislative oversight bodies.

Failure to successfully implement SSR can seriously compromise peacebuilding efforts for several reasons. First, unaccountable and/or unprofessional security forces can become spoilers, which can hold the entire peacebuilding process hostage to their narrow interests under threat of violence. This can lead to a relapse of armed conflict. Second, it can also prolong peacekeeping missions, as security is a precondition of development. Last, SSR is a prerequisite for the exit strategy of costly peacekeeping missions, since it allows countries to secure themselves.

The central question of SSR in a country like Liberia is how to transform the military from a symbol of terror into an
instrument of democracy. The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) was complicit in human rights atrocities and the descent into civil war. Hence, the objective of the Joint US-Liberia SSR programme was to demobilise Liberia’s armed forces and reconstitute the AFL and Ministry of Defence (MOD) in toto.1

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of this innovative programme was the United States’ decision to completely outsource this critical task to private military companies (PMCs). Rarely in modern history has one sovereign nation hired a private entity to raise a military for another sovereign nation. This brief ing outlines some of the key elements and outcomes of this prototypical programme, as seen from one of its early architects which may augur future US engagement in Africa. This is especially relevant given the new US military’s Africa Command (AFRICOM), which will likely outsource similar missions to private companies in the future.

The Decision to Outsource

Following Taylor’s departure, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) on 19 September 2003. At the time, it was the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world, growing to 15,000 ‘blue helmets’ with a robust civilian component. Jacques Paul Klein was appointed as the Special Representative of the Secretary General and UNMIL officially took over peacekeeping duties on 1 October 2003. Two months later it began the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) process of approximately 100,000 people.

From 4 June to 18 August 2003 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brokered the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), also known as the ‘Accra Accords’. In Part Four of these Accords on Security Sector Reforms, the UN and US agreed to share responsibilities, with the UN agreeing to transform the Liberian National Police and the US the AFL. The US’s commitment was managed by the US Department of State (DOS), which organised an initial assessment trip in January 2004. This was followed by a subject matter expert assessment in May, consisting of personnel from US Department of Defense (DOD) and two companies: DynCorp International (DynCorp) and Pacific Architects and Engineers (PA&E). The purpose of this assessment mission, during which time one of the DOD civilian staff members was murdered, was to determine the operational requirements for SSR of the AFL.

Following the assessment mission, DOD concluded it could not conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints, driven in part by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consequently, the DOS decided to wholly ‘contract out’ the task of reconstituting the AFL and MoD to the private sector. Not long after the assessment trip, DOS tendered a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E. Only these two companies were allowed to submit bids as they had earlier won the five-year Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract from DOS to support peacekeeping and security efforts in Africa. IDIQ contracts essentially act as umbrella contracts between the US government and select companies for a fixed period of time, and are meant to streamline the contracting process. After reviewing both proposals, DOS decided to divide the duties between the two contractors. DynCorp was responsible for demobilising the legacy force and then recruiting, vetting and training the AFL and MoD. PA&E was responsible for fielding the AFL and providing mentorship once the units were in place. Both firms were required to engage in construction of military bases and other facilities as necessary, with authorisation from DOS.
Designing the Force

The SSR process began by informally identifying and engaging key stakeholders, which included the legacy force, former rebels, the host government, civil society, and the international community. To their credit, DynCorp eschewed ill-fitting templates of the US military for the new AFL, and sought to craft – in partnership with the Liberian government – a more appropriate security force, which is discussed below. After a full-year of conversation, a vision of the AFL’s mission, composition, and desired end state was reached. It would be a mistake to assume that there was uniform consensus or that all stakeholders were engaged fully. The prominent voices in the discussion were the US government, which was sponsoring the programme, and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL).

Ultimately the vision entailed a small all-volunteer force (approximately 2,000 persons) that could be scaled upwards in time. It was acknowledged that a 2,000 person force would be insufficient to defend all of Liberia, should a full-scale war erupt. But it was also acknowledged that the size needed to be constrained by the government’s ability to pay soldiers’ salaries on a regular basis, as history suggested that unpaid soldiers were a greater threat to Liberia’s security than threat of an invading army.

It was also agreed that the AFL should have a defence-oriented force posture and light infantry organisational structure that was strong enough to repel cross-border militant attacks but not so strong as to threaten Liberia’s neighbours. This force would maintain a 12th grade functional literacy level, balanced ethnic and gender mix within the ranks, and foster an apolitical professional ethos, especially in the leadership, that respects the rule of law, cultivates a public service ethos, and accepts civilian control of the military. Finally, the AFL and ideally the entire Liberian security sector should embrace a ‘human security’ model.

DynCorp officially proposed the initial force structure and ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ – the blueprint for the new AFL – to the State Department in July 2005. In military parlance, a ‘force structure’ is the wire-diagram of units in the AFL and MoD, from the General Staff down to the basic infantry squad. A ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ is a spreadsheet inventory of personnel and equipment, delineating for each unit the exact rank, title, and military occupational specialty of each soldier and every piece of equipment authorised for the unit. The original blueprint for the AFL totalled 1,928 soldiers: a brigade headquarters company (103 personnel), two light infantry battalions (663 personnel each), an engineer company (162 personnel), a military police company (114 personnel), a training company (180 personnel), a military band (40 personnel), and three military personnel at the Ministry of Defense, which was overwhelmingly civilian in composition. Although this blueprint has changed over time, the original concept for the AFL remains consistent.

Establishing the Programme

It is impossible to truncate a multi-year, highly complex process, with more than a few surprises, into a single article. In brief, the AFL SSR programme was originally envisaged to proceed in several phases. Phase I was political consultation with stakeholders and sensitising the public to the creation of a new AFL. The key issues were: identifying and engaging stakeholders; the composition and mission of the AFL; and overcoming the legacy of atrocities it inherited from the civil war. Phase II was safely demobilising the legacy force. The key issues included: who is eligible for demobilisation benefits; finding donor money to pay for those benefits; controls to prevent
fraud during the demobilisation process; public sensitisation to the programme; and fears that disgruntled demobilised soldiers would incite political violence. At the same time, construction of training facilities commenced. The primary concerns were: negotiating site selection; finding competent construction companies; theft of materials; and significant delays caused by the six-month rainy season.

Phase III was recruiting and vetting the force. The primary concern for recruiting was attracting women and minority ethnic groups to serve in what was traditionally an ethnically Krahn-dominated institution. As for vetting, it is difficult to establish mere identity in post-conflict Liberia, to say nothing of a full background check. Creating a competent vetting programme was a key challenge.

Phase IV was military training and equipping. The chief concerns were lack of literacy, leadership selection and instilling a professional, apolitical ethos that placed service to the country above tribe or individual. Simultaneously, MoD transformation began, which included hiring and training all civilian personnel, as well as the creation of all AFL policies. Here the challenges were finding qualified mentors and synchronising the development of the MoD with interdependent government institutions.

Phase V was fielding the new force, which meant deployment of soldiers to their permanent duty station. At the time of publication, the programme remains mired in Phase IV due to several reasons, including sensitivity and uniqueness of the task, erratic programme funding by the US, and irregularities of DynCorp management (see Malan, 2008). Last, almost every aspect of this programme is *sui generis*, as there are no textbooks on comprehensive SSR, and this made progress problematic.

Programme Timeline

**2003**

*August:* Charles Taylor flees Liberia and ECOWAS peacekeepers and US troops arrive. The interim government and rebels sign the CPA. Gyude Bryant is chosen to head the interim government (NTGL). *September–October:* US forces pull out, and UNMIL begins the peacekeeping mission. *December:* UNMIL begins DDRR for non-statutory (non-AFL) combatants only. AFL personnel are disarmed, but not demobilised, rehabilitated and reintegrated, leaving that to the US government, as agreed to during CPA negotiations.

**2004**

*January:* The US Department of State sends a small contingent to Liberia to begin a preliminary assessment. The US is responsible for Part IV, Article Seven of the CPA, which covers SSR for the AFL. DOS is the lead agency within the US government for this task. *February:* International donors pledge more than US$500 million in reconstruction aid. *May:* DOS organises a ten-day assessment of SSR for the AFL. The assessment team consists of US personnel (mostly from the military) and two contractor teams: DynCorp and PA&E. A member of the assessment team is murdered in his hotel room during a robbery. *June:* DoD decides it cannot conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints. DOS decides to contract the SSR programme, and tenders a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E. *July:* DOS decides to split the contract between the two contractors, making DynCorp responsible for selecting and training the force and PA&E for fielding the force. However, DOS does not officially initiate the programme or release funds until programme preconditions are met (e.g., political support of the NTGL to demobilise legacy AFL veterans). *October:* Riots in Monrovia leave 16 people dead; UNMIL says former combatants and AFL veterans were behind the violence.
2005  

February–March: Consultations with major stakeholders regarding the mission and composition of the future AFL. This includes civil society, the standing AFL, former warring parties and political factions, the NTGL, UNMIL, and other entities. A comprehensive recruiting and vetting plan is devised intended to screen out human rights abusers from joining the AFL. March–May: Consultations with stakeholders continue. Discussions include the problem of safely demobilising the legacy force without provoking political violence, mission and force structure of future AFL, location of training bases, sensitisation campaign for civil society, and arrears owed AFL veterans. The demobilisation plan is drafted and presented to Chairman Bryant, who signs Executive Order 5, authorising the full demobilisation of all legacy AFL units. DOS officially initiates the SSR programme and releases funds to DynCorp to begin recruiting and building. PA&E will begin its programme once training commences. July: The demobilisation and reintegration of 13,770 legacy soldiers commences. DynCorp builds a demobilisation site outside Monrovia. The US government approves the initial blueprint for the new AFL’s force structure. Construction of AFL training facilities commences but is slowed by the monsoon rainy season. September: The NTGL agrees that the international community should supervise its finances in an effort to counter corruption. October: Recruiting and vetting for the new AFL begins. Over 12,000 applicants will be processed in the two years to come. 23 November: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf becomes the first woman to be elected as an African head of state. She takes office the following January.  

2006  

January: The demobilisation of the AFL is successful completed, the first time in modern African history that an entire standing military was safely demobilised without significant incident. February: A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is set up to investigate human rights abuses between 1979 and 2003. Tensions transpire between the TRC and SSR programme, when the TRC’s request for access to SSR vetting records is denied by the SSR team on account that it might compromise sources and methods, possibly resulting in retribution killings of witnesses who spoke to the SSR vetting team on condition of anonymity about human rights abuses of some AFL candidates. April: MOD transformation begins. Former President Charles Taylor appears before the UN-backed Sierra Leone Special Court on charges of crimes against humanity. In June the International Criminal Court at The Hague agrees to host his trial. May: Brownie Samukai, the Liberian Minister of Defence, spends a week in Washington, DC collaboratively formulating the Liberian National Defence Strategy, modelled on a human security paradigm.  

June: A first draft of the National Defence Strategy is written, seeking to align the AFL’s mission with the goals of development for durable stability. Progress is limited because the Government of Liberia, UNMIL, the US government and others are delayed with the National Security Strategy. The UN Security Council eases a ban on weapons sales so that Liberia can arm newly trained security forces. An embargo on Liberian timber exports is lifted shortly afterwards. July: The first class of AFL basic training begins. It is a pilot programme of about 110 candidates, mostly selected for their leadership potential in order to fill the leadership ranks first. DynCorp begins the process of purchasing and importing arms into Liberia for the AFL. President Johnson-Sirleaf switches on generator-powered streetlights in the capital, which has been without electricity for 15 years. August: The first major shipment of arms arrives in Monrovia for the AFL. It is the first legal shipment in 15 years. November: The first AFL basic training class graduates. Training of future classes is halted owing to US budget constraints.
2007 September: 630 recruits have graduated from the Initial Entry Training (IET) course. Owing to cost overruns, IET was shortened from eleven weeks to eight weeks by cutting three weeks that were devoted to human rights, civics, and laws of war training. March: 119 civilian MOD employees graduate a 17-week of SSR programme training course. April: The UN Security Council votes to lift its ban on Liberian diamond exports. The ban was imposed in 2001 to stem the flow of ‘blood diamonds,’ which helped fund the civil war. June: The start of Charles Taylor’s war crimes trial at The Hague, where he stands accused of instigating atrocities in Sierra Leone.

2008 January: 485 soldiers graduated from IET.

Surprises
As with any complex peacebuilding mission, few things went as planned. Some of this was due to the difficulty of the task and environment; however, some was due to the unique relationship between DynCorp, the US government, and Liberian government. To be clear, this trifecta produced both positive and negative results, many of which were unexpected.

Irreconcilable Differences
Profit-motive and public policy can be conflicting interests. DynCorp, like most private companies, is naturally profit-seeking and is guided by market forces in the search for more demand for its services. Government institutions, on the other hand, are primarily interested in achieving public goods through public policy. Profit versus policy can be conflicting goals in public-private partnerships, such as the US and DynCorp, where the government utilises private means to achieve public goods. To resolve this, governments can shape companies’ interests and behaviour through market regulation that incentivise the private sector to realise responsible outcomes. However, current regulation and oversight in the US of this multi-billion dollar industry is diminimus. With a few notable exceptions, there has yet to be a serious discussion within the US government defining the appropriate spheres of activity for private contractors and government personnel in the security sector, much less effective regulatory oversight and concrete accountability mechanisms. Owing to this, the PMC industry behaves like an unguided missile, seeking profit wherever the market will bear it, even if it means a loss for society as a whole (see Avant, 2005).

Another deleterious side effect of this public-private partnership is the evolving co-dependency between government and the industry based on the asymmetries of information that exist between them. This industry has boomed from a multi-million to a multi-billion dollar market since 9/11, owing to the US government’s need of ‘wartime’ muscle. Unfortunately, the US bureaucracy that governs this industry was unable to grow at a commensurate rate, as the public sector is generally less nimble at growth than the private sector. Consequently, there is a paucity of government administrators to oversee these large companies, and those that exist are generally unqualified, ill-equipped and/or over-tasked. In Liberia for example, DynCorp’s contract overseer was a US Navy officer with absolutely no experience in building armies, especially given his background as a sailor. Nor was he a Certified Public Accountant or fully trained contract officer, skilled in managing a multi-million dollar contract with a large, savvy multinational company. Although his efforts were laudable and tireless, the US government simply did not equip him with the requisite tools he needed to achieve his assignment.

Consequently, there was a substantial knowledge gap between the officer in charge of overseeing the contract and the
company, which DynCorp could exploit for profit. He was largely dependent upon DynCorp’s technical opinions in order to make relevant programmatic decisions on behalf of the US government. The problem was that DynCorp have a vested interest in steering the government towards profitable outcomes rather than good public policy. This might include inflating the need for more staff than is required or purchasing more equipment at the government’s expense. DynCorp, like many government contractors, makes its profit on ‘time and materials,’ meaning that they charge the government a premium for every hour an employee works or for every item (no matter how small) that is purchased. How much a premium they charge largely constitutes the company’s profit margin.

There are other ways that DynCorp had the opportunity to manipulate public outcomes for private gains. For example, DynCorp occupied a unique position during the consultations: impromptu facilitator. Achieving some modicum of consent from myriad stakeholders regarding the SSR programme was vital. Ideally, it would have fallen to the US government to drive this conversation. However, US embassy staffing was thin and over-burdened. As a result, the task of engaging stakeholders unofficially fell to DynCorp. Although DynCorp had no ‘vote’ in the outcome of these informal stakeholder consultations, it occupied the privileged position of agenda setter: identifying and sequencing the issues to be discussed; shaping outcomes by strategically proposing solutions for stakeholders to react to; and the de facto selection of stakeholder leadership by choosing whom to engage and when, regardless of whether their opinions represented the group as a whole. Consequently, the company could partly shape outcomes.

In my earlier experience, programme managers at DynCorp did not deliberately manipulate stakeholder consulta-

tions for a wider profit margin and instead focused solely on achieving the mission as outlined in the US government’s issued Statement of Work. However, this public-private partnership was patently vulnerable to exploitation and warrants concern: the lack of industry oversight combined with the lethal nature of the work could have explosive consequences for Africa.

Principal-Agent Issues

However, not every aspect of this public-private partnership is negative. These companies can act as institutional ‘free-agents’ who are not beholden to entrenched viewpoints, agendas, interests, budget battles or turf-wars. Consequently, they can propose and implement practical solutions without regard to bureaucratic dogma. This is not to suggest that DynCorp was able to act autonomously in Monrovia: it was not. But DynCorp managers did enjoy a modicum of latitude that US government bureaucrats could not, especially along the inter-agency fault lines between DOD and the US Department of State. Moreover, given the ‘whole of government’ nature of SSR, DynCorp could act as a cross-cutting agent throughout the government (see OECD-DAC, 2007).

In fact, DynCorp could even advocate for the raw interests of Liberians in back offices of the Pentagon and State Department in Washington, DC. For example, it became evident during the consultations that Liberians were strong advocates of gender equality in the ranks while the US government was not. Although this SSR programme was managed by the State Department, it would frequently confer with DOD on technical issues regarding the AFL. Certain elements in DOD opposed the idea of women serving in ‘front line’ combat units, such as the infantry, which is the practice of the US army. Acting as a third-party facilitator, DynCorp was, in some ways, an unwitting arbitrator in a debate between the
defence establishment in Washington, DC and the stakeholders in Liberia. As a structural 'other' in the process, which was nominally dispassionate on the issue, DynCorp managers could credibly present ideas and recommendations to stakeholders without the burdens of institutional loyalty or prejudice. This helped drive the argument for gender parity, since key managers in DynCorp were persuaded by the Liberians’ case, championing it within the walls of the Washington, DC bureaucracy and effectively giving voice to Liberian interests. Ultimately, DOS opted for gender parity, overturning DOD’s desire to utilise US military templates – such as no women in infantry units – for other nations’ militaries.

Consequently, Liberian women now enjoy greater equality in the ranks than do American women. This remarkable outcome was partly driven by DynCorp’s position as a comparative ‘free agent’ in the US bureaucracy and facilitator in the consultation process. It was also largely driven by individual personalities on the ground rather than any corporate philosophy, demonstrating once more the vulnerability of the process to manipulation, either positive or negative.

Innovative Solutions

Another positive facet of this private-public partnership is innovative thought. As mentioned above, the DOD is often tempted to utilise ill-fitting US templates for foreign militaries, whether they are appropriate or not. US ‘train and equip’ programmes typically overlay US strategy, procedures, doctrine, and other US ‘best practices’ on foreign forces that receive the training. Examples of ‘train and equip’ programmes include: Joint Combined Exchange Training; International Military Education and Training; and Foreign Military Financing. Recently, the US government greatly expanded this capability through ‘1206 funding,’ named for the section of the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act in the 2006 defence budget. This authority allows the DOD, in consultation with the State Department, to spend up to $200 million a year to train and equip the militaries of strategic partners in the US’s global ‘war on terror’.

The problem is that military templates that might work well for the US may not work well for Liberia. Liberia needs a Liberian solution. This requires more than a ‘train and equip’ mentality, which only provides better shooters in newer equipment. These programmes are necessary but insufficient for wholesale SSR, as they fail to address the underlying causes of why security sectors fail: corruption, human rights abuse, incompetent leadership, culture of impunity, lack of ethnic balance, etc.

For instance, during the initial SSR assessment mission to Liberia in May, 2004, the US military proposed a 4,020-person AFL, including a 412-person combat engineer battalion that would conduct tasks such as mine laying, constructing field fortifications, and digging tank traps. However, Liberia is not in danger of a World War Two-style Blitzkrieg from Sierra Leone. Instead, its engineer needs are basic infrastructure repair such as roads, bridges and buildings, to ensure the logistical resupply of bases and humanitarian relief. Also, conspicuously absent from the briefing was any plan to transform the Ministry of Defense and build institutional capacity for the AFL. Also absent was a recruiting, vetting and training plan for the AFL. Last, even though this was only a concept briefing based on a quick trip to Liberia, it lacked significant input from indigenous stakeholders or experts in West African security. In fact, the majority of officers who served on the assessment mission had never set foot in Africa before.

These and other problems were addressed a year later by DynCorp – in
partnered with the NTGL and US government—after consultations with stakeholders and non-US experts, a practice not usually employed by DOD in ‘train and equip’ programmes. This led to innovative recommendations and a more tailored force for Liberia. For example, the force was ‘simplified’ greatly. DynCorp opted for a basic motorised infantry brigade that was not dependent on expensive technologies that are difficult to source and maintain in Africa, no ‘elite’ units such as Taylor’s former ‘Special Anti-Terrorist Unit (SATU)’ which could terrorise the population, or high-caliber weaponry such as tanks or artillery that could threaten neighbours. By eschewing the DOD’s penchant to create miniature US-militaries around the world, Liberia enjoys a more sustainable force that is better tailored for the needs of the country.

There were other significant innovations, three of which warrant further analysis. The first is the creation of a rigorous human rights vetting model for AFL candidates to ensure past human rights abusers do not enter the AFL. This is an enormous challenge in a post-conflict environment where credible public records and other instruments of background checks are utterly lacking (McFate, 2007). The second is the institutionalisation of a special ombudsman-like office within the Ministry of Defense to address issues of tribal and gender equality. During Samuel Doe’s reign, the AFL devolved into a sectarian institution dominated by his Krahn tribe, which at times used the military as a tool for ethnic cleansing. It was important to prevent this from happening again.

The third example was placing human rights, ‘laws of war,’ and civics training equal to combat related training, such as shooting. Given the AFL’s troubled past, stakeholders urged that every soldier must understand that knowing when to pull the trigger was as important as hitting what you were aiming at. Accordingly, three of the eleven weeks of Basic Training (also called Initial Entry Training) were devoted to civics training, an unprecedented development in military training in Africa or elsewhere.

Tragically, DynCorp later opted to cut this training, shortening Basic Training to eight weeks, thus saving money. This is a mistake. As Mark Malan recommends in a recent report on Liberia’s SSR:

Congress should insist on more credible measures to ensure that civics and human rights become a central element of the US training program for the AFL (Malan, 2008:xi).

Prelude to Future US Engagement in Africa?

The US-Liberia SSR Programme may prove a good indicator of future US engagement in Africa, especially given the newly established US military Africa Command or AFRICOM. AFRICOM will likely outsource a good portion of its capabilities to PMCs given the complementary interests of supply and demand. AFRICOM has a huge mandate yet will not be given dedicated military units to accomplish its mission. In fact, no new military units will be created for AFRICOM at all, save the headquarters itself currently located at Stuttgart, Germany. Worse, it cannot expect to ‘borrow’ existing units elsewhere because of the huge demand for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. How will it accomplish its mission? By outsourcing it to PMCs.

Which is exactly what PMCs are waiting for. This multi-billion dollar industry is looking for the next US-sponsored conflict market once the Iraq and Afghanistan ‘bubble bursts,’ and they see that market as Africa, a continent of crisis. Thanks to the wars in the Middle East and opportunities like the US-Liberia SSR Programme in Africa, this industry has honed its services in the areas that
AFRICOM most needs: training and equipping; war-zone logistics; humanitarian response; post-conflict reconstruction; infrastructure repair; and SSR. The symmetry of supply and demand between PMCs and AFRICOM are exquisite.

Conclusion

The US-Liberia SSR Programme is an excellent prism into the future of US engagement on the continent, especially vis-à-vis AFRICOM. The complex outcomes that stem from outsourcing core military tasks, such as making militaries, to PMCs augur insights into how AFRICOM might engage Africa. This article briefly charts some of these outcomes, both positive and negative, from an ‘insider’s’ perspective.

However, larger concerns loom on the horizon. The utilisation of PMCs in Africa is more sensitive than in the Middle East given Africa’s lamentable past experiences with colonialism and mercenaries. This will prove a public diplomacy challenge for AFRICOM, which will seek to win ‘hearts and minds’ for the American cause. Moreover, consistent with the rule of ‘unintended consequences,’ the reliance by AFRICOM on PMCs may unwittingly generate a wider market for force on the continent, attracting future PMCs from Russia or elsewhere, in addition to the possibility of African PMCs. Will demand diversify to encompass multinational companies, NGOs, opposition groups, and private individuals? What will happen if market forces demand greater combat-oriented services? Could, for example, an NGO hire a PMC to conduct an armed humanitarian intervention in Darfur to ‘save lives’ in the name of human rights and the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ doctrine? What are the second, third and fourth order repercussions of this action? Could it exacerbate on-the-ground conflict? Draw the US into a war with Sudan? Trigger a UN Chapter 7 intervention? The implications of this on global security governance are terrifying, and few would welcome the development of an industry vested in conflict in Africa. Yet these critical questions remain scarcely examined.

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1. The author was a principal architect of this programme; he does not claim credit for its management.

Bibliography


The Dynamics of Private Security in Senegal

Cyrus O’Brien

The privatisation of security has recently attracted much attention, particularly in light of abuses by private military companies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of this attention sensationalises private security by focusing on private armies unbounded by national boundaries and unencumbered by international law. Recently, however, less dramatic forms of private security such as private guarding, surveillance, alarm systems, and patrolling have become more prevalent worldwide. These more mundane forms of private security are central to the daily operations of many societies.

The expansion of private security in the developing world is nearly always attributed to high levels of insecurity and general instability. Senegal, by contrast, is relatively safe and stable, but nevertheless has a rapidly expanding private security sector. The country is home to more than 150 private security companies that employ between 25,000 and 35,000 people, making Senegal’s private security sector relatively larger per capita than those of more violent countries like Nigeria and Kenya. The vast majority of these companies operate in the informal sector where they avoid taxation and governmental regulation, and like in many other countries, working conditions in the sector are poor. Unlike many other countries, however, Senegal has made significant and successful efforts to prevent international security companies like Group4Securicor from gaining a foothold.

This briefing is based on research conducted on behalf of the gun control organisation Le Mouvement Contre les Armes Légères en Afrique de l'Ouest (MALAO) in Senegal in the spring of 2007. It describes the private security sector, concentrating particularly on Dakar, where international businesses and international organisations (IOs) provide the largest sources of demand for private security. It includes an examination of the economic and political circumstances that have enabled the growth of private security and a discussion of the relationship between private security companies, the government, and business.

The Growth of Private Security Amidst Stability & Peace

In the worldwide proliferation of private security companies (PSCs), Senegal represents a unique case: the private security sector is growing despite political stability and a low crime rate. Previous briefings in this journal have attributed the growth of private security in other countries to ‘high crime rates, combined with the inability of the public security services to provide adequate protection’ (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2005). Indeed, general insecurity has been a key factor driving the sector’s growth in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Nicaragua, and Guatemala (Ibid; Lilly & von Tangen Page, 2002). The situation in Senegal demonstrates that the expansion of private security is not limited to countries where instability and insecurity prevail.

Senegal has the reputation of being West Africa’s most stable country. Since its independence from France in 1960, it has maintained a democratic system of government and regularly holds relatively fair elections. The Senegalese armed forces are firmly under civilian control and have never intervened in politics, making Senegal one of the few African countries to avoid a coup d’état since independence from colonial rule. The Casamance, a breakaway southern province separated from Senegal proper by the Gambia, is the only major source of instability in the country. However, since 2000 the situation has calmed, resulting
in only occasional violence. Violence has been confined to the Casamance, leaving the majority of Senegal free from political strife.

This climate of political stability has enabled Senegal to maintain a remarkably low crime rate. Winslow (2008), relying on data from Interpol, reported the total crime rate to be 64.29 crimes for every 100,000 people, compared with 1,709.88 for Japan and 5,955.05 for the United Kingdom. The same study showed Senegal’s murder rate to be 0.33 per 100,000 people, or roughly one fifth that of the UK. Although the general crime statistic is surely underreported, the given murder rate is roughly accurate; because murders are rare in Senegal, the press thoroughly reports them. Though not completely reliable, these figures show that Senegal is not a country plagued by crime.

With little else to offer – peanuts are the biggest contributor to the GDP – Senegal markets its stability and peace to attract foreign businesses and organisations. Dakar, the capital, hosts the West African headquarters for many international non-governmental organisations, research institutions, and IOs. Particularly since the war in Ivory Coast, business and organisations have flocked to Senegal. In January of this year, Dubai World paid US$800 million for the rights to administer a free trade zone within Senegal, joining the flow of businesses that see Senegal as a ‘gateway’ into the region (Flynn, 2008).

It is primarily the presence of these businesses and organisations that generates demand for PSCs. Because demand is almost entirely fuelled by foreigners and expatriates, private guards are an almost entirely urban phenomenon. International mining activities, heavily guarded despite their rural location, are the exception. Throughout Dakar, private guards stand in front of nearly every sizable business or organisation guarding everything from banks to bookstores to offices and schools. Nearly every location an expatriate might visit is under private guard. Foreign businesses and organisations contract PSCs to provide security not only for the businesses themselves, but also for the homes of their employees. Paradoxically, then, peace, stability, and a low crime rate fuel the growth of the private security sector because they attract international businesses and organisations.

The police are widely viewed as inept and corrupt, prompting the wealthy to turn to the private sector for security. The majority of the population, however, continues to rely on traditional methods for security. Typical neighbourhoods are some of the safest places in the country, as residents keep a watchful eye on suspicious persons and come quickly to each other’s aid. While usually advantageous, at times such security networks become vigilante groups and occasionally escalate a situation. While statistics are hard to obtain, evidence suggests that vigilante groups account for most of Senegal’s (low) murder rate; upon identifying a thief or criminal, mobs may beat the suspect to death. On the whole, however, traditional security methods help to preserve overall security, making most of Senegal’s villages, neighbourhoods, and towns safe.

**Inequality, Exploitation & Unions**

The private security sector in Senegal mushroomed in the aftermath of the 1994 economic reforms promoted by the IMF and World Bank. Although the first private security companies were founded in the late 1980s, they did not become prevalent until the economic reforms resulted in greater levels of inequality. There are currently over 150 private security companies in Senegal, all but a few created since 1994. The sector’s rapid rate of expansion makes it difficult to estimate the exact number, as new PSCs are formed with incredible frequency.
The 1994 neo-liberal reforms involved the lifting of subsidies and price controls, a steady deregulation of the economy, and a 50% devaluation of the currency. The reforms positively affected Senegal’s macroeconomic outlook; inflation was brought under control, government finances were balanced, and the economy turned around. After contracting in the early 1990s, Senegal’s economy has steadily grown at an annual rate of around 5%.

The economic gains of the 1990s were not distributed across the Senegalese economy. Living conditions for most of the population declined as prices for food and other basic goods were deregulated. The number of street peddlers exploded at this time, as unemployment forced large numbers of people into the informal economy. Today, nearly a quarter of the population survives on less than $1 a day, and more than three-fifths on less than $2 each day. Thus, despite the economic influxes caused by the arrival of international business, intense poverty and inequality are on the rise, and may potentially destabilise the prevailing security environment. As one director of a PSC remarked, the private security sector depends ‘not on a lack of security, but instead on a lack of wealth’.

With nearly half of the workforce unemployed, private guards face a strikingly soft labour market. A typical guard is paid between US$70 and $120 each month, while the most professional companies pay their employees up to $180. In some cases, guards are given monthly transport stipends, but these almost never meet actual costs. Guards work exceedingly long hours and face very high exploitation, taking home only 35-50% of what clients pay for their services.

In my research, I found not one private security company in Senegal that did not violate national regulations in some way. The most common abuses were paying below the minimum wage, demanding that guards work for unreasonable hours, and employing guards on temporary contracts. Senegalese labour codes stipulate that after one temporary six-month contract, employers must hire a worker permanently or dismiss the employee. Even the most professionalised and the highest paying PSCs in Senegal violate this provision in the work code.

There are no strong unions of security guards, although many guards express a desire for one. Many guards are reluctant to establish a union because they fear being laid off when their six-month contract expires. The lack of permanent contracts in the sector increases the vulnerability of guards and prevents them from taking strong positions relating to working conditions.

**Cooperation Between PSCs & the Government**

Most PSCs are managed or owned by former police and military officials. In some cases, officers will found private security companies while still holding public office, usually passing the day-to-day management responsibilities to a family member. Tightening the relationship between the state security forces and private sector, nearly all security guards in Senegal have completed military service and, for most companies, military or police service is an explicit prerequisite to employment.

One-third of Senegal’s military is comprised of conscripts, each of whom serves two years without the possibility of extension. Although conscription exists, it is not enforced against one’s will. The droves of unemployed find such relatively well-paying vacancies in the military desirable, and the positions are easily filled. After serving two years, conscripts are released from the army and many find jobs in the private security sector. Many guards lament their discharge from the state security forces and some eventually find more lucrative
employment with the police or gendarmerie.

Despite the overlap in personnel, there is little overt cooperation between PSCs and state security forces. Police and private security guards hold positive views of each other but, in contrast to the situation in many countries, the police do not rely on the private sector. The government of Senegal has no contracts with PSCs and all state security functions remain under the purview of the army and police. Public-private partnerships, such as water treatment plants, La Poste, and Senelec (the national electric company), are exceptions and hire PSCs to guard their facilities.

Two private military companies, Northrop Grumman Technical Services (NGTS) and Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), train the Senegalese armed forces as part of the US State Department’s African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) programme. The ACOTA programme, created after the US debacle in Somalia, seeks to train and equip African militaries to conduct peacekeeping missions, thereby minimising the responsibilities of the West. The US Government supplies Senegal with the bulk of its military equipment and hires NGTS and MPRI teams to conduct eight two-month training programmes, focusing primarily on peacekeeping tactics. Senegalese soldiers trained under ACOTA have served as peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Darfur.

In addition to ACOTA, Senegal is a partner in the so-called ‘war on terror’ and currently receives aid through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, a counter-terrorism effort to track activity from the Atlantic Ocean to Chad. The role of private military companies in this programme is unclear.

**Regulation & Corruption**

The most significant problems facing the private security sector in Senegal result from their poor regulation. More than 80% of PSCs are not registered with the government, do not pay taxes, and operate completely in the informal sector. In 2003, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade issued a decree mandating that all PSCs be owned and operated by Senegalese citizens or companies. At the time, Senegal’s largest private security company, the American owned Sagam Sécurité, was forced to sell. This decree has kept the private security sector entirely in domestic hands and prevented multinationals like Group4Securicor from making inroads in Senegal.

Only registered PSCs are permitted to have armed guards. Despite this requirement, some guards in the informal sector are armed. Senegal has largely succeeded in keeping guns out of the country, but steadily grants around 120 licenses each year (Agboton-Johnson et al. 2004). Private security companies win a sizable majority of these licenses, although as licenses are awarded to individuals and their affiliations are not listed, no exact figures are available.¹ Personal ties are important, as companies that have the strongest ties to the state security system or to the state bureaucracy are more likely to win licenses. That said, this research found no evidence of corruption in the form of bribes at the governmental level.

In the private sector, however, corruption is rampant. In order to be paid the amount stipulated by the contract, the manager of a PSC must frequently bribe the contracting company. Only after a bribe of $50-100, is the contracting company likely to pay the PSC. This form of corruption is worst in public-private companies, particularly La Poste.
In 2000, the computer system that the Ministry of the Interior used to track gun licenses failed, evidently one of the few victims of the computer virus Y2K. Since then, licenses have been recorded in piecemeal fashion, and the system is largely disorganised. Every year, the Ministry of the Interior sends the possessor of a gun license a notification of the tax that is owed for each firearm. Several PSC managers reported that the lists from the government omit many of their guns, in some cases up to half of the firearms they actually own. In effect, the government has lost track of many of the arms it has licensed. The absence of state control or records of arms is a dangerous contributor to the growth of private security companies.

The growth of private security in Senegal has been remarkably uncontroversial and has faced little criticism in the press. The majority of the population views private security as the domain of international business and as a form of employment in a struggling economy. The government should be commended for its 2003 efforts to bring the private security sector into domestic hands and under the purview of the Ministry of the Interior. Despite such efforts, however, the private security sector remains largely unregulated.

Private security is likely to play an even more prominent role as increasing economic inequality makes the political situation more volatile. Additionally, the influx of people and arms from Senegal’s war-torn neighbours threatens an already fragile stability. Dakar’s riots in November 2007 are a reminder of how quickly a situation can deteriorate. Nevertheless, Senegal’s stability will likely continue to attract international businesses and international organisations, and the government’s adoption of neoliberalism makes it unlikely that economic inequalities will subside. These conditions virtually guarantee the continued growth of the private security sector, which already rivals or exceeds the state security forces in terms of number of personnel. The size and projected growth of private security, and its corresponding rise in influence, mandate a continuing re-evaluation of the role and scope of private security in Senegal and throughout Africa.

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Bibliography
Prison Privatisation in the African Context
Andrew Coyle

The use of prison as a direct punishment of the court is a relatively modern phenomenon. It began in the 17th and 18th century, principally in Western Europe and North America, and over the succeeding centuries its use has spread to virtually every country in the world. In Africa prior to colonial times there was no indigenous concept of imprisonment as a form of punishment. The idea of taking substantial numbers of predominantly young men, who would otherwise be economically and socially active, locking them behind high walls and making them and their dependants a burden on the rest of society made no economic or cultural sense. As elsewhere in the world the first prisons were built as a tool for the colonial powers to subdue the local populace. Today one can still visit some African towns and see prisons which reflect their French colonial past, while in a number of countries in West and East Africa many prisons are built on a common British model. One suspects that the original construction plan might still be found somewhere in the Public Records Office in Kew near London.

The rate of imprisonment in any country is usually quoted per 100,000 of the total population. On that basis, the average rate of imprisonment around the world is about 140. Rates vary dramatically from country to country. The United States, with about 23% of all the world’s prisoners, has a rate of 751, while India has a rate of 32 (ICPS, 2008). This is not the place to enter into an analysis of what leads to such variations; suffice to say that there is little evidence that they can be explained by differing rates of crime but are more likely to be explained by a variety of economic, cultural and social factors.

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Prison Privatisation in the African Context
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Imprisonment rates within the African continent also vary widely. The Republic of the Congo has the lowest rate of imprisonment in the world, with 22 prisoners per 100,000 of its population, closely followed by Burkina Faso with 23. The median rate for West African countries is 37, while that in southern Africa is 267, with South Africa having the highest rate at 348.

Prisons which are properly constructed and humanely managed are very expensive on the public purse and conditions in many developed countries have been severely criticised by independent bodies such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and Human Rights Watch. In a number of countries in Africa conditions for those held there can only be described as inhuman and degrading. On 5 March 2005 the East African Standard newspaper reported on conditions in one prison in Kenya:

[The prison], built in 1962 to hold about 350 prisoners, is congested with more than 1,450. The jail is a hallmark of neglect and abuse. Child offenders mingle with suspected murderers, violent robbers and rapists. Hardcore convicted criminals share halls with remandees accused of misdemeanours. In the women’s section, infants accompanying their mothers sleep in the same cells with mentally unsound murder suspects.

At one corner in the sickbay, a patient, deeply asleep, snores loudly beside a plastic bucket full of human waste. Another prisoner sits beside the bucket, his eyes wide open as if in a trance. Patients say they use the bucket at night and empty it in the morning for use during the day. The room is crawling with vermin.

In Ward Four, John Ndichu and 235 others spend most of the day and night squatting. This is because if they sit, they would have to stretch their legs and there is no space for that.
In 2006 the Vice-President of Kenya announced plans to free 15,000 prisoners by the end of July, noting that prisons built to hold a total of 16,000 people were then holding 48,000 inmates countrywide. ‘Most of the prison facilities date back to colonial times, when Kenya’s population was less than 10 million (it is now over 30 million),’ he said adding that the congestion was now posing a health hazard to inmates. This story could be repeated many times in other African countries. Governments recognise the need to improve prison conditions but simply lack the resources to improve them.

**Prison Privatisation**

It is generally accepted that, even in an age of reducing government direct delivery of services and increasing private control of services which are essential for the common good, there are some responsibilities which the state cannot delegate and which it must carry out itself. An example would be defence of the nation from external enemies. All armed services remain under the direct control of the government in democratic countries and private or mercenary armies are not permitted, although as shown in several articles in this Special Issue, private military companies are increasingly integrated into and support national militaries in various ways. The judiciary is another example where private enterprise is eschewed. Protection of the public has become a slightly greyer area in recent years. Private security firms now abound and in some countries outnumber the police but the core responsibility for public order and for investigation of crime still lies with state officials.

Until thirty or so years ago the task of depriving citizens of their liberty was another function which was regarded as a state monopoly for similar reasons. Individual freedom was so sacred that only the state could take it away after due process and only the state could administer the punishment passed by its own courts. That is a position which is still maintained in the majority of democratic countries, but not in all.

The modern phenomenon of prison privatisation can be traced back to 1979 when the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service began contracting commercial companies to detain illegal immigrants who were awaiting deportation hearings (Wood, 2003). By the mid-1980s the number of people in prison in the US was increasing to such an extent that a number of states turned to these private detention companies to provide quick build prisons and detention centres. An added advantage for the state jurisdictions was that the resultant costs could be recorded against revenue or operating budgets rather than as capital costs.

In the course of the following decade governments entered into contracts for private prisons in a number of other countries, including the UK, Australia and New Zealand. This came to be seen increasingly as a lucrative business with the small number of companies involved each chasing its share of ‘the market’. In 2004 one of the companies described the UK as ‘the second largest private correctional market in the world’ (GEO Group, 2004).

In respect of prisons the term ‘privatisation’ covers a wide spectrum. This starts with marginal areas such as issuing commercial contracts for the prison shops or canteens, where prisoners are able to purchase items for personal use. The next stage in privatisation is that in which specific services, such as drug treatment or other programmes for prisoners, are delivered by commercial companies or not-for-profit organisations. Moving along the spectrum, in some cases contracts are issued for the central services within the prison; these can include catering, health care, education
and work for prisoners. The most advanced example of this is in France where a number of prisons are run under a system of dual management, with prison service personnel carrying out what are described as the public service duties (supervision, rehabilitation, registration and management) and commercial companies being responsible for all other functions (maintenance, transportation, accommodation, food service, work and vocational training).

A further phase of privatisation is that in which the entire operation of a prison is contracted to a commercial company or a not-for-profit organisation. In this case the state builds and continues to own the prison buildings and enters into a contract with a company for the management of the prison. Thereafter the state takes no part in the daily management. A number of the earliest examples of prison privatisation in England and Australia followed this model. The ultimate stage of privatisation, so far, is that in which a commercial company takes a prison from drawing board to final operation. This includes its design, construction, financing and management. This is the model now generally followed in the UK and, as we shall see, in South Africa. The mechanism for implementing the private construction and management of new prisons, as with other public institutions, has been the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) or Public Private Partnership (PPP).

Technically, none of these models should be described as privatisation. The legal responsibility for the prisoners who are held in them remains with the state, which contracts out their daily management to the differing degrees described above. Full privatisation would exist only if the state handed over complete responsibility for the citizens sentenced to prison to a commercial company. However, as far as the prisoner in the prison which is managed by a commercial company is concerned, this is a semantic distinction. For all practical purposes, such a prisoner is in the hands of a commercial company. The best of these companies may well set out to treat the prisoners under their control in a decent and humane manner. A few of them succeed better than their counterparts in the public sector. Despite this there is no escaping the fact that the final responsibility of these companies is to their shareholders; they must deliver a profit or they will cease to trade. This is the ultimate difference between a private prison and a public one.

**Prison Privatisation in Africa**

In 1993 the prison population in South Africa stood at 111,000. By 2002, it had risen to 182,000. At the end of January 2008 it had fallen back to 166,000, while the system had beds for 114,500. The rise in numbers in the decade after 1993 placed intolerable strain on the system and there was international criticism not only of levels of overcrowding but also of corruption and violence inside the prisons. In an attempt to deal with these problems the government turned to prison privatisation.

The issue of prison privatisation in South Africa was discussed at a seminar in Cape Town in 2003 (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003). The introduction to the report of the conference refers to findings by Professor Julia Sloth Nielsen that, the privatisation of state assets was explicitly part of the government’s overall economic programme in the period following 1996, and indeed remains part of government’s chosen strategy. Correctional Services decided to explore the possibility of privatisation as part of a new prisons building programme, one key aim of which was to address overcrowding, inter-alia through the more rapid construction of new facilities.
One of the speakers at the conference, Stephen Nathan, placed this in a wider context when he said,

_The backdrop to prison privatisation is the economic restructuring – including privatisation of state assets and services – being imposed on countries by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank._

At the time of writing South Africa is the only country in Africa which has private prisons. The government initially planned to tender for four private prisons but in the end restricted itself to two tenders for financial reasons. Mangaung Prison, with 3,024 places and now operated by GSL, was opened at Bloemfontein in July 2001 and Kutama-Sinthumule Prison, with 2,928 places and operated by the South African Custodial Services, a subsidiary of the GEO Group, opened in Louis Trichardt in 2002. These are the two largest private prisons in the world. The GEO Group describes itself as a world leader in privatised correctional and detention management, with operations also in the US and the UK.

According to Prison Privatisation Report International (2003), these two prisons have proved to be extremely costly to the Department of Corrections. As early as 2002 the government set up a task force to investigate the prisons’ financing, costs, outputs and risk allocation; to establish a comparison with public sector prisons; and to identify features for renegotiation to address the department of correctional services’ affordability restraints. In November 2002 the task force reported that returns on the company’s investments in Mangaung prison could be as high as 29.9% while returns on Kutama-Sinthumule were as high as 25%. Construction and operating fees at Bloemfontein had increased from R154.41 per prisoner per day at the outset to R215.70, while at Louis Trichardt costs had increased from R139.31 to R160.36. The task force recommended that the contracts for the two prisons should be renegotiated. This proved to be impossible.

The contracts provide for both capital repayments and daily per prisoner costs, adjusted annually for inflation, but based on what have been described as exceedingly unrealistic ‘input specifications’, including a limit of two prisoners per cell and extensive educational and vocational training requirements, to levels which are not available in any publicly managed prison. It has been reported that the two prisons will over the next three years consume between 5.1 and 5.4% of the total Correctional Services Budget (R642,235 million in 2008/9), for facilities housing around 3% of the prison population (Sloth-Nielsen, 2006).

A senior adviser in the South African Treasury is reported to have commented, ‘We ordered a Rolls Royce but we should have ordered a Toyota’ (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003).

In his Budget Vote speech in late 2007 the Corrections Minister announced his intention to invite tenders for the construction of five new prisons on a public-private partnership model ‘once national treasury agrees to cover the project management costs.’ It is by no means clear that the Treasury will give its agreement to this.

The problems faced by a country such as South Africa are compounded if one looks at the situation of its impoverished neighbour, Lesotho. In 2001 the prison population of Lesotho was less than 3,000. The government acknowledged that the conditions in its prisons were appalling and had to be improved yet it lacked the resources to realise its ambition. Enter Group 4 Corrections Services SA (Pty) Ltd. with a solution which was completely alien to the traditions of the country. It offered to build a prison with 3,500 places which would be of a high
physical standard. The price to be paid was that all the prisoners in the country would be located in this single mega prison, very far from their homes and in an environment which would be completely at odds with the culture of the country. Group 4 apparently developed its proposal at the request of the Lesotho Department of Justice, Human Rights and Rehabilitation. Later the Minister who had invited Group 4 to develop its proposal was replaced and the government decided not to pursue the proposal. In May 2008 Group4Securicor, the successor company to Group 4 and the largest private security company in the world, announced that it had taken over GLS, the contractor for Mangaung Prison, thus making it a player in private prisons in South Africa. This amalgamation reinforced the increasing tendency to reduce the extent of competition among the companies involved in this field.

Conclusion

In the UK there is increasing concern about the long term financial costs of private prisons. In addition, the respected independent Chief Inspector of Prisons has issued extremely critical reports on the operation of several of these prisons. In 2001 the National Audit Office published a generally positive report on PFI prisons (National Audit Office, 2001). However, a further report in 2003 (National Audit Office, 2003) was much more cautious and concluded that the use of private prisons ‘is neither a guarantee of success nor the cause of inevitable failure’.

The situation in South Africa is much more problematic, not least because of questions about the competence of the entire system. For example, in 2001 President Thabo Mbeki appointed a Commission of Inquiry to investigate and report on corruption, maladministration, violence, and intimidation in the Department of Correctional Services. The Commission handed its final report to President Mbeki on 15 December 2005, but it took nearly a year and last minute pressure from the Correctional Services Portfolio Committee Chairperson and Judge Jali, the Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry, before the Minister of Correctional Services released the full report to the public in November 2006.3 The report of the Jali Commission makes very uncomfortable reading for the Department of Corrections and the Government of South Africa. Of the Commission’s seven focus areas, none were found to have been immune to corruption and in all nine management areas that were investigated, evidence of corruption, maladministration, and the violation of prisoners’ rights were found. In such an overarching climate one would have to be very cautious about the expansion of commercially managed privatisation.

South Africa is a case study in the way that prison privatisation may well proceed in the coming years. Faced with the reality that profit margins in the developed world are likely to be restricted in future and the fact that returns on investment have to be balanced against greater levels of public scrutiny and potential for embarrassment, the small number of companies involved in the business of prison privatisation are beginning to turn their attention to developing countries. Many of these countries are faced with rising prison populations and with terrible prison conditions. Governments are under increasing pressure to improve the conditions of their prisons, while knowing that they have no resources to do so. These are fertile grounds for private prison companies, who can come into a country, promising to relieve the government of unbearable commitments to capital funding in exchange for a revenue commitment which is attractive in the short term but which will have crippling implications in the longer term. This often suits the wishes of politicians who have short term agendas rather than long term ones. A further attraction for private prison companies is that in
such countries it will often be possible to prepare a contract which meets the needs of the private contractor much better than those of the contracting state in both financial and operational terms. In many developing countries there is a real problem with corruption in the public and private services at an institutional and at an individual level. When prisons are operated on a for-profit basis the danger of this happening is likely to be considerably increased. In addition, the strict monitoring arrangements which exist in some developed countries will be absent, leaving the contracting company free to interpret the conditions of the contract to its own advantage.

There is a more fundamental issue which exists in developed as well as in developing countries. It is that the real issue is not about whether private prisons are cheaper than public ones, nor whether they are managed more effectively and efficiently. The fundamental change which has come about with the introduction of privatisation is the concept of prison as a ‘market-place’ and a business which will inevitably expand. Private prisons have been introduced as a short term response by governments to rising prison populations, to shortage of prison places and to limited public funding to maintain existing prisons and to build new ones. As a result, the financial and social costs of an increasing use of imprisonment have not been subject to public scrutiny. Many of the costs of increased imprisonment are hidden in the short term. In fiscal terms, high capital expenditure can be converted into long term revenue expenditure, which reduces current financial costs term while increasing future costs to the public purse. In social terms, governments have not encouraged public debate about why so many additional prison places are needed, being content to argue that they will provide as many places as are necessary to protect the public. This is an even more dangerous phenomenon in developing countries than it is in developed ones.

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Endnotes


Bibliography


The Nigerian Feminist Movement: Lessons from Women in Nigeria, WIN*

Bene E. Madunagu

In Nigeria, as in other societies, there is, and there has always been a women’s movement or more correctly women’s movements. These existed before, during and after colonialism. Many of these may probably not fit into the conventional definition of a movement. Various forms of interest groups see themselves as movements. I admit that all of these do serve interests that in many ways attempt at addressing inequalities between women and men in society. While this is an acceptable criterion of minimising disagreements in the characterisation of women-based organisations, the reality is that there are still substantial differences in the forms of movements that call themselves ‘women’s movements’. Some ‘movements’ may or may not have clear objectives, mission or vision but exist as ad hoc bodies, useful when the need arises but with little or no coordination, continuity or sustainability. Some may just be limited to specific local struggles.

In Nigeria, the oldest and largest women’s movement can be said to be the National Council of Women’s Societies (NCWS) founded in 1958. Basu’s (1995) definition clearly suits the NCWS.

The Nigerian women’s movement is an unarmed movement. It is non-confrontational. It is a movement for the progressive upliftment of women for motherhood, nationhood and development.

This movement is ‘at home’ with the protection of our culture and tradition as well as with the supremacy of men. It will not rock the boat. It essentially accepts what the tradition has been and what religion sanctions.

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There are sectors of this movement that are more radical than the status-quo and that would raise the struggle to a higher level but are still afraid of what the men would say or do. There are gender activists who would rather not be associated with feminism, publicly or privately. Again there are women ‘activists’ in the larger women’s movement who call themselves feminists when they are in the midst of feminists but will quickly condemn ‘those crazy people’, a reference to those who publicly admit and declare that they are feminists. There are yet those who are feminists, ‘but’; these are women who want to be seen truly as feminists but become uncomfortable with discussions on such questions as the totality of who a feminist is and the extent of feminism in terms of core values, principles and praxis. They are satisfied with declaration and participation in meetings and conferences where the term feminism gets mentioned, but are generally silent when issues of sexual rights are discussed. For them, feminism has limits. They are, for instance, totally homophobic.

Feminism in Nigeria

There is no denying the fact that some forms of feminist struggles existed in Nigeria before what was clearly acclaimed and identified openly as a feminist movement: Women in Nigeria (WIN). However such struggles were largely undocumented. I make bold to state that feminism in Nigeria in its present form – consistent, organised, with clear objectives and ideology – came into being with the inauguration, in 1983, of the organisation Women in Nigeria (WIN) following the 1982 national conference on the same theme. WIN was a direct outcome of the conference, envisioned as a feminist movement and named as such.

During its first ten years WIN facilitated the development of many of the self-
identified feminists in Nigeria today. WIN started off with a clearly stated rights-based approach to issues about women in Nigeria and was very clear on the issues of gender and social justice. However, the open policy of WIN of ‘come one – come all’, where anyone, male or female, was accepted as long as such a person accepted the provisions of our Constitution, carried a danger of WIN including persons who have contempt for feminism but come into WIN with their own agenda. There was no punishment for anyone who played no active role as long as such a person showed up once in a while at meetings. In spite of the inherent weaknesses in the nature of membership criteria for WIN, one must always pay tribute to WIN as training ground for the emergence of organised feminist struggles in Nigeria. WIN’s open policy of membership led to the entry of many persons who had no clue about feminism and gender justice and its core values and principles. Many enthusiastic members equated feminist struggles to abstract class struggle, with total disdain for gender issues. Internal conflicts generated by ignorance and opportunism as well as male chauvinistic understanding of social struggles as not including gender equality and equity as key components of social justice became a cankerworm that progressively weakened WIN as a movement for social transformation – a core focus of feminist struggles.

The Uniqueness & Contribution of WIN to the Nigerian Feminist Movement

From the onset, WIN engaged in research, policy advocacy and activism aimed at transforming the conditions under which women and other underprivileged classes in Nigeria lived. WIN’s further uniqueness was its consciousness of both class and gender in the struggle for the emancipation of women. WIN acknowledged that, although the majority of women, suffered from the exploitative and oppressive character of the Nigerian society, women suffer additional forms of exploitation and oppression – as women. Thus WIN recognised the double forms of exploitation and oppression of women as members of the subordinate class and as women. WIN set out to struggle against both class and gender oppression through promoting the study of conditions of women, disseminating the outcome for policy formulation, defending the rights of women and taking actions to transform the conditions of women.

WIN’s Strategies

WIN started off with the strategy of research, analysis and documentation of conditions of women in various situations in the society. The outcome of this strategy provided the much needed data for advocacy and mobilisation of women to demand their rights. This strategy also led to the practice of holding annual conferences as a means of public education and the creation of awareness, using research data and gender analysis as convincing tool for demanding for women’s rights. We may also mention the adoption of a clear Constitution that emerged from the involvement and participation of all members, the establishment of WIN as an institution with basic feminist principles and values, the emergence of well-defined organisational structures of leadership and representation at national and in the state branches, and clearly defined roles, responsibilities and obligations.

During these first ten years, WIN never received subvention from government and so was able to maintain its independence. It could therefore take actions without compromising since, as the saying goes, ‘the person that pays the piper dictates the tune’.
WIN’s Publications

As stated earlier, one of the strengths of WIN’s strategies was the documentation of research and analysis from a gender perspective. A research theme was chosen each year by consensus and the outcome was published. The first major publication of WIN was the book, Women In Nigeria Today (Zed Books, 1985) that came out of the conference that gave birth to WIN. This inaugural publication was followed by:

- Women and education (edited proceedings of the 3rd annual WIN conference) (1992);
- Child abuse (1992); Women in Nigeria – The first ten years (1993);
- Women in the transition to democracy in Nigerian politics (edited proceedings of the 8th annual WIN conference held in Kano (1989);
- Women and violence: Breaking The Silence: Women Against Violence (edited proceedings of the 10th anniversary WIN conference, 1993);

These publications became invaluable in the understanding of gender issues in Nigeria. There is no way a collection of persons from different backgrounds, cultures and different experiences could be in serious actions together without conflicts. This would have been unnatural.

However, WIN had its in-house policy of conflict resolution, and the principles on which the feminists worked helped in the process of constructive criticism a healthy practice for movement building. WIN succeeded as a training ground for many Nigerian feminists who are still committed in many ways to feminist struggles.

Beyond WIN

A lot has happened since the transformation of WIN from its initial focus and content to the present period when in almost every feminist gathering, questions arise that raise doubts. The Nigerian feminist movement has a forum – Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) – which is larger and more coherent than WIN.

The NFF was launched in January 2008 after an incubation period that started with the launching of the African Feminist Forum (AFF) in Accra, Ghana in 2006. As a chapter of the African Feminist Forum, the Nigerian Feminist Forum is bound by the values and principles of the AFF. The NFF has effectively replaced WIN as the Nigerian Feminist Movement, and it has gone beyond the historical stage of isolated country movements to become part of the continental (Pan African) feminist movement. AFF documents clearly state the content, context, values and principles of the present vibrant Nigerian feminist movement. Let me quickly point out that we in the NFF know that there are many self-identified Nigerian feminists within Nigeria and in the diaspora who are yet to be part of the NFF, which is still very young. Hence NFF is not a closed club nor is it a ‘come one, come all’ club. We have learned from the past. There are clear guidelines and conditions for becoming a part of the NFF. The secretariat of both the AFF and the NFF are ever ready to furnish potential, interested feminists who wish to be members with information on how to do join.

The information is contained in the Charter of the Feminist Principles for African Feminists clearly states how African and Nigerian feminists alike define themselves, the understanding Feminism and Patriarchy, our identity as African and Nigerian feminists, our ethics as individual and institutional African and Nigerian feminists, and our understanding of feminist leadership. The charter of the feminist principles of the AFF is binding on all the country level feminist forums including Nigerian Feminist Forum.
From WIN to NFF

WIN’s lessons and experiences for the NFF as a new formation include the need for the adoption of basic principles of organisation and action. There is also the need to agree on responsibilities as well as structures for coordination and leadership to ensure organised actions and sustainability. This is already being practised in the NFF with a central organising committee serviced by a joint secretariat of two feminist organisations, both located in Lagos.

Two recent events have tested the strength of NFF. One was the rallying of Nigerian feminists and many other progressive sectors of Nigerian society to put an end to attempts by a private university to force virginity and HIV testing on Nigerian girls entering the institution. Another was the mobilisation against a state attempt to ban the use of condoms. Nigerian feminists along with various institutions caused the state to annul the policy, thereby putting an end to the matter. The most recent had to do with a proposed federal bill, introduced by the female chairperson of the Nigerian Senate Committee for Women and Youths, to institutionalise a dress-code for women. The NFF, together with several women organisations, put an end to the proposed bill through several press conferences and the weight of Nigerian women’s mobilisation to fill the hall where the public hearings on the bill took place. There are many other situations that show the resurgence and revitalisation of feminist activism in Nigeria.

We celebrate these victories. It is gratifying that this can happen in present primitive neo-colonial Nigeria (and Africa), where laws are imposed by the imperialist ‘International Community’; our leaders have kept us in the backyard of that global community to serve as the dustbins or refuse dump for what does not work or what is dangerous to the community of the G8 countries. Our leaders are prepared to sign imperialist conditionalities drafted by the ailing IMF and the World Bank. These conditionalities for unequal trade agreements and perpetual indebtedness of the developing or retrogressing world where we are located, create and deepen poverty with women bearing the greatest burden imposed by culture and tradition and reinforced by the new forms of imperialist-driven religious evangelism. To worsen this already bad situation from present-day globalisation policies of re-colonisation of Africa (in particular, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, etc.), the United States and the rest of the West have come with poverty alleviation strategies and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to divert our attention from the cruel poverty imposed by their policies and the excruciating challenges women in particular face from the new importation of imperialist style of democracy. Hence, if in spite of these burdens, feminists, the larger women’s movement, and our allies have been able to challenge effectively these offshoots of imperialist-directed democracy in our country, we have cause to celebrate – with our eyes open, of course, to see when they try other gimmicks.

This is the present state of the Nigerian feminist movement and its relationship with the larger Nigerian Feminist Movement, an offshoot of the Pan-African Feminist Movement (AFF).

I FORESEE A SUSTAINED ACTIVE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA THAT WILL PLAY A STRONG ROLE IN THE AFRICAN FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND IN THE GLOBAL FEMINIST MOVEMENT AS A FORCE TO BE RECOGNISED AND RESPECTED. THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!!
APPENDIX: Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists

The African Feminist Forum took place from 15-19 November 2006 in Accra, Ghana. The meeting brought together over 100 feminist activists from all over the region and the diaspora. The space was crafted as an autonomous space in which African feminists from all walks of life, at different levels of engagement within the feminist movement such as mobilizing at local levels for women’s empowerment to academia, could reflect on a collective basis and chart ways to strengthen and grow the feminist movement on the continent.

A key outcome of the forum was the adoption of the Charter of Feminist Principles, which was agreed by the Regional Working group for the Forum, to be one of its principle aims. It was felt that we need something to help us define and affirm our commitment to feminist principles, which will guide our analysis, and practice. As such the Charter sets out the collective values that we hold as key to our work and to our lives as African feminists. It charts the change we wish to see in our communities, and also how this change is to be achieved. In addition it spells out our individual and collective responsibilities to the movement and to one another within the movement.

With this Charter, we reaffirm our commitment to dismantling patriarchy in all its manifestations in Africa. We remind ourselves of our duty to defend and respect the rights of all women, without qualification. We commit to protecting the legacy of our feminist ancestors who made numerous sacrifices, in order that we can exercise greater autonomy.

PREAMBLE: NAMING OURSELVES AS FEMINISTS

We define and name ourselves publicly as Feminists because we celebrate our feminist identities and politics. We recognise that the work of fighting for women’s rights is deeply political, and the process of naming is political too. Choosing to name ourselves as Feminists we politicise the struggle for women’s rights, we question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated, and we develop tools for transformative analysis and action. We have multiple and varied identities as African Feminists. We are African women – we live here in Africa and even when we live elsewhere, our focus is on the lives of African women on the continent. Our feminist identity is not qualified with ‘Ifs’, ‘Buts’, or ‘However’s’. We are Feminists. Full stop.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF FEMINISM & PATRIARCHY

As African feminists our understanding of feminism places patriarchal social relations structures and systems which are embedded in other oppressive and exploitative structures at the centre of our analysis. Patriarchy is a system of male authority which legitimizes the oppression of women through political, social, economic, legal cultural, religious and military institutions. Men’s access to, and control over resources and rewards within the private and public sphere derives its legitimacy from the patriarchal ideology of male dominance. Patriarchy varies in time and space, meaning that it changes over time, and varies according to class, race, ethnic, religious and global-imperial relationships and structures. Furthermore, in the current conjunctures, patriarchy does not simply change according to these factors, but is inter-related with and informs relationships of class, race, ethnic, religious, and global-imperialism. Thus to challenge patriarchy effectively also requires challenging other systems of oppression and exploitation, which frequently mutually support each other.

Our understanding of Patriarchy is crucial because it provides for us as feminists, a framework within which to express the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations which affect African women. Patriarchal ideology enables and legitimizes the structuring of every aspect of our lives by establishing the framework within which society defines and views men and women and constructs male supremacy. Our ideological task as feminists is to understand this system and our political task is to end it. Our focus is fighting against patriarchy as a system rather than fighting individual men or women. Therefore, as feminists, we define our work as investing individual and institutional energies in the struggle against all forms of patriarchal oppression and exploitation.

OUR IDENTITIY AS AFRICAN FEMINISTS

As Feminists who come from/work/live in Africa, we claim the right and the space to be Feminist and African. We recognise that we do not have a homogenous identity as feminists – we acknowledge and celebrate our diversities and our shared commitment to a transformative agenda for African societies and African women in particular. This is what gives us our common feminist identity.
Our current struggles as African Feminists are inextricably linked to our past as a continent—diverse pre-colonial contexts, slavery, colonization, liberation struggles, neo-colonialism, globalization. Modern African States were built off the backs of African Feminists who fought alongside men for the liberation of the continent. As we craft new African States in this new millennium, we also craft new identities for African women, identities as full citizens, free from patriarchal oppression, with rights of access, ownership and control over resources and our own bodies and utilizing positive aspects of our cultures in liberating and nurturing ways. We also recognise that our pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories and herstories require special measures to be taken in favour of particular African women in different contexts.

We acknowledge the historical and significant gains that have been made by the African Women’s Movement over the past forty years, and we make bold to lay claim to these gains as African feminists – they happened because African Feminists led the way, from the grassroots level and up; they strategised, organised, networked, went on strike and marched in protest, and did the research, analysis, lobbying, institution building and all that it took for States, employers and institutions to acknowledge women’s personhood.

As African feminists, we are also part of a global feminist movement against patriarchal oppression in all its manifestations. Our experiences are linked to that of women in other parts of the world with whom we have shared solidarity and support over the years. As we assert our space as African feminists, we also draw inspiration from our feminist ancestors who blazed the trail and made it possible to affirm the rights of African women. As we invoke the memory of those women whose names are hardly ever recorded in any history books, we insist that it is a profound insult to claim that feminism was imported into Africa from the West. We reclaim and assert the long and rich tradition of African women’s resistance to patriarchy in Africa. We henceforth claim the right to theorise for ourselves, write for ourselves, strategise for ourselves and speak for ourselves as African feminists.

INDIVIDUAL ETHICS

As individual feminists, we are committed to and believe in gender equality based on feminist principles which are:

- The indivisibility, inalienability and universality of women’s human rights;

- The effective participation in building and strengthening progressive African feminist organizing and networking to bring about transformatory change;

- A spirit of feminist solidarity and mutual respect based on frank, honest and open discussion of difference with each other;

- The support, nurture, and care of other African feminists, along with the care for our own well-being;

- The practice of non-violence and the achievement of non-violent societies;

- The right of all women to live free of patriarchal oppression, discrimination and violence;

- The right of all women to have access to sustainable and just livelihoods as well as welfare provision, including quality health care, education, water and sanitation;

- Freedom of choice and autonomy regarding bodily integrity issues, including reproductive rights, abortion, sexual identity and sexual orientation;

- A critical engagement with discourses of religion, culture, tradition and domesticity with a focus on the centrality of women’s rights;

- The recognition and presentation of African women as the subjects not the objects of our work, and as agents in their lives and societies;

- The right to healthy, mutually respectful and fulfilling personal relationships;

- The right to express our spirituality within or outside of organised religions;

- The acknowledgment of the feminist agency of African women which has a rich Herstory that has been largely undocumented and ignored.

INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS

As feminist organisations we commit to the following:

- Advocating for openness, transparency, equality and accountability in feminist-led institutions and organisations;

- Affirming that being a feminist institution is not incompatible with being professional, efficient, disciplined and accountable;

- Insisting on and supporting African women’s labour rights, including egalitarian governance, fair and equal remuneration and maternity policies;
Using power and authority responsibly, and managing institutional hierarchies with respect for all concerned. We believe that feminist spaces are created to empower and uplift women. At no time should we allow our institutional spaces to degenerate into sites of oppression and undermining of other women;

Exercising responsible leadership and management of organisations whether in a paid or unpaid capacity and striving to uphold critical feminist values and principles at all times;

Exercising accountable leadership in feminist organisations, taking into consideration the needs of others for self-fulfillment and professional development. This includes creating spaces for power-sharing across generations;

Creating and sustaining feminist organisations to foster women’s leadership. Women’s organisations and networks should be led and managed by women. It is a contradiction of feminist leadership principles to have men leading, managing and being spokespersons for women’s organisations;

Feminist organisations as models of good practice in the community of civil society organizations, ensuring that the financial and material resources mobilised in the name of African women are put to the service of African women and not diverted to serve personal interests. Systems and structures with appropriate Codes of Conduct to prevent corruption and fraud, and to manage disputes and complaints fairly, are the means of ensuring our organisations;

Striving to inform our activism with theoretical analysis and to connect the practice of activism to our theoretical understanding of African feminism;

Being open to critically assessing our impact as feminist organisations, and being honest and pro-active with regards to our role in the movement;

Opposing the subversion and/or hijacking of autonomous feminist spaces to serve right wing, conservative agendas;

Ensuring that feminist non-governmental or mass organisations are created in response to real needs expressed by women that need to be met, and not to serve selfish interests, and unaccountable income-generating agendas.

As leaders in the feminist movement, we recognise that feminist agency has popularised the notion of women as leaders. As feminist leaders we are committed to making a critical difference in leadership, based on the understanding that the quality of women’s leadership is even more important than the numbers of women in leadership. We believe in and commit ourselves to the following:

Disciplined work ethics guided by integrity and accountability at all times;

Expanding and strengthening a multi-generational network and pool of feminist leaders across the continent;

Ensuring that the feminist movement is recognised as a legitimate constituency for women in leadership positions;

Building and expanding our knowledge and information base on an ongoing basis, as the foundation for shaping our analysis and strategies and for championing a culture of learning beginning with ourselves within the feminist movement;

Nurturing, mentoring and providing opportunities for young feminists in a non-matronising manner;

Crediting African women’s labour, intellectual and otherwise in our work;

Creating time to respond in a competent, credible and reliable manner to other feminists in need of solidarity and support whether political, practical or emotional;

Being open to giving and receiving peer reviews and constructive feedback from other feminists.

References


Endnote

* This briefing was originally published in 1986: A. Mohammed & Bene E. Madunagu (1986), ‘WIN: A Militant Approach to the Mobilisation of Women’, ROAPE 13:37, 103-105. Many thanks to Bene for this very timely up-date (editors).
Angolans Vote for Peace

On 5 September 2008 Angola held its first election since its protracted conflict was put to an end in April 2002. MPLA’s victory in the 1992 legislative elections was contested by UNITA and the subsequent crisis resulted in the resumption of the civil war. This historical precedent triggered a degree apprehension vis-à-vis the electoral process amongst most Angolans. The organisation of the 2008 legislative elections was managed by the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Election Process. Both bodies were largely made up of elements of the ruling party albeit the CNE had some representatives from opposition parties. The government developed a sophisticated and costly electoral system including electoral materials produced by the multinational company INDRA based in Spain.

The organisation of the elections began in 2006. The voter registration process was a paramount undertaking due to the absence of a census list of the Angolan population since 1975. The survey was carried out by several registration brigades and was observed by party agents; as a result over 8 million Angolans were registered. Nonetheless, the process was not absent of controversy since the opposition parties denounced that the traditional authorities, the so-called Sobas, in connivance with the barrios (neighbourhood) coordinators collected voters ID cards in order to elaborate a parallel register list of voters. According to the main opposition party UNITA, this was a strategy to coerce villagers into voting for MPLA. In addition, UNITA accused the CNE of recruiting polling staff members mainly amongst members of MPLA. Nevertheless, these alleged irregularities did not outweigh opposition parties’ eagerness to participate in the electoral process. In addition, the government put in place a program to induce civilian disarmament for the purpose of fostering people’s confidence in a peaceful electoral outcome.

Since May 2008 MPLA and UNITA ran a pre-election campaign leading up to the electoral campaign which started officially on 7 August 2008. According to electoral law, the 14 parties that were registered were to receive $1.1 million each for the electoral campaign three months before E-day. However, these state funds were only distributed to the political parties at the beginning of August. Opposition parties had meagre private means of financing the campaign and lacked propaganda materials and even means of transport to reach their constituencies. Hence, opposition parties mainly conducted a door to door campaign. Meanwhile, MPLA was accused by the opposition parties of using state resources for its campaign (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement1). MPLA used a wide range of means of transport (small airplanes, school buses, 4x4 vehicles, motorbikes, bikes, etc.) and displayed generous campaign resources including the distribution of a wide range of electoral materials. In addition, MPLA conducted a very well orchestrated electoral propaganda campaign in the national mass media, namely the National Angolan Radio (RPA), the National Angolan TV (TPA) and the governmental Jornal de Angola. Media opposition such as the weekly journal O Novo Jornal enjoyed limited distribution and the church run Radio Igreja could only be broadcasted in Luanda. The opposition parties struggled to get their message across to the population in the provinces due to limited means and poor organisational planning in some cases.

The MPLA campaign focused on the government’s role in sustaining 6 years of peace, social progress and economic development. José Eduardo Dos Santos, MPLA’s president and Angola’s Head of State for the last 30 years was described...
in mass meetings and rallies as a successful peacemaker. Governmental achievements made recurrently the headlines of national news programs i.e. inauguration of hospitals, schools, running water plants, infrastructures or new branches of the state-owned network of supermarkets *noso super*. The Angolan media generously publicised China’s leading role in re-building the country’s infrastructures in exchange for oil supplies.

In recent years, the Angolan economy has had an annual real growth rate over 15%, its inflation stays in double digits and revenues result mainly from the booming oil industry and the extraction of minerals and diamonds. In 2008 Angola became Africa’s largest oil producer overtaking Nigeria.² The Angolan Finance minister José Pedro de Morais received the prize of Best African Finance Minister in 2007 from the *Financial Times* magazine *The Banker* and he was also recently nominated among the Personalities of the Year by the *Foreign Direct Investment* Magazine (FDIM). The country attracts international investment and duly pays back its foreign debt to international creditors. Angolan companies linked to the Government of Angola are also striving to take control of the banking sector traditionally dominated by Portuguese firms.³

The booming economy has been cleverly exploited by MPLA campaigners as being the engine for social progress to address deficits in health, education, clean water, electricity and infrastructures. Despite MPLA’s optimistic vision, Angola is still amongst the world’s least developed nations and occupies the 162nd position in the 2007-2008 UNDP development index rankings. Individuals closely connected to the MPLA leadership manage the main sources of the country’s capitalist development such as oil, construction, telecommunications and hotel industries whilst most Angolans live in precarious conditions, in shanty towns or in small villages in the rural countryside, below minimum hygiene standards, often without easy access to clean water resulting in outbreaks of contagious diseases such as cholera and chronic diarrhoea among children who suffer also from nutritional disorders. Malaria remains the most common cause of infant mortality. Despite a widespread social perception of corruption amongst certain elements of the ruling party, MPLA’s landslide victory in the elections was determined by the Angolan people’s desire to maintain peace and their expectations on the development prospects resulting from the country’s emerging role in the energy sector.

In the era of globalisation, MPLA is the only game in town. Since pre-campaigning began, significant members of UNITA: some of them concerned about maintaining their positions as administrators of the current Government of National Unity: defected from UNITA and subsequently expressed their support to MPLA. Their move to the ruling party was widely publicised by state media on E-day week. Despite questions raised on the confusion between state structures and the MPLA party, elections have been deemed by all international observation missions as transparent, and all opposition parties have accepted the results, whilst allegations of vote rigging have almost been non-existent. Seemingly, international observers highlighted the process was hampered to some extent by organisational pitfalls such as delays in the distribution of materials which then obliged many polling stations to re-open in Luanda on E-day + 1, delays in the accreditation of opposition party observers and inconsistencies in the interpretation of counting procedures (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement ⁴).

MPLA obtained a landslide victory receiving 81% of the votes. UNITA and...
Briefings: Angolans Vote for Peace

PRS received respectively 10% and 3% of the votes. UNITA’s resounding defeat has been aggravated by its sharply declining influence in its traditional strongholds. On the other hand, PRS slightly improved its 1992 results by focusing its campaign on the promotion of federalism, i.e. provincial management of revenues as the recipe to address corruption and shorten the gap between a rich urban elite based in Luanda and poverty-stricken peasants living in the provinces; significantly, PRS obtained over 40% of the votes casted in diamond-rich province of Lunda Sul.

Needless to emphasise that MPLA’s main challenge ahead is to maintain these excellent electoral results; the electorate gave credit to the leadership who managed to sustain 6 years of peace but in future contests the government’s capacity to deliver socio-economic development will be scrutinised more closely. These elections have been conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner and Angola has taken a step forward towards political stability; as in 1992, most Angolans voted for MPLA but the country’s path towards development could benefit from governmental efforts to enable constructive criticism in the public arena. Opposition parties and independent civil society organisations are irreplaceable assets in the priceless business of sustaining Angola’s hard-won peace.

Endnotes
2. Oil in Angola is a state subsidised product. Super oil price is less than .50 cents per litre.
3. The Portuguese Bank BPI sold 49.9% of Banco de Fomento Angola, the southern African country’s largest private sector bank, to Angola’s mobile phone operator, Unitel. For further information see Peter Wise, Financial Times.com (15 September 2008).

Angola Election: 2008: Final Results

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<tr>
<th>Party</th>
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<tr>
<td>MPLA</td>
<td>81.64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNITA</td>
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<tr>
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The Full Cabinet List

President: José Eduardo dos Santos
Prime Minister: António Paulo Kassoma
Minister of National Defence: Kundi Paihama
Minister of Interior: Roberto Leal Ramos Monteiro
Minister of Foreign Affairs: Assunção Afonso dos Anjos
Minister of Economy: Manuel Nunes Junior
Minister of Territory Administration: Virgílio Ferreira de Fontes Pereira
Minister of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security: António Domingos Pitra
Minister of Justice: Guilhermina Contreiras da Costa Prata
Minister of Finance: Eduardo Leopoldo Severin de Morais
Minister of Planning: Ana Afonso Dias Lourenço
Minister of Commerce: Maria Idalina de Oliveira Valente
Minister of Hotel and Tourism: Pedro Mutindi
Minister of Agriculture: Afonso Pedro Canga
Minister of Fisheries: Salamão José Luete Chiribimbi
Minister of Industry: Joaquim Duarte da Costa David
Minister of Oil: José Maria Botelho de Vasconcelos
Minister of Geology and Mining: Makenda Ambroise
Chris Allen
8 December 1942 – 29 September 2008

Chris, one of the founding editors of this journal, died in Coulestrine, France on the 29th of September. We will be publishing tributes and a selection of his writing in the March 2009 issue of ROAPE. Our love to Frances and their daughters, Kate and Jude.

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Outsourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp International as Sovereign Agent

Sean McFate

After over 150 years of troubled history, fourteen years of civil war, war crimes and horrific abuses of power, Liberia stands at the precipice of history. The war came to a merciful end in 2003, when Charles Taylor fled into exile, but the war’s ravages were complete. The United States Agency for International Development characterised Liberia’s post-conflict landscape this way:

Over 250,000 people, most of them civilian non-combatants, have lost their lives in the civil war. More than 1.3 million have been displaced, including hundreds of thousands who fled the country. Abductions, torture, rape and other human rights abuses have taken place on a massive scale. It is estimated that at least one in ten children may have been recruited into militias at one time or another. A similar percentage has been traumatized by seeing their families and friends murdered and raped (US Agency for International Development, 2004).

Liberia remains dependent upon one of the world’s largest United Nations peacekeeping forces for its survival, and fears are mounting over the looming departure of peacekeepers. Who will provide security then? Will spoilers plunge the country back into violence? How will Liberia ward off potential spillover effects from violence in neighbouring Sierra Leone, Guinea, or Côte d’Ivoire?

These questions were presaged in the peace talks leading up to Taylor’s departure, and it was decided that wholesale transformation of the security sector was required so that Liberia could secure itself and not be forever reliant on international peacekeepers.

Security sector reform (SSR) is a crucial element of peacebuilding, especially in post-conflict settings. SSR is the wholesale transformation of indigenous security organisations into effective, legitimate, apolitical, and accountable institutions that uphold the rule of law and maintain the state’s monopoly on force. At a minimum, the security sector comprises three categories of actors: those directly involved in the protection of civilians and the state from violent harms (e.g. law enforcement or military); institutions that govern these actors (e.g. Ministries of Interior, Defense, Justice); and executive and legislative oversight bodies.

Failure to successfully implement SSR can seriously compromise peacebuilding efforts for several reasons. First, unaccountable and/or unprofessional security forces can become spoilers, which can hold the entire peacebuilding process hostage to their narrow interests under threat of violence. This can lead to a relapse of armed conflict. Second, it can also prolong peacekeeping missions, as security is a precondition of development. Last, SSR is a prerequisite for the exit strategy of costly peacekeeping missions, since it allows countries to secure themselves.

The central question of SSR in a country like Liberia is how to transform the military from a symbol of terror into an...
instrument of democracy. The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) was complicit in human rights atrocities and the descent into civil war. Hence, the objective of the Joint US-Liberia SSR programme was to demobilise Liberia’s armed forces and reconstitute the AFL and Ministry of Defence (MOD) in toto.1

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of this innovative programme was the United States’ decision to completely outsource this critical task to private military companies (PMCs). Rarely in modern history has one sovereign nation hired a private entity to raise a military for another sovereign nation. This briefing outlines some of the key elements and outcomes of this prototypical programme, as seen from one of its early architects which may augur future US engagement in Africa. This is especially relevant given the new US military’s Africa Command (AFRICOM), which will likely outsource similar missions to private companies in the future.

The Decision to Outsource

Following Taylor’s departure, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) on 19 September 2003. At the time, it was the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world, growing to 15,000 ‘blue helmets’ with a robust civilian component. Jacques Paul Klein was appointed as the Special Representative of the Secretary General and UNMIL officially took over peacekeeping duties on 1 October 2003. Two months later it began the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) process of approximately 100,000 people.

From 4 June to 18 August 2003 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brokered the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), also known as the ‘Accra Accords’. In Part Four of these Accords on Security Sector Reforms,2 the UN and US agreed to share responsibilities, with the UN agreeing to transform the Liberian National Police and the US the AFL. The US’s commitment was managed by the US Department of State (DOS), which organised an initial assessment trip in January 2004. This was followed by a subject matter expert assessment in May, consisting of personnel from US Department of Defense (DOD) and two companies: DynCorp International (DynCorp) and Pacific Architects and Engineers (PA&E). The purpose of this assessment mission, during which time one of the DOD civilian staff members was murdered, was to determine the operational requirements for SSR of the AFL.

Following the assessment mission, DOD concluded it could not conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints, driven in part by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consequently, the DOS decided to wholly ‘contract out’ the task of reconstituting the AFL and MoD to the private sector. Not long after the assessment trip, DOS tendered a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E. Only these two companies were allowed to submit bids as they had earlier won the five-year Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract from DOS to support peacekeeping and security efforts in Africa. IDIQ contracts essentially act as umbrella contracts between the US government and select companies for a fixed period of time, and are meant to streamline the contracting process. After reviewing both proposals, DOS decided to divide the duties between the two contractors. DynCorp was responsible for demobilising the legacy force and then recruiting, vetting and training the AFL and MoD. PA&E was responsible for fielding the AFL and providing mentorship once the units were in place. Both firms were required to engage in construction of military bases and other facilities as necessary, with authorisation from DOS.
Designing the Force

The SSR process began by informally identifying and engaging key stakeholders, which included the legacy force, former rebels, the host government, civil society, and the international community. To their credit, DynCorp eschewed ill-fitting templates of the US military for the new AFL, and sought to craft – in partnership with the Liberian government – a more appropriate security force, which is discussed below. After a full-year of conversation, a vision of the AFL’s mission, composition, and desired end state was reached. It would be a mistake to assume that there was uniform consensus or that all stakeholders were engaged fully. The prominent voices in the discussion were the US government, which was sponsoring the programme, and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL).

Ultimately the vision entailed a small all-volunteer force (approimately 2,000 persons) that could be scaled upwards in time. It was acknowledged that a 2,000 person force would be insufficient to defend all of Liberia, should a full-scale war erupt. But it was also acknowledged that the size needed to be constrained by the government’s ability to pay soldiers’ salaries on a regular basis, as history suggested that unpaid soldiers were a greater threat to Liberia’s security than threat of an invading army.

It was also agreed that the AFL should have a defence-oriented force posture and light infantry organisational structure that was strong enough to repel cross-border militant attacks but not so strong as to threaten Liberia’s neighbours. This force would maintain a 12th grade functional literacy level, balanced ethnic and gender mix within the ranks, and foster an apolitical professional ethos, especially in the leadership, that respects the rule of law, cultivates a public service ethos, and accepts civilian control of the military. Finally, the AFL and ideally the entire Liberian security sector should embrace a ‘human security’ model.

DynCorp officially proposed the initial force structure and ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ – the blueprint for the new AFL – to the State Department in July 2005. In military parlance, a ‘force structure’ is the wire-diagram of units in the AFL and MoD, from the General Staff down to the basic infantry squad. A ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ is a spreadsheet inventory of personnel and equipment, delineating for each unit the exact rank, title, and military occupational specialty of each soldier and every piece of equipment authorised for the unit. The original blueprint for the AFL totalled 1,928 soldiers: a brigade headquarters company (103 personnel), two light infantry battalions (663 personnel each), an engineer company (162 personnel), a military police company (114 personnel), a training company (180 personnel), a military band (40 personnel), and three military personnel at the Ministry of Defense, which was overwhelmingly civilian in composition. Although this blueprint has changed over time, the original concept for the AFL remains consistent.

Establishing the Programme

It is impossible to truncate a multi-year, highly complex process, with more than a few surprises, into a single article. In brief, the AFL SSR programme was originally envisaged to proceed in several phases. Phase I was political consultation with stakeholders and sensitising the public to the creation of a new AFL. The key issues were: identifying and engaging stakeholders; the composition and mission of the AFL; and overcoming the legacy of atrocities it inherited from the civil war. Phase II was safely demobilising the legacy force. The key issues included: who is eligible for demobilisation benefits; finding donor money to pay for those benefits; controls to prevent
fraud during the demobilisation process; public sensitisation to the programme; and fears that disgruntled demobilised soldiers would incite political violence. At the same time, construction of training facilities commenced. The primary concerns were: negotiating site selection; finding competent construction companies; theft of materials; and significant delays caused by the six-month rainy season.

Phase III was recruiting and vetting the force. The primary concern for recruiting was attracting women and minority ethnic groups to serve in what was traditionally an ethnically Krahn-dominated institution. As for vetting, it is difficult to establish mere identity in post-conflict Liberia, to say nothing of a full background check. Creating a competent vetting programme was a key challenge.

Phase IV was military training and equipping. The chief concerns were lack of literacy, leadership selection and instilling a professional, apolitical ethos that placed service to the country above tribe or individual. Simultaneously, MoD transformation began, which included hiring and training all civilian personnel, as well as the creation of all AFL policies. Here the challenges were finding qualified mentors and synchronising the development of the MoD with interdependent government institutions.

Phase V was fielding the new force, which meant deployment of soldiers to their permanent duty station. At the time of publication, the programme remains mired in Phase IV due to several reasons, including sensitivity and uniqueness of the task, erratic programme funding by the US, and irregularities of DynCorp management (see Malan, 2008). Last, almost every aspect of this programme is sui generis, as there are no textbooks on comprehensive SSR, and this made progress problematic.

Programme Timeline

2003 August: Charles Taylor flees Liberia and ECOWAS peacekeepers and US troops arrive. The interim government and rebels sign the CPA. Gyude Bryant is chosen to head the interim government (NTGL). September–October: US forces pull out, and UNMIL begins the peacekeeping mission. December: UNMIL begins DDRR for non-statutory (non-AFL) combatants only. AFL personnel are disarmed, but not demobilised, rehabilitated and reintegrated, leaving that to the US government, as agreed to during CPA negotiations.

2004 January: The US Department of State sends a small contingent to Liberia to begin a preliminary assessment. The US is responsible for Part IV, Article Seven of the CPA, which covers SSR for the AFL. DOS is the lead agency within the US government for this task. February: International donors pledge more than US$500 million in reconstruction aid. May: DOS organises a ten-day assessment of SSR for the AFL. The assessment team consists of US personnel (mostly from the military) and two contractor teams: DynCorp and PA&E. A member of the assessment team is murdered in his hotel room during a robbery. June: DoD decides it cannot conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints. DOS decides to contract the SSR programme, and tenders a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E. July: DOS decides to split the contract between the two contractors, making DynCorp responsible for selecting and training the force and PA&E for fielding the force. However, DOS does not officially initiate the programme or release funds until programme preconditions are met (e.g., political support of the NTGL to demobilise legacy AFL veterans). October: Riots in Monrovia leave 16 people dead; UNMIL says former combatants and AFL veterans were behind the violence.
2005 February–March: Consultations with major stakeholders regarding the mission and composition of the future AFL. This includes civil society, the standing AFL, former warring parties and political factions, the NTGL, UNMIL, and other entities. A comprehensive recruiting and vetting plan is devised intended to screen out human rights abusers from joining the AFL. March–May: Consultations with stakeholders continue. Discussions include the problem of safely demobilising the legacy force without provoking political violence, mission and force structure of future AFL, location of training bases, sensitisation campaign for civil society, and arrears owed AFL veterans. The demobilisation plan is drafted and presented to Chairman Bryant, who signs Executive Order 5, authorising the full demobilisation of all legacy AFL units. DOS officially initiates the SSR programme and releases funds to DynCorp to begin recruiting and building. PA&E will begin its programme once training commences. July: The demobilisation and reintegration of 13,770 legacy soldiers commences. DynCorp builds a demobilisation site outside Monrovia. The US government approves the initial blueprint for the new AFL’s force structure. Construction of AFL training facilities commences but is slowed by the monsoon rainy season. September: The NTGL agrees that the international community should supervise its finances in an effort to counter corruption. October: Recruiting and vetting for the new AFL begins. Over 12,000 applicants will be processed in the two years to come. 23 November: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf becomes the first woman to be elected as an African head of state. She takes office the following January.

2006 January: The demobilisation of the AFL is successful completed, the first time in modern African history that an entire standing military was safely demobilised without significant incident. February: A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is set up to investigate human rights abuses between 1979 and 2003. Tensions transpire between the TRC and SSR programme, when the TRC’s request for access to SSR vetting records is denied by the SSR team on account that it might compromise sources and methods, possibly resulting in re-prisal killings of witnesses who spoke to the SSR vetting team on condition of anonymity about human rights abuses of some AFL candidates. April: MOD transformation begins. Former President Charles Taylor appears before the UN-backed Sierra Leone Special Court on charges of crimes against humanity. In June the International Criminal Court at The Hague agrees to host his trial. May: Brownie Samukai, the Liberian Minister of Defence, spends a week in Washington, DC collaboratively formulating the Liberian National Defence Strategy, modelled on a human security paradigm. June: A first draft of the National Defence Strategy is written, seeking to align the AFL’s mission with the goals of development for durable stability. Progress is limited because the Government of Liberia, UNMIL, the US government and others are delayed with the National Security Strategy. The UN Security Council eases a ban on weapons sales so that Liberia can arm newly trained security forces. An embargo on Liberian timber exports is lifted shortly afterwards. July: The first class of AFL basic training begins. It is a pilot programme of about 110 candidates, mostly selected for their leadership potential in order to fill the leadership ranks first. DynCorp begins the process of purchasing and importing arms into Liberia for the AFL. President Johnson-Sirleaf switches on generator-powered streetlights in the capital, which has been without electricity for 15 years. August: The first major shipment of arms arrives in Monrovia for the AFL. It is the first legal shipment in 15 years. November: The first AFL basic training class graduates. Training of future classes is halted owing to US budget constraints.
2007  September: 630 recruits have graduated from the Initial Entry Training (IET) course. Owing to cost overruns, IET was shortened from eleven weeks to eight weeks by cutting three weeks that were devoted to human rights, civics, and laws of war training. March: 119 civilian MOD employees graduate a 17-week of SSR programme training course. April: The UN Security Council votes to lift its ban on Liberian diamond exports. The ban was imposed in 2001 to stem the flow of ‘blood diamonds,’ which helped fund the civil war. June: The start of Charles Taylor’s war crimes trial at The Hague, where he stands accused of instigating atrocities in Sierra Leone.

2008  January: 485 soldiers graduated from IET.

Surprises
As with any complex peacebuilding mission, few things went as planned. Some of this was due to the difficulty of the task and environment; however, some was due to the unique relationship between DynCorp, the US government, and Liberian government. To be clear, this triffecta produced both positive and negative results, many of which were unexpected.

Irreconcilable Differences
Profit-motive and public policy can be conflicting interests. DynCorp, like most private companies, is naturally profit-seeking and is guided by market forces in the search for more demand for its services. Government institutions, on the other hand, are primarily interested in achieving public goods through public policy. Profit versus policy can be conflicting goals in public-private partnerships, such as the US and DynCorp, where the government utilises private means to achieve public goods. To resolve this, governments can shape companies’ interests and behaviour through market regulation that incentivise the private sector to realise responsible outcomes. However, current regulation and oversight in the US of this multi-billion dollar industry is *diminimus*. With a few notable exceptions, there has yet to be a serious discussion within the US government defining the appropriate spheres of activity for private contractors and government personnel in the security sector, much less effective regulatory oversight and concrete accountability mechanisms. Owing to this, the PMC industry behaves like an unguided missile, seeking profit wherever the market will bear it, even if it means a loss for society as a whole (see Avant, 2005).

Another deleterious side effect of this public-private partnership is the evolving co-dependency between government and the industry based on the asymmetries of information that exist between them. This industry has boomed from a multi-million to a multi-billion dollar market since 9/11, owing to the US government’s need of ‘wartime’ muscle. Unfortunately, the US bureaucracy that governs this industry was unable to grow at a commensurate rate, as the public sector is generally less nimble at growth than the private sector. Consequently, there is a paucity of government administrators to oversee these large companies, and those that exist are generally unqualified, ill-equipped and/or over-tasked. In Liberia for example, DynCorp’s contract overseer was a US Navy officer with absolutely no experience in building armies, especially given his background as a sailor. Nor was he a Certified Public Accountant or fully trained contract officer, skilled in managing a multi-million dollar contract with a large, savvy multinational company. Although his efforts were laudable and tireless, the US government simply did not equip him with the requisite tools he needed to achieve his assignment.

Consequently, there was a substantial knowledge gap between the officer in charge of overseeing the contract and the
company, which DynCorp could exploit for profit. He was largely dependent upon DynCorp’s technical opinions in order to make relevant programmatic decisions on behalf of the US government. The problem was that DynCorp have a vested interest in steering the government towards profitable outcomes rather than good public policy. This might include inflating the need for more staff than is required or purchasing more equipment at the government’s expense. DynCorp, like many government contractors, makes its profit on ‘time and materials,’ meaning that they charge the government a premium for every hour an employee works or for every item (no matter how small) that is purchased. How much a premium they charge largely constitutes the company’s profit margin.

There are other ways that DynCorp had the opportunity to manipulate public outcomes for private gains. For example, DynCorp occupied a unique position during the consultations: impromptu facilitator. Achieving some modicum of consent from myriad stakeholders regarding the SSR programme was vital. Ideally, it would have fallen to the US government to drive this conversation. However, US embassy staffing was thin and over-burdened. As a result, the task of engaging stakeholders unofficially fell to DynCorp. Although DynCorp had no ‘vote’ in the outcome of these informal stakeholder consultations, it occupied the privileged position of agenda setter: identifying and sequencing the issues to be discussed; shaping outcomes by strategically proposing solutions for stakeholders to react to; and the de facto selection of stakeholder leadership by choosing whom to engage and when, regardless of whether their opinions represented the group as a whole. Consequently, the company could partly shape outcomes.

In my earlier experience, programme managers at DynCorp did not deliberately manipulate stakeholder consulta-

tions for a wider profit margin and instead focused solely on achieving the mission as outlined in the US government’s issued Statement of Work. However, this public-private partnership was patently vulnerable to exploitation and warrants concern: the lack of industry oversight combined with the lethal nature of the work could have explosive consequences for Africa.

Principal-Agent Issues

However, not every aspect of this public-private partnership is negative. These companies can act as institutional ‘free-agents’ who are not beholden to entrenched viewpoints, agendas, interests, budget battles or turf-wars. Consequently, they can propose and implement practical solutions without regard to bureaucratic dogma. This is not to suggest that DynCorp was able to act autonomously in Monrovia: it was not. But DynCorp managers did enjoy a modicum of latitude that US government bureaucrats could not, especially along the inter-agency fault lines between DOD and the US Department of State. Moreover, given the ‘whole of government’ nature of SSR, DynCorp could act as a cross-cutting agent throughout the government (see OECD-DAC, 2007).

In fact, DynCorp could even advocate for the raw interests of Liberians in back offices of the Pentagon and State Department in Washington, DC. For example, it became evident during the consultations that Liberians were strong advocates of gender equality in the ranks while the US government was not. Although this SSR programme was managed by the State Department, it would frequently confer with DOD on technical issues regarding the AFL. Certain elements in DOD opposed the idea of women serving in ‘front line’ combat units, such as the infantry, which is the practice of the US army. Acting as a third-party facilitator, DynCorp was, in some ways, an unwitting arbitrator in a debate between the
defence establishment in Washington, DC and the stakeholders in Liberia. As a structural ‘other’ in the process, which was nominally dispassionate on the issue, DynCorp managers could credibly present ideas and recommendations to stakeholders without the burdens of institutional loyalty or prejudice. This helped drive the argument for gender parity, since key managers in DynCorp were persuaded by the Liberians’ case, championing it within the walls of the Washington, DC bureaucracy and effectively giving voice to Liberian interests. Ultimately, DOS opted for gender parity, overturning DOD’s desire to utilise US military templates – such as no women in infantry units – for other nations’ militaries.

Consequently, Liberian women now enjoy greater equality in the ranks than do American women. This remarkable outcome was partly driven by DynCorp’s position as a comparative ‘free agent’ in the US bureaucracy and facilitator in the consultation process. It was also largely driven by individual personalities on the ground rather than any corporate philosophy, demonstrating once more the vulnerability of the process to manipulation, either positive or negative.

Innovative Solutions

Another positive facet of this private-public partnership is innovative thought. As mentioned above, the DOD is often tempted to utilise ill-fitting US templates for foreign militaries, whether they are appropriate or not. US ‘train and equip’ programmes typically overlay US strategy, procedures, doctrine, and other US ‘best practices’ on foreign forces that receive the training. Examples of ‘train and equip’ programmes include: Joint Combined Exchange Training; International Military Education and Training; and Foreign Military Financing. Recently, the US government greatly expanded this capability through ‘1206 funding,’ named for the section of the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act in the 2006 defence budget. This authority allows the DOD, in consultation with the State Department, to spend up to $200 million a year to train and equip the militaries of strategic partners in the US’s global ‘war on terror’.

The problem is that military templates that might work well for the US may not work well for Liberia. Liberia needs a Liberian solution. This requires more than a ‘train and equip’ mentality, which only provides better shooters in newer equipment. These programmes are necessary but insufficient for wholesale SSR, as they fail to address the underlying causes of why security sectors fail: corruption, human rights abuse, incompetent leadership, culture of impunity, lack of ethnic balance, etc.

For instance, during the initial SSR assessment mission to Liberia in May, 2004, the US military proposed a 4,020-person AFL, including a 412-person combat engineer battalion that would conduct tasks such as mine laying, constructing field fortifications, and digging tank traps. However, Liberia is not in danger of a World War Two-style blitzkrieg from Sierra Leone. Instead, its engineer needs are basic infrastructure repair such as roads, bridges and buildings, to ensure the logistical resupply of bases and humanitarian relief. Also, conspicuously absent from the briefing was any plan to transform the Ministry of Defense and build institutional capacity for the AFL. Also absent was a recruiting, vetting and training plan for the AFL. Last, even though this was only a concept briefing based on a quick trip to Liberia, it lacked significant input from indigenous stakeholders or experts in West African security. In fact, the majority of officers who served on the assessment mission had never set foot in Africa before.

These and other problems were addressed a year later by DynCorp – in
partnership with the NTGL and US government – after consultations with stakeholders and non-US experts, a practice not usually employed by DOD in ‘train and equip’ programmes. This led to innovative recommendations and a more tailored force for Liberia. For example, the force was ‘simplified’ greatly. DynCorp opted for a basic motorised infantry brigade that was not dependent on expensive technologies that are difficult to source and maintain in Africa, no ‘elite’ units such as Taylor’s former ‘Special Anti-Terrorist Unit (SATU)’ which could terrorise the population, or high-caliber weaponry such as tanks or artillery that could threaten neighbours. By eschewing the DOD’s penchant to create miniature US-militaries around the world, Liberia enjoys a more sustainable force that is better tailored for the needs of the country.

There were other significant innovations, three of which warrant further analysis. The first is the creation of a rigorous human rights vetting model for AFL candidates to ensure past human rights abusers do not enter the AFL. This is an enormous challenge in a post-conflict environment where credible public records and other instruments of background checks are utterly lacking (McFate, 2007). The second is the institutionalisation of a special ombudsman-like office within the Ministry of Defense to address issues of tribal and gender equality. During Samuel Doe’s reign, the AFL devolved into a sectarian institution dominated by his Krahn tribe, which at times used the military as a tool for ethnic cleansing. It was important to prevent this from happening again.

The third example was placing human rights, ‘laws of war,’ and civics training equal to combat related training, such as shooting. Given the AFL’s troubled past, stakeholders urged that every soldier must understand that knowing when to pull the trigger was as important as hitting what you were aiming at. Accordingly, three of the eleven weeks of Basic Training (also called Initial Entry Training) were devoted to civics training, an unprecedented development in military training in Africa or elsewhere.

Tragically, DynCorp later opted to cut this training, shortening Basic Training to eight weeks, thus saving money. This is a mistake. As Mark Malan recommends in a recent report on Liberia’s SSR:

Congress should insist on more credible measures to ensure that civics and human rights become a central element of the US training program for the AFL (Malan, 2008:xii).

Prelude to Future US Engagement in Africa?

The US-Liberia SSR Programme may prove a good indicator of future US engagement in Africa, especially given the newly established US military Africa Command or AFRICOM. AFRICOM will likely outsource a good portion of its capabilities to PMCs given the complementary interests of supply and demand. AFRICOM has a huge mandate yet will not be given dedicated military units to accomplish its mission. In fact, no new military units will be created for AFRICOM at all, save the headquarters itself currently located at Stuttgart, Germany. Worse, it cannot expect to ‘borrow’ existing units elsewhere because of the huge demand for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. How will it accomplish its mission? By outsourcing it to PMCs.

Which is exactly what PMCs are waiting for. This multi-billion dollar industry is looking for the next US-sponsored conflict market once the Iraq and Afghanistan ‘bubble bursts,’ and they see that market as Africa, a continent of crisis. Thanks to the wars in the Middle East and opportunities like the US-Liberia SSR Programme in Africa, this industry has honed its services in the areas that
AFRICOM most needs: training and equipping; war-zone logistics; humanitarian response; post-conflict reconstruction; infrastructure repair; and SSR. The symmetry of supply and demand between PMCs and AFRICOM are exquisite.

Conclusion

The US-Liberia SSR Programme is an excellent prism into the future of US engagement on the continent, especially vis-à-vis AFRICOM. The complex outcomes that stem from outsourcing core military tasks, such as making militaries, to PMCs augur insights into how AFRICOM might engage Africa. This article briefly charts some of these outcomes, both positive and negative, from an ‘insider’s’ perspective.

However, larger concerns loom on the horizon. The utilisation of PMCs in Africa is more sensitive than in the Middle East given Africa’s lamentable past experiences with colonialism and mercenaries. This will prove a public diplomacy challenge for AFRICOM, which will seek to win ‘hearts and minds’ for the American cause. Moreover, consistent with the rule of ‘unintended consequences,’ the reliance by AFRICOM on PMCs may unwittingly generate a wider market for force on the continent, attracting future PMCs from Russia or elsewhere, in addition to the possibility of African PMCs. Will demand diversify to encompass multinational companies, NGOs, opposition groups, and private individuals? What will happen if market forces demand greater combat-oriented services? Could, for example, an NGO hire a PMC to conduct an armed humanitarian intervention in Darfur to ‘save lives’ in the name of human rights and the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ doctrine? What are the second, third and fourth order repercussions of this action? Could it exacerbate on-the-ground conflict? Draw the US into a war with Sudan? Trigger a UN Chapter 7 intervention? The implications of this on global security governance are terrifying, and few would welcome the development of an industry vested in conflict in Africa. Yet these critical questions remain scarcely examined.

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Endnotes

1. The author was a principal architect of this programme; he does not claim credit for its management.

Bibliography

The Dynamics of Private Security in Senegal
Cyrus O’Brian

The privatisation of security has recently attracted much attention, particularly in light of abuses by private military companies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of this attention sensationalises private security by focusing on private armies unbounded by national boundaries and unencumbered by international law. Recently, however, less dramatic forms of private security such as private guarding, surveillance, alarm systems, and patrolling have become more prevalent worldwide. These more mundane forms of private security are central to the daily operations of many societies.

The expansion of private security in the developing world is nearly always attributed to high levels of insecurity and general instability. Senegal, by contrast, is relatively safe and stable, but nevertheless has a rapidly expanding private security sector. The country is home to more than 150 private security companies that employ between 25,000 and 35,000 people, making Senegal’s private security sector relatively larger per capita than those of more violent countries like Nigeria and Kenya. The vast majority of these companies operate in the informal sector where they avoid taxation and governmental regulation, and like in many other countries, working conditions in the sector are poor. Unlike many other countries, however, Senegal has made significant and successful efforts to prevent international security companies like Group4Securicor from gaining a foothold.

This briefing is based on research conducted on behalf of the gun control organisation Le Mouvement Contre les Armes Légères en Afrique de l’Ouest (MALAO) in Senegal in the spring of 2007. It describes the private security sector, concentrating particularly on Dakar, where international businesses and international organisations (IOs) provide the largest sources of demand for private security. It includes an examination of the economic and political circumstances that have enabled the growth of private security and a discussion of the relationship between private security companies, the government, and business.

The Growth of Private Security Amidst Stability & Peace

In the worldwide proliferation of private security companies (PSCs), Senegal represents a unique case: the private security sector is growing despite political stability and a low crime rate. Previous briefings in this journal have attributed the growth of private security in other countries to ‘high crime rates, combined with the inability of the public security services to provide adequate protection’ (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2005). Indeed, general insecurity has been a key factor driving the sector’s growth in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Nicaragua, and Guatemala (Ibid; Lilly & von Tangen Page, 2002). The situation in Senegal demonstrates that the expansion of private security is not limited to countries where instability and insecurity prevail.

Senegal has the reputation of being West Africa’s most stable country. Since its independence from France in 1960, it has maintained a democratic system of government and regularly holds relatively fair elections. The Senegalese armed forces are firmly under civilian control and have never intervened in politics, making Senegal one of the few African countries to avoid a coup d’état since independence from colonial rule. The Casamance, a breakaway southern province separated from Senegal proper by the Gambia, is the only major source of instability in the country. However, since 2000 the situation has calmed, resulting
in only occasional violence. Violence has been confined to the Casamance, leaving the majority of Senegal free from political strife.

This climate of political stability has enabled Senegal to maintain a remarkably low crime rate. Winslow (2008), relying on data from Interpol, reported the total crime rate to be 64.29 crimes for every 100,000 people, compared with 1,709.88 for Japan and 5,955.05 for the United Kingdom. The same study showed Senegal’s murder rate to be 0.33 per 100,000 people, or roughly one fifth that of the UK. Although the general crime statistic is surely underreported, the given murder rate is roughly accurate; because murders are rare in Senegal, the press thoroughly reports them. Though not completely reliable, these figures show that Senegal is not a country plagued by crime.

With little else to offer – peanuts are the biggest contributor to the GDP – Senegal markets its stability and peace to attract foreign businesses and organisations. Dakar, the capital, hosts the West African headquarters for many international non-governmental organisations, research institutions, and IOs. Particularly since the war in Ivory Coast, business and organisations have flocked to Senegal. In January of this year, Dubai World paid US$800 million for the rights to administer a free trade zone within Senegal, joining the flow of businesses that see Senegal as a ‘gateway’ into the region (Flynn, 2008).

It is primarily the presence of these businesses and organisations that generates demand for PSCs. Because demand is almost entirely fuelled by foreigners and expatriates, private guards are an almost entirely urban phenomenon. International mining activities, heavily guarded despite their rural location, are the exception. Throughout Dakar, private guards stand in front of nearly every sizable business or organisation guarding everything from banks to bookstores to offices and schools. Nearly every location an expatriate might visit is under private guard. Foreign businesses and organisations contract PSCs to provide security not only for the businesses themselves, but also for the homes of their employees. Paradoxically, then, peace, stability, and a low crime rate fuel the growth of the private security sector because they attract international businesses and organisations.

The police are widely viewed as inept and corrupt, prompting the wealthy to turn to the private sector for security. The majority of the population, however, continues to rely on traditional methods for security. Typical neighbourhoods are some of the safest places in the country, as residents keep a watchful eye on suspicious persons and come quickly to each other’s aid. While usually advantageous, at times such security networks become vigilante groups and occasionally escalate a situation. While statistics are hard to obtain, evidence suggests that vigilante groups account for most of Senegal’s (low) murder rate; upon identifying a thief or criminal, mobs may beat the suspect to death. On the whole, however, traditional security methods help to preserve overall security, making most of Senegal’s villages, neighbourhoods, and towns safe.

**Inequality, Exploitation & Unions**

The private security sector in Senegal mushroomed in the aftermath of the 1994 economic reforms promoted by the IMF and World Bank. Although the first private security companies were founded in the late 1980s, they did not become prevalent until the economic reforms resulted in greater levels of inequality. There are currently over 150 private security companies in Senegal, all but a few created since 1994. The sector’s rapid rate of expansion makes it difficult to estimate the exact number, as new PSCs are formed with incredible frequency.
The 1994 neo-liberal reforms involved the lifting of subsidies and price controls, a steady deregulation of the economy, and a 50% devaluation of the currency. The reforms positively affected Senegal’s macroeconomic outlook; inflation was brought under control, government finances were balanced, and the economy turned around. After contracting in the early 1990s, Senegal’s economy has steadily grown at an annual rate of around 5%.

The economic gains of the 1990s were not distributed across the Senegalese economy. Living conditions for most of the population declined as prices for food and other basic goods were deregulated. The number of street peddlers exploded at this time, as unemployment forced large numbers of people into the informal economy. Today, nearly a quarter of the population survives on less than $1 a day, and more than three-fifths on less than $2 each day. Thus, despite the economic influxes caused by the arrival of international business, intense poverty and inequality are on the rise, and may potentially destabilise the prevailing security environment. As one director of a PSC remarked, the private security sector depends ‘not on a lack of security, but instead on a lack of wealth’.

With nearly half of the workforce unemployed, private guards face a strikingly soft labour market. A typical guard is paid between US$70 and $120 each month, while the most professional companies pay their employees up to $180. In some cases, guards are given monthly transport stipends, but these almost never meet actual costs. Guards work exceedingly long hours and face very high exploitation, taking home only 35-50% of what clients pay for their services.

In my research, I found not one private security company in Senegal that did not violate national regulations in some way. The most common abuses were paying below the minimum wage, demanding that guards work for unreasonable hours, and employing guards on temporary contracts. Senegalese labour codes stipulate that after one temporary six-month contract, employers must hire a worker permanently or dismiss the employee. Even the most professionalised and the highest paying PSCs in Senegal violate this provision in the work code.

There are no strong unions of security guards, although many guards express a desire for one. Many guards are reluctant to establish a union because they fear being laid off when their six-month contract expires. The lack of permanent contracts in the sector increases the vulnerability of guards and prevents them from taking strong positions relating to working conditions.

Cooperation Between PSCs & the Government

Most PSCs are managed or owned by former police and military officials. In some cases, officers will found private security companies while still holding public office, usually passing the day-to-day management responsibilities to a family member. Tightening the relationship between the state security forces and private sector, nearly all security guards in Senegal have completed military service and, for most companies, military or police service is an explicit prerequisite to employment.

One-third of Senegal’s military is comprised of conscripts, each of whom serves two years without the possibility of extension. Although conscription exists, it is not enforced against one’s will. The droves of unemployed find such relatively well-paying vacancies in the military desirable, and the positions are easily filled. After serving two years, conscripts are released from the army and many find jobs in the private security sector. Many guards lament their discharge from the state security forces and some eventually find more lucrative
employment with the police or gendarmerie.

Despite the overlap in personnel, there is little overt cooperation between PSCs and state security forces. Police and private security guards hold positive views of each other but, in contrast to the situation in many countries, the police do not rely on the private sector. The government of Senegal has no contracts with PSCs and all state security functions remain under the purview of the army and police. Public-private partnerships, such as water treatment plants, La Poste, and Senelec (the national electric company), are exceptions and hire PSCs to guard their facilities.

Two private military companies, Northrop Grumman Technical Services (NGTS) and Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), train the Senegalese armed forces as part of the US State Department’s African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) programme. The ACOTA programme, created after the US debacle in Somalia, seeks to train and equip African militaries to conduct peacekeeping missions, thereby minimising the responsibilities of the West. The US Government supplies Senegal with the bulk of its military equipment and hires NGTS and MPRI teams to conduct eight two-month training programmes, focusing primarily on peacekeeping tactics. Senegalese soldiers trained under ACOTA have served as peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Darfur.

In addition to ACOTA, Senegal is a partner in the so-called ‘war on terror’ and currently receives aid through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, a counter-terrorism effort to track activity from the Atlantic Ocean to Chad. The role of private military companies in this programme is unclear.

Regulation & Corruption

The most significant problems facing the private security sector in Senegal result from their poor regulation. More than 80% of PSCs are not registered with the government, do not pay taxes, and operate completely in the informal sector. In 2003, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade issued a decree mandating that all PSCs be owned and operated by Senegalese citizens or companies. At the time, Senegal’s largest private security company, the American owned Sagam Sécurité, was forced to sell. This decree has kept the private security sector entirely in domestic hands and prevented multinationals like Group4Securicor from making inroads in Senegal.

Only registered PSCs are permitted to have armed guards. Despite this requirement, some guards in the informal sector are armed. Senegal has largely succeeded in keeping guns out of the country, but steadily grants around 120 licenses each year (Agboton-Johnson et al. 2004). Private security companies win a sizable majority of these licenses, although as licenses are awarded to individuals and their affiliations are not listed, no exact figures are available. Personal ties are important, as companies that have the strongest ties to the state security system or to the state bureaucracy are more likely to win licenses. That said, this research found no evidence of corruption in the form of bribes at the governmental level.

In the private sector, however, corruption is rampant. In order to be paid the amount stipulated by the contract, the manager of a PSC must frequently bribe the contracting company. Only after a bribe of $50-100, is the contracting company likely to pay the PSC. This form of corruption is worst in public-private companies, particularly La Poste.
In 2000, the computer system that the Ministry of the Interior used to track gun licenses failed, evidently one of the few victims of the computer virus Y2K. Since then, licenses have been recorded in piecemeal fashion, and the system is largely disorganised. Every year, the Ministry of the Interior sends the possessor of a gun license a notification of the tax that is owed for each firearm. Several PSC managers reported that the lists from the government omit many of their guns, in some cases up to half of the firearms they actually own. In effect, the government has lost track of many of the arms it has licensed. The absence of state control or records of arms is a dangerous contributor to the growth of private security companies.

The growth of private security in Senegal has been remarkably uncontroversial and has faced little criticism in the press. The majority of the population views private security as the domain of international business and as a form of employment in a struggling economy. The government should be commended for its 2003 efforts to bring the private security sector into domestic hands and under the purview of the Ministry of the Interior. Despite such efforts, however, the private security sector remains largely unregulated.

Private security is likely to play an even more prominent role as increasing economic inequality makes the political situation more volatile. Additionally, the influx of people and arms from Senegal’s war-torn neighbours threatens an already fragile stability. Dakar’s riots in November 2007 are a reminder of how quickly a situation can deteriorate. Nevertheless, Senegal’s stability will likely continue to attract international businesses and international organisations, and the government’s adoption of neoliberalism makes it unlikely that economic inequalities will subside. These conditions virtually guarantee the continued growth of the private security sector, which already rivals or exceeds the state security forces in terms of number of personnel. The size and projected growth of private security, and its corresponding rise in influence, mandate a continuing re-evaluation of the role and scope of private security in Senegal and throughout Africa.

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Bibliography
Prison Privatisation in the African Context
Andrew Coyle

The use of prison as a direct punishment of the court is a relatively modern phenomenon. It began in the 17th and 18th century, principally in Western Europe and North America, and over the succeeding centuries its use has spread to virtually every country in the world. In Africa prior to colonial times there was no indigenous concept of imprisonment as a form of punishment. The idea of taking substantial numbers of predominantly young men, who would otherwise be economically and socially active, locking them behind high walls and making them and their dependants a burden on the rest of society made no economic or cultural sense. As elsewhere in the world the first prisons were built as a tool for the colonial powers to subdue the local populace. Today one can still visit some African towns and see prisons which reflect their French colonial past, while in a number of countries in West and East Africa many prisons are built on a common British model. One suspects that the original construction plan might still be found somewhere in the Public Records Office in Kew near London.

The rate of imprisonment in any country is usually quoted per 100,000 of the total population. On that basis, the average rate of imprisonment around the world is about 140. Rates vary dramatically from country to country. The United States, with about 23% of all the world’s prisoners, has a rate of 751, while India has a rate of 32 (ICPS, 2008). This is not the place to enter into an analysis of what leads to such variations; suffice to say that there is little evidence that they can be explained by differing rates of crime but are more likely to be explained by a variety of economic, cultural and social factors.

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Imprisonment rates within the African continent also vary widely. The Republic of the Congo has the lowest rate of imprisonment in the world, with 22 prisoners per 100,000 of its population, closely followed by Burkina Faso with 23. The median rate for West African countries is 37, while that in southern Africa is 267, with South Africa having the highest rate at 348.

Prisons which are properly constructed and humanely managed are very expensive on the public purse and conditions in many developed countries have been severely criticised by independent bodies such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and Human Rights Watch. In a number of countries in Africa conditions for those held there can only be described as inhuman and degrading. On 5 March 2005 the East African Standard newspaper reported on conditions in one prison in Kenya:

[The prison], built in 1962 to hold about 350 prisoners, is congested with more than 1,450. The jail is a hallmark of neglect and abuse. Child offenders mingle with suspected murderers, violent robbers and rapists. Hardcore convicted criminals share halls with remandees accused of misconduct. In the women’s section, infants accompanying their mothers sleep in the same cells with mentally unsound murder suspects.

At one corner in the sickbay, a patient, deeply asleep, snores loudly beside a plastic bucket full of human waste. Another prisoner sits beside the bucket, his eyes wide open as if in a trance. Patients say they use the bucket at night and empty it in the morning for use during the day. The room is crawling with vermin.

In Ward Four, John Ndichu and 235 others spend most of the day and night squatting. This is because if they sit, they would have to stretch their legs and there is no space for that.1
In 2006 the Vice-President of Kenya announced plans to free 15,000 prisoners by the end of July, noting that prisons built to hold a total of 16,000 people were then holding 48,000 inmates countrywide. ‘Most of the prison facilities date back to colonial times, when Kenya’s population was less than 10 million (it is now over 30 million),’ he said adding that the congestion was now posing a health hazard to inmates. This story could be repeated many times in other African countries. Governments recognise the need to improve prison conditions but simply lack the resources to improve them.

**Prison Privatisation**

It is generally accepted that, even in an age of reducing government direct delivery of services and increasing private control of services which are essential for the common good, there are some responsibilities which the state cannot delegate and which it must carry out itself. An example would be defence of the nation from external enemies. All armed services remain under the direct control of the government in democratic countries and private or mercenary armies are not permitted, although as shown in several articles in this Special Issue, private military companies are increasingly integrated into and support national militaries in various ways. The judiciary is another example where private enterprise is eschewed. Protection of the public has become a slightly greyer area in recent years. Private security firms now abound and in some countries outnumber the police but the core responsibility for public order and for investigation of crime still lies with state officials.

Until thirty or so years ago the task of depriving citizens of their liberty was another function which was regarded as a state monopoly for similar reasons. Individual freedom was so sacred that only the state could take it away after due process and only the state could administer the punishment passed by its own courts. That is a position which is still maintained in the majority of democratic countries, but not in all.

The modern phenomenon of prison privatisation can be traced back to 1979 when the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service began contracting commercial companies to detain illegal immigrants who were awaiting deportation hearings (Wood, 2003). By the mid-1980s the number of people in prison in the US was increasing to such an extent that a number of states turned to these private detention companies to provide quick build prisons and detention centres. An added advantage for the state jurisdictions was that the resultant costs could be recorded against revenue or operating budgets rather than as capital costs.

In the course of the following decade governments entered into contracts for private prisons in a number of other countries, including the UK, Australia and New Zealand. This came to be seen increasingly as a lucrative business with the small number of companies involved each chasing its share of ‘the market’. In 2004 one of the companies described the UK as ‘the second largest private correctional market in the world’ (GEO Group, 2004).

In respect of prisons the term ‘privatisation’ covers a wide spectrum. This starts with marginal areas such as issuing commercial contracts for the prison shops or canteens, where prisoners are able to purchase items for personal use. The next stage in privatisation is that in which specific services, such as drug treatment or other programmes for prisoners, are delivered by commercial companies or not-for-profit organisations. Moving along the spectrum, in some cases contracts are issued for the central services within the prison; these can include catering, health care, education...
and work for prisoners. The most advanced example of this is in France where a number of prisons are run under a system of dual management, with prison service personnel carrying out what are described as the public service duties (supervision, rehabilitation, registration and management) and commercial companies being responsible for all other functions (maintenance, transportation, accommodation, food service, work and vocational training).

A further phase of privatisation is that in which the entire operation of a prison is contracted to a commercial company or a not-for-profit organisation. In this case the state builds and continues to own the prison buildings and enters into a contract with a company for the management of the prison. Thereafter the state takes no part in the daily management. A number of the earliest examples of prison privatisation in England and Australia followed this model. The ultimate stage of privatisation, so far, is that in which a commercial company takes a prison from drawing board to final operation. This includes its design, construction, financing and management. This is the model now generally followed in the UK and, as we shall see, in South Africa. The mechanism for implementing the private construction and management of new prisons, as with other public institutions, has been the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) or Public Private Partnership (PPP).

Technically, none of these models should be described as privatisation. The legal responsibility for the prisoners who are held in them remains with the state, which contracts out their daily management to the differing degrees described above. Full privatisation would exist only if the state handed over complete responsibility for the citizens sentenced to prison to a commercial company. However, as far as the prisoner in the prison which is managed by a commercial company is concerned, this is a semantic distinction. For all practical purposes, such a prisoner is in the hands of a commercial company. The best of these companies may well set out to treat the prisoners under their control in a decent and humane manner. A few of them succeed better than their counterparts in the public sector. Despite this there is no escaping the fact that the final responsibility of these companies is to their shareholders; they must deliver a profit or they will cease to trade. This is the ultimate difference between a private prison and a public one.

Prison Privatisation in Africa

In 1993 the prison population in South Africa stood at 111,000. By 2002, it had risen to 182,000. At the end of January 2008 it had fallen back to 166,000, while the system had beds for 114,500. The rise in numbers in the decade after 1993 placed intolerable strain on the system and there was international criticism not only of levels of overcrowding but also of corruption and violence inside the prisons. In an attempt to deal with these problems the government turned to prison privatisation.

The issue of prison privatisation in South Africa was discussed at a seminar in Cape Town in 2003 (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003). The introduction to the report of the conference refers to findings by Professor Julia Sloth Nielsen that,

the privatisation of state assets was explicitly part of the government’s overall economic programme in the period following 1996, and indeed remains part of government’s chosen strategy. Correctional Services decided to explore the possibility of privatisation as part of a new prisons building programme, one key aim of which was to address overcrowding, inter-alia through the more rapid construction of new facilities.
One of the speakers at the conference, Stephen Nathan, placed this in a wider context when he said,

*The backdrop to prison privatisation is the economic restructuring – including privatisation of state assets and services – being imposed on countries by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.*

At the time of writing South Africa is the only country in Africa which has private prisons. The government initially planned to tender for four private prisons but in the end restricted itself to two tenders for financial reasons. Mangaung Prison, with 3,024 places and now operated by GSL, was opened at Bloemfontein in July 2001 and Kutama-Sinthumule Prison, with 2,928 places and operated by the South African Custodial Services, a subsidiary of the GEO Group, opened in Louis Trichardt in 2002. These are the two largest private prisons in the world. The GEO Group describes itself as a world leader in privatised correctional and detention management, with operations also in the US and the UK.

According to Prison Privatisation Report International (2003), these two prisons have proved to be extremely costly to the Department of Corrections. As early as 2002 the government set up a task force to investigate the prisons’ financing, costs, outputs and risk allocation; to establish a comparison with public sector prisons; and to identify features for renegotiation to address the department of correctional services’ affordability restraints. In November 2002 the task force reported that returns on the company’s investments in Mangaung prison could be as high as 29.9% while returns on Kutama-Sinthumule were as high as 25%. Construction and operating fees at Bloemfontein had increased from R154.41 per prisoner per day at the outset to R215.70, while at Louis Trichardt costs had increased from R139.31 to R160.36. The task force recommended that the contracts for the two prisons should be renegotiated. This proved to be impossible.

The contracts provide for both capital repayments and daily per prisoner costs, adjusted annually for inflation, but based on what have been described as exceedingly unrealistic ‘input specifications’, including a limit of two prisoners per cell and extensive educational and vocational training requirements, to levels which are not available in any publicly managed prison. It has been reported that the two prisons will over the next three years consume between 5.1 and 5.4% of the total Correctional Services Budget (R642.235 million in 2008/9), for facilities housing around 3% of the prison population (Sloth-Nielsen, 2006).

A senior adviser in the South African Treasury is reported to have commented, ‘We ordered a Rolls Royce but we should have ordered a Toyota’ (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003).

In his Budget Vote speech in late 2007 the Corrections Minister announced his intention to invite tenders for the construction of five new prisons on a public-private partnership model ‘once national treasury agrees to cover the project management costs.’ It is by no means clear that the Treasury will give its agreement to this.

The problems faced by a country such as South Africa are compounded if one looks at the situation of its impoverished neighbour, Lesotho. In 2001 the prison population of Lesotho was less than 3,000. The government acknowledged that the conditions in its prisons were appalling and had to be improved yet it lacked the resources to realise its ambition. Enter Group 4 Corrections Services SA (Pty) Ltd. with a solution which was completely alien to the traditions of the country. It offered to build a prison with 3,500 places which would be of a high
physical standard. The price to be paid was that all the prisoners in the country would be located in this single mega prison, very far from their homes and in an environment which would be completely at odds with the culture of the country. Group 4 apparently developed its proposal at the request of the Lesotho Department of Justice, Human Rights and Rehabilitation. Later the Minister who had invited Group 4 to develop its proposal was replaced and the government decided not to pursue the proposal. In May 2008 Group4Securicor, the successor company to Group 4 and the largest private security company in the world, announced that it had taken over GLS, the contractor for Mangaung Prison, thus making it a player in private prisons in South Africa. This amalgamation reinforced the increasing tendency to reduce the extent of competition among the companies involved in this field.

Conclusion

In the UK there is increasing concern about the long term financial costs of private prisons. In addition, the respected independent Chief Inspector of Prisons has issued extremely critical reports on the operation of several of these prisons. In 2001 the National Audit Office published a generally positive report on PFI prisons (National Audit Office, 2001). However, a further report in 2003 (National Audit Office, 2003) was much more cautious and concluded that the use of private prisons ‘is neither a guarantee of success nor the cause of inevitable failure’.

The situation in South Africa is much more problematic, not least because of questions about the competence of the entire system. For example, in 2001 President Thabo Mbeki appointed a Commission of Inquiry to investigate and report on corruption, maladministration, violence, and intimidation in the Department of Correctional Services. The Commission handed its final report to President Mbeki on 15 December 2005, but it took nearly a year and last minute pressure from the Correctional Services Portfolio Committee Chairperson and Judge Jali, the Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry, before the Minister of Correctional Services released the full report to the public in November 2006.3 The report of the Jali Commission makes very uncomfortable reading for the Department of Corrections and the Government of South Africa. Of the Commission’s seven focus areas, none were found to have been immune to corruption and in all nine management areas that were investigated, evidence of corruption, maladministration, and the violation of prisoners’ rights were found. In such an overarching climate one would have to be very cautious about the expansion of commercially managed privatisation.

South Africa is a case study in the way that prison privatisation may well proceed in the coming years. Faced with the reality that profit margins in the developed world are likely to be restricted in future and the fact that returns on investment have to be balanced against greater levels of public scrutiny and potential for embarrassment, the small number of companies involved in the business of prison privatisation are beginning to turn their attention to developing countries. Many of these countries are faced with rising prison populations and with terrible prison conditions. Governments are under increasing pressure to improve the conditions of their prisons, while knowing that they have no resources to do so. These are fertile grounds for private prison companies, who can come into a country, promising to relieve the government of unbearable commitments to capital funding in exchange for a revenue commitment which is attractive in the short term but which will have crippling implications in the longer term. This often suits the wishes of politicians who have short term agendas rather than long term ones. A further attraction for private prison companies is that in
such countries it will often be possible to prepare a contract which meets the needs of the private contractor much better than those of the contracting state in both financial and operational terms. In many developing countries there is a real problem with corruption in the public and private services at an institutional and at an individual level. When prisons are operated on a for-profit basis the danger of this happening is likely to be considerably increased. In addition, the strict monitoring arrangements which exist in some developed countries will be absent, leaving the contracting company free to interpret the conditions of the contract to its own advantage.

There is a more fundamental issue which exists in developed as well as in developing countries. It is that the real issue is not about whether private prisons are cheaper than public ones, nor whether they are managed more effectively and efficiently. The fundamental change which has come about with the introduction of privatisation is the concept of prison as a ‘market-place’ and a business which will inevitably expand. Private prisons have been introduced as a short term response by governments to rising prison populations, to shortage of prison places and to limited public funding to maintain existing prisons and to build new ones. As a result, the financial and social costs of an increasing use of imprisonment have not been subject to public scrutiny. Many of the costs of increased imprisonment are hidden in the short term. In fiscal terms, high capital expenditure can be converted into long term revenue expenditure, which reduces current financial costs term while increasing future costs to the public purse. In social terms, governments have not encouraged public debate about why so many additional prison places are needed, being content to argue that they will provide as many places as are necessary to protect the public. This is an even more dangerous phenomenon in developing countries than it is in developed ones.

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Endnotes

Bibliography
The Nigerian Feminist Movement: Lessons from Women in Nigeria, WIN*

Bene E. Madunagu

In Nigeria, as in other societies, there is, and there has always been a women’s movement or more correctly women’s movements. These existed before, during and after colonialism. Many of these may probably not fit into the conventional definition of a movement. Various forms of interest groups see themselves as movements. I admit that all of these do serve interests that in many ways attempt at addressing inequalities between women and men in society. While this is an acceptable criterion of minimising disagreements in the characterisation of women-based organisations, the reality is that there are still substantial differences in the forms of movements that call themselves ‘women’s movements’. Some ‘movements’ may or may not have clear objectives, mission or vision but exist as ad hoc bodies, useful when the need arises but with little or no coordination, continuity or sustainability. Some may just be limited to specific local struggles.

In Nigeria, the oldest and largest women’s movement can be said to be the National Council of Women’s Societies (NCWS) founded in 1958. Basu’s (1995) definition clearly suits the NCWS.

The Nigerian women’s movement is an unarmed movement. It is non-confrontational. It is a movement for the progressive upliftment of women for motherhood, nationhood and development.

This movement is ‘at home’ with the protection of our culture and tradition as well as with the supremacy of men. It will not rock the boat. It essentially accepts what the tradition has been and what religion sanctions.

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There are sectors of this movement that are more radical than the status-quo and that would raise the struggle to a higher level but are still afraid of what the men would say or do. There are gender activists who would rather not be associated with feminism, publicly or privately. Again there are women ‘activists’ in the larger women’s movement who call themselves feminists when they are in the midst of feminists but will quickly condemn ‘those crazy people’, a reference to those who publicly admit and declare that they are feminists. There are yet those who are feminists, ‘but’; these are women who want to be seen truly as feminists but become uncomfortable with discussions on such questions as the totality of who a feminist is and the extent of feminism in terms of core values, principles and praxis. They are satisfied with declaration and participation in meetings and conferences where the term feminism gets mentioned, but are generally silent when issues of sexual rights are discussed. For them, feminism has limits. They are, for instance, totally homophobic.

Feminism in Nigeria

There is no denying the fact that some forms of feminist struggles existed in Nigeria before what was clearly acclaimed and identified openly as a feminist movement: Women in Nigeria (WIN). However such struggles were largely undocumented. I make bold to state that feminism in Nigeria in its present form – consistent, organised, with clear objectives and ideology – came into being with the inauguration, in 1983, of the organisation Women in Nigeria (WIN) following the 1982 national conference on the same theme. WIN was a direct outcome of the conference, envisioned as a feminist movement and named as such.

During its first ten years WIN facilitated the development of many of the self-
identified feminists in Nigeria today. WIN started off with a clearly stated rights-based approach to issues about women in Nigeria and was very clear on the issues of gender and social justice. However, the open policy of WIN of ‘come one – come all’, where anyone, male or female, was accepted as long as such a person accepted the provisions of our Constitution, carried a danger of WIN including persons who have contempt for feminism but come into WIN with their own agenda. There was no punishment for anyone who played no active role as long as such a person showed up once in a while at meetings. In spite of the inherent weaknesses in the nature of membership criteria for WIN, one must always pay tribute to WIN as a training ground for the emergence of organised feminist struggles in Nigeria. WIN’s open policy of membership led to the entry of many persons who had no clue about feminism and gender justice and its core values and principles. Many enthusiastic members equated feminist struggles to abstract class struggle, with total disdain for gender issues. Internal conflicts generated by ignorance and opportunism as well as male chauvinistic understanding of social struggles as not including gender equality and equity as key components of social justice became a cankerworm that progressively weakened WIN as a movement for social transformation – a core focus of feminist struggles.

**The Uniqueness & Contribution of WIN to the Nigerian Feminist Movement**

From the onset, WIN engaged in research, policy advocacy and activism aimed at transforming the conditions under which women and other underprivileged classes in Nigeria lived. WIN’s further uniqueness was its consciousness of both class and gender in the struggle for the emancipation of women. WIN acknowledged that, although the majority of women suffered from the exploitative and oppressive character of the Nigerian society, women suffer additional forms of exploitation and oppression – as women. Thus WIN recognised the double forms of exploitation and oppression of women as members of the subordinate class and as women. WIN set out to struggle against both class and gender oppression through promoting the study of conditions of women, disseminating the outcome for policy formulation, defending the rights of women and taking actions to transform the conditions of women.

**WIN’s Strategies**

WIN started off with the strategy of research, analysis and documentation of conditions of women in various situations in the society. The outcome of this strategy provided the much needed data for advocacy and mobilisation of women to demand their rights. This strategy also led to the practice of holding annual conferences as a means of public education and the creation of awareness, using research data and gender analysis as convincing tool for demanding for women’s rights. We may also mention the adoption of a clear Constitution that emerged from the involvement and participation of all members, the establishment of WIN as an institution with basic feminist principles and values, the emergence of well-defined organisational structures of leadership and representation at national and in the state branches, and clearly defined roles, responsibilities and obligations.

During these first ten years, WIN never received subvention from government and so was able to maintain its independence. It could therefore take actions without compromising since, as the saying goes, ‘the person that pays the piper dictates the tune’.
WIN’s Publications

As stated earlier, one of the strengths of WIN’s strategies, was documentation of research and analysis from a gender perspective. A research theme was chosen each year by consensus and the outcome was published. The first major publication of WIN was the book, *Women In Nigeria Today* (Zed Books, 1985) that came out of the conference that gave birth to WIN. This inaugural publication was followed by:

- *Women and education* (edited proceedings of the 3rd annual WIN conference) (1992);
- *Child abuse* (1992);
- *Women in Nigeria – The first ten years* (1993);
- *Women in the transition to democracy in Nigerian politics* (edited proceedings of the 8th annual WIN conference held in Kano (1989);
- *Women and violence: Breaking The Silence: Women Against Violence* (edited proceedings of the 10th anniversary WIN conference, 1993);

These publications became invaluable in the understanding of gender issues in Nigeria. There is no way a collection of persons from different backgrounds, cultures and different experiences could be in serious actions together without conflicts. This would have been unnatural.

However, WIN had its in-house policy of conflict resolution, and the principles on which the feminists worked helped in the process of constructive criticism a healthy practice for movement building. WIN succeeded as a training ground for many Nigerian feminists who are still committed in many ways to feminist struggles.

Beyond WIN

A lot has happened since the transformation of WIN from its initial focus and content to the present period when in almost every feminist gathering, questions arise that raise doubts. The Nigerian feminist movement has a forum – Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) – which is larger and more coherent than WIN.

The NFF was launched in January 2008 after an incubation period that started with the launching of the African Feminist Forum (AFF) in Accra, Ghana in 2006. As a chapter of the African Feminist Forum, the Nigerian Feminist Forum is bound by the values and principles of the AFF. The NFF has effectively replaced WIN as the Nigerian Feminist Movement, and it has gone beyond the historical stage of isolated country movements to become part of the continental (Pan African) feminist movement. AFF documents clearly state the content, context, values and principles of the present vibrant Nigerian feminist movement. Let me quickly point out that we in the NFF know that there are many self-identified Nigerian feminists within Nigeria and in the diaspora who are yet to be part of the NFF, which is still very young. Hence NFF is not a closed club nor is it a ‘come one, come all’ club. We have learned from the past. There are clear guidelines and conditions for becoming a part of the NFF. The secretariat of both the AFF and the NFF are ever ready to furnish potential, interested feminists who wish to be members with information on how to do join.

The information is contained in the Charter of the Feminist Principles for African Feminists clearly states how African and Nigerian feminists alike define themselves, the understanding Feminism and Patriarchy, our identity as African and Nigerian feminists, our ethics as individual and institutional African and Nigerian feminists, and our understanding of feminist leadership. The charter of the feminist principles of the AFF is binding on all the country level feminist forums including Nigerian Feminist Forum.
From WIN to NFF

WIN’s lessons and experiences for the NFF as a new formation include the need for the adoption of basic principles of organisation and action. There is also the need to agree on responsibilities as well as structures for coordination and leadership to ensure organised actions and sustainability. This is already being practised in the NFF with a central organising committee serviced by a joint secretariat of two feminist organisations, both located in Lagos.

Two recent events have tested the strength of NFF. One was the rallying of Nigerian feminists and many other progressive sectors of Nigerian society to put an end to attempts by a private university to force virginity and HIV testing on Nigerian girls entering the institution. Another was the mobilisation against a state attempt to ban the use of condoms. Nigerian feminists along with various institutions caused the state to annul the policy, thereby putting an end to the matter. The most recent had to do with a proposed federal bill, introduced by the female chairperson of the Nigerian Senate Committee for Women and Youths, to institutionalise a dress-code for women. The NFF, together with several women organisations, put an end to the proposed bill through several press conferences and the weight of Nigerian women’s mobilisation to fill the hall where the public hearings on the bill took place. There are many other situations that show the resurgence and revitalisation of feminist activism in Nigeria.

We celebrate these victories. It is gratifying that this can happen in present primitive neo-colonial Nigeria (and Africa), where laws are imposed by the imperialist ‘International Community’; our leaders have kept us in the backyard of that global community to serve as the dustbins or refuse dump for what does not work or what is dangerous to the community of the G8 countries. Our leaders are prepared to sign imperialist conditionalities drafted by the ailing IMF and the World Bank. These conditionalities for unequal trade agreements and perpetual indebtedness of the developing or retrogressing world where we are located, create and deepen poverty with women bearing the greatest burden imposed by culture and tradition and reinforced by the new forms of imperialist-driven religious evangelism. To worsen this already bad situation from present-day globalisation policies of re-colonisation of Africa (in particular, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, etc.), the United States and the rest of the West have come with poverty alleviation strategies and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to divert our attention from the cruel poverty imposed by their policies and the excruciating challenges women in particular face from the new importation of imperialist style of democracy. Hence, if in spite of these burdens, feminists, the larger women’s movement, and our allies have been able to challenge effectively these offshoots of imperialist-directed democracy in our country, we have cause to celebrate – with our eyes open, of course, to see when they try other gimmicks.

This is the present state of the Nigerian feminist movement and its relationship with the larger Nigerian Feminist Movement, an offshoot of the Pan-African Feminist Movement (AFF).

I FORESEE A SUSTAINED ACTIVE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA THAT WILL PLAY A STRONG ROLE IN THE AFRICAN FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND IN THE GLOBAL FEMINIST MOVEMENT AS A FORCE TO BE RECOGNISED AND RESPECTED.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!!
APPENDIX: Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists

The African Feminist Forum took place from 15-19 November 2006 in Accra, Ghana. The meeting brought together over 100 feminist activists from all over the region and the diaspora. The space was crafted as an autonomous space in which African feminists from all walks of life, at different levels of engagement within the feminist movement such as mobilizing at local levels for women’s empowerment to academia, could reflect on a collective basis and chart ways to strengthen and grow the feminist movement on the continent.

A key outcome of the forum was the adoption of the Charter of Feminist Principles, which was agreed by the Regional Working group for the Forum, to be one of its principle aims. It was felt that we need something to help us define and affirm our commitment to feminist principles, which will guide our analysis, and practice. As such the Charter sets out the collective values that we hold as key to our work and to our lives as African feminists. It charts the change we wish to see in our communities, and also how this change is to be achieved. In addition it spells out our individual and collective responsibilities to the movement and to one another within the movement.

With this Charter, we reaffirm our commitment to dismantling patriarchy in all its manifestations in Africa. We remind ourselves of our duty to defend and respect the rights of all women, without qualification. We commit to protecting the legacy of our feminist ancestors who made numerous sacrifices, in order that we can exercise greater autonomy.

PREAMBLE: NAMING OURSELVES AS FEMINISTS

We define and name ourselves publicly as Feminists because we celebrate our feminist identities and politics. We recognise that the work of fighting for women’s rights is deeply political, and the process of naming is political too. Choosing to name ourselves Feminist places us in a clear ideological position. By naming ourselves as Feminists we politicise the struggle for women’s rights, we question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated, and we develop tools for transformative analysis and action. We have multiple and varied identities as African Feminists. We are African women – we live here in Africa and even when we live elsewhere, our focus is on the lives of African women on the continent. Our feminist identity is not qualified with ‘If’s’, ‘Buts’, or ‘However’s’. We are Feminists. Full stop.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF FEMINISM & PATRIARCHY

As African feminists our understanding of feminism places patriarchal social relations structures and systems which are embedded in other oppressive and exploitative structures at the centre of our analysis. Patriarchy is a system of male authority which legitimizes the oppression of women through political, social, economic, legal cultural, religious and military institutions. Men’s access to, and control over resources and rewards within the private and public sphere derives its legitimacy from the patriarchal ideology of male dominance. Patriarchy varies in time and space, meaning that it changes over time, and varies according to class, race, ethnic, religious and global-imperial relationships and structures. Furthermore, in the current conjunctures, patriarchy does not simply change according to these factors, but is inter-related with and informs relationships of class, race, ethnic, religious and global-imperialism. Thus to challenge patriarchy effectively also requires challenging other systems of oppression and exploitation, which frequently mutually support each other.

Our understanding of Patriarchy is crucial because it provides for us as feminists, a framework within which to express the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations which affect African women. Patriarchal ideology enables and legitimizes the structuring of every aspect of our lives by establishing the framework within which society defines and views men and women and constructs male supremacy. Our ideological task as feminists is to understand this system and our political task is to end it. Our focus is fighting against patriarchy as a system rather than fighting individual men or women. Therefore, as feminists, we define our work as investing individual and institutional energies in the struggle against all forms of patriarchal oppression and exploitation.

OUR IDENTITY AS AFRICAN FEMINISTS

As Feminists who come from/work/live in Africa, we claim the right and the space to be Feminist and African. We recognise that we do not have a homogenous identity as feminists – we acknowledge and celebrate our diversities and our shared commitment to a transformative agenda for African societies and African women in particular. This is what gives us our common feminist identity.
Our current struggles as African Feminists are inextricably linked to our past as a continent—diverse pre-colonial contexts, slavery, colonization, liberation struggles, neocolonialism, globalization. Modern African States were built off the backs of African Feminists who fought alongside men for the liberation of the continent. As we craft new African States in this new millennium, we also craft new identities for African women, identities as full citizens, free from patriarchal oppression, with rights of access, ownership and control over resources and our own bodies and utilizing positive aspects of our cultures in liberating and nurturing ways. We also recognise that our pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories and herstories require special measures to be taken in favour of particular African women in different contexts.

We acknowledge the historical and significant gains that have been made by the African Women’s Movement over the past forty years, and we make bold to lay claim to these gains as African feminists – they happened because African Feminists led the way, from the grassroots level and up; they strategised, organised, networked, went on strike and marched in protest, and did the research, analysis, lobbying, institution building and all that it took for States, employers and institutions to acknowledge women’s personhood.

As African feminists, we are also part of a global feminist movement against patriarchal oppression in all its manifestations. Our experiences are linked to that of women in other parts of the world with whom we have shared solidarity and support over the years. As we assert our space as African feminists, we also draw inspiration from our feminist ancestors who blazed the trail and made it possible to affirm the rights of African women. As we invoke the memory of those women whose names are hardly ever recorded in any history books, we insist that it is a profound insult to claim that feminism was imported into Africa from the West. We reclaim and assert the long and rich tradition of African women’s resistance to patriarchy in Africa. We henceforth claim the right to theorise for ourselves, write for ourselves, strategise for ourselves and speak for ourselves as African feminists.

**INDIVIDUAL ETHICS**

As individual feminists, we are committed to and believe in gender equality based on feminist principles which are:

- The indivisibility, inalienability and universality of women’s human rights;
- The effective participation in building and strengthening progressive African feminist organizing and networking to bring about transformatory change;
- A spirit of feminist solidarity and mutual respect based on frank, honest and open discussion of difference with each other;
- The support, nurture, and care of other African feminists, along with the care for our own well-being;
- The practice of non-violence and the achievement of non-violent societies;
- The right of all women to live free of patriarchal oppression, discrimination and violence;
- The right of all women to have access to sustainable and just livelihoods as well as welfare provision, including quality health care, education, water and sanitation;
- Freedom of choice and autonomy regarding bodily integrity issues, including reproductive rights, abortion, sexual identity and sexual orientation;
- A critical engagement with discourses of religion, culture, tradition and domesticity with a focus on the centrality of women’s rights;
- The recognition and presentation of African women as the subjects not the objects of our work, and as agents in their lives and societies;
- The right to healthy, mutually respectful and fulfilling personal relationships;
- The right to express our spirituality within or outside of organised religions;
- The acknowledgment of the feminist agency of African women which has a rich Herstory that has been largely undocumented and ignored.

**INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS**

As feminist organisations we commit to the following:

- Advocating for openness, transparency, equality and accountability in feminist-led institutions and organisations;
- Affirming that being a feminist institution is not incompatible with being professional, efficient, disciplined and accountable;
- Insisting on and supporting African women’s labour rights, including egalitarian governance, fair and equal remuneration and maternity policies;
Using power and authority responsibly, and managing institutional hierarchies with respect for all concerned. We believe that feminist spaces are created to empower and uplift women. At no time should we allow our institutional spaces to degenerate into sites of oppression and undermining of other women;

• Exercising responsible leadership and management of organisations whether in a paid or unpaid capacity and striving to uphold critical feminist values and principles at all times;

• Exercising accountable leadership in feminist organisations, taking into consideration the needs of others for self-fulfilment and professional development. This includes creating spaces for power-sharing across generations;

• Creating and sustaining feminist organisations to foster women’s leadership. Women’s organisations and networks should be led and managed by women. It is a contradiction of feminist leadership principles to have men leading, managing and being spokespersons for women’s organizations;

• Feminist organisations as models of good practice in the community of civil society organizations, ensuring that the financial and material resources mobilised in the name of African women are put to the service of African women and not diverted to serve personal interests. Systems and structures with appropriate Codes of Conduct to prevent corruption and fraud, and to manage disputes and complaints fairly, are the means of ensuring our organisations;

• Striving to inform our activism with theoretical analysis and to connect the practice of activism to our theoretical understanding of African feminism;

• Being open to critically assessing our impact as feminist organisations, and being honest and pro-active with regards to our role in the movement;

• Opposing the subversion and/or hijacking of autonomous feminist spaces to serve right wing, conservative agendas;

• Ensuring that feminist non-governmental or mass organisations are created in response to real needs expressed by women that need to be met, and not to serve selfish interests, and unaccountable income-generating agendas.

FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

As leaders in the feminist movement, we recognise that feminist agency has popularised the notion of women as leaders. As feminist leaders we are committed to making a critical difference in leadership, based on the understanding that the quality of women’s leadership is even more important than the numbers of women in leadership. We believe in and commit ourselves to the following:

• Disciplined work ethics guided by integrity and accountability at all times;

• Expanding and strengthening a multi-generational network and pool of feminist leaders across the continent;

• Ensuring that the feminist movement is recognised as a legitimate constituency for women in leadership positions;

• Building and expanding our knowledge and information base on an ongoing basis, as the foundation for shaping our analysis and strategies and for championing a culture of learning beginning with ourselves within the feminist movement;

• Nurturing, mentoring and providing opportunities for young feminists in a non-matronising manner;

• Crediting African women’s labour, intellectual and otherwise in our work;

• Creating time to respond in a competent, credible and reliable manner to other feminists in need of solidarity and support whether political, practical or emotional;

• Being open to giving and receiving peer reviews and constructive feedback from other feminists.

References


Endnote

* This briefing was originally published in 1986: A. Mohammed & Bene E. Madunagu (1986), ‘WIN: A Militant Approach to the Mobilisation of Women’, ROAPE 13:37, 103-105. Many thanks to Bene for this very timely up-date (editors).
Angolans Vote for Peace

On 5 September 2008 Angola held its first election since its protracted conflict was put to an end in April 2002. MPLA’s victory in the 1992 legislative elections was contested by UNITA and the subsequent crisis resulted in the resumption of the civil war. This historical precedent triggered a degree apprehension vis-à-vis the electoral process amongst most Angolans. The organisation of the 2008 legislative elections was managed by the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Election Process. Both bodies were largely made up of elements of the ruling party albeit the CNE had some representatives from opposition parties. The government developed a sophisticated and costly electoral system including electoral materials produced by the multinational company INDRA based in Spain.

The organisation of the elections began in 2006. The voter registration process was a paramount undertaking due to the absence of a census list of the Angolan population since 1975. The survey was carried out by several registration brigades and was observed by party agents; as a result over 8 million Angolans were registered. Nonetheless, the process was not absent of controversy since the opposition parties denounced that the traditional authorities, the so-called Sobas, in connivance with the barrios (neighbourhood) coordinators collected voters ID cards in order to elaborate a parallel register list of voters. According to the main opposition party UNITA, this was a strategy to coerce villagers into voting for MPLA. In addition, UNITA accused the CNE of recruiting polling staff members mainly amongst members of MPLA. Nevertheless, these alleged irregularities did not outweigh opposition parties’ eagerness to participate in the electoral process. In addition, the government put in place a program to induce civilian disarmament for the purpose of fostering people’s confidence in a peaceful electoral outcome.

Since May 2008 MPLA and UNITA ran a pre-election campaign leading up to the electoral campaign which started officially on 7 August 2008. According to electoral law, the 14 parties that were registered were to receive $1.1 million each for the electoral campaign three months before E-day. However, these state funds were only distributed to the political parties at the beginning of August. Opposition parties had meagre private means of financing the campaign and lacked propaganda materials and even means of transport to reach their constituencies. Hence, opposition parties mainly conducted a door to door campaign. Meanwhile, MPLA was accused by the opposition parties of using state resources for its campaign (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement¹). MPLA used a wide range of means of transport (small airplanes, school buses, 4x4 vehicles, motorbikes, bikes, etc.) and displayed generous campaign resources including the distribution of a wide range of electoral materials. In addition, MPLA conducted a very well orchestrated electoral propaganda campaign in the national mass media, namely the National Angolan Radio (RPA), the National Angolan TV (TPA) and the governmental Jornal de Angola. Media opposition such as the weekly journal O Novo Jornal enjoyed limited distribution and the church run Radio Igreja could only be broadcasted in Luanda. The opposition parties struggled to get their message across to the population in the provinces due to limited means and poor organisational planning in some cases.

The MPLA campaign focused on the government’s role in sustaining 6 years of peace, social progress and economic development. José Eduardo Dos Santos, MPLA’s president and Angola’s Head of State for the last 30 years was described

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in mass meetings and rallies as a successful peacemaker. Governmental achievements made recurrently the headlines of national news programs i.e. inauguration of hospitals, schools, running water plants, infrastructures or new branches of the state-owned network of supermarkets *nossosuper*. The Angolan media generously publicised China’s leading role in re-building the country’s infrastructures in exchange for oil supplies.

In recent years, the Angolan economy has had an annual real growth rate over 15%, its inflation stays in double digits and revenues result mainly from the booming oil industry and the extraction of minerals and diamonds. In 2008 Angola became Africa’s largest oil producer overtaking Nigeria. The Angolan Finance minister José Pedro de Morais received the prize of Best African Finance Minister in 2007 from the *Financial Times* magazine *The Banker* and he was also recently nominated among the Personalities of the Year by the *Foreign Direct Investment* Magazine (FDIM). The country attracts international investment and duly pays back its foreign debt to international creditors. Angolan companies linked to the Government of Angola are also striving to take control of the banking sector traditionally dominated by Portuguese firms.

The booming economy has been cleverly exploited by MPLA campaigners as being the engine for social progress to address deficits in health, education, clean water, electricity and infrastructures. Despite MPLA’s optimistic vision, Angola is still amongst the world’s least developed nations and occupies the 162nd position in the 2007-2008 UNDP development index rankings. Individuals closely connected to the MPLA leadership manage the main sources of the country’s capitalist development such as oil, construction, telecommunications and hotel industries whilst most Angolans live in precarious conditions, in shanty towns or in small villages in the rural countryside, below minimum hygiene standards, often without easy access to clean water resulting in outbreaks of contagious diseases such as cholera and chronic diarrhoea among children who suffer also from nutritional disorders. Malaria remains the most common cause of infant mortality. Despite a widespread social perception of corruption amongst certain elements of the ruling party, MPLA’s landslide victory in the elections was determined by the Angolan people’s desire to maintain peace and their expectations on the development prospects resulting from country’s emerging role in the energy sector.

In the era of globalisation, MPLA is the only game in town. Since pre-campaigning began, significant members of UNITA: some of them concerned about maintaining their positions as administrators of the current Government of National Unity: defected from UNITA and subsequently expressed their support to MPLA. Their move to the ruling party was widely publicised by state media on E-day week. Despite questions raised on the confusion between state structures and the MPLA party, elections have been deemed by all international observation missions as transparent, and all opposition parties have accepted the results, whilst allegations of vote rigging have almost been non-existent. Seemingly, international observers highlighted the process was hampered to some extent by organisational pitfalls such as delays in the distribution of materials which then obliged many polling stations to re-open in Luanda on E-day + 1, delays in the accreditation of opposition party observers and inconsistencies in the interpretation of counting procedures (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement).

MPLA obtained a landslide victory receiving 81% of the votes. UNITA and
Briefings: Angolans Vote for Peace

The Full Cabinet List

President: José Eduardo dos Santos
Prime Minister: António Paulo Kassoma
Minister of National Defence: Kundi Paihama
Minister of Interior: Roberto Leal Ramos Monteiro
Minister of Foreign Affairs: Assunção Afonso dos Anjos
Minister of Economy: Manuel Nunes Júnior
Minister of Territory Administration: Virgílio Ferreira de Fontes Pereira
Minister of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security: António Domingos Pitra Costa Neto
Minister of Justice: Guilhermina Contreiras da Costa Prata
Minister of Finance: Eduardo Leopoldo Severin de Morais
Minister of Planning: Ana Afonso Dias Lourenço
Minister of Commerce: Maria Idalina de Oliveira Valente
Minister of Hotel and Tourism: Pedro Mutindi
Minister of Agriculture: Afonso Pedro Canga
Minister of Fisheries: Salamão José Luete Chiribimbí
Minister of Industry: Joaquim Duarte da Costa David
Minister of Oil: José Maria Botelho de Vasconcelos
Minister of Geology and Mining: Makenda Ambroise

PRS received respectively 10% and 3% of the votes. UNITA’s resounding defeat has been aggravated by its sharply declining influence in its traditional strongholds. On the other hand, PRS slightly improved its 1992 results by focusing its campaign on the promotion of federalism, i.e. provincial management of revenues as the recipe to address corruption and shorten the gap between a rich urban elite based in Luanda and poverty-stricken peasants living in the provinces; significantly, PRS obtained over 40% of the votes casted in diamond-rich province of Lunda Sul.

Needless to emphasise that MPLA’s main challenge ahead is to maintain these excellent electoral results; the electorate gave credit to the leadership who managed to sustain 6 years of peace but in future contests the government’s capacity to deliver socio-economic development will be scrutinised more closely. These elections have been conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner and Angola has taken a step forward towards political stability; as in 1992, most Angolans voted for MPLA but the country’s path towards development could benefit from governmental efforts to enable constructive criticism in the public arena. Opposition parties and independent civil society organisations are irreplaceable assets in the priceless business of sustaining Angola’s hard-won peace.

Endnotes

2. Oil in Angola is a state subsidised product. Super oil price is less than .50 cents per litre.
3. The Portuguese Bank BPI sold 49.9% of Banco de Fomento Angola, the southern African country’s largest private sector bank, to Angola’s mobile phone operator, Unitel. For further information see Peter Wise, Financial Times.com (15 September 2008).

Angola Election: 2008: Final Results

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Chris, one of the founding editors of this journal, died in Coulestrine, France on the 29th of September. We will be publishing tributes and a selection of his writing in the March 2009 issue of ROAPE. Our love to Frances and their daughters, Kate and Jude.

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Briefings

Outsourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp International as Sovereign Agent

Sean McFate

After over 150 years of troubled history, fourteen years of civil war, war crimes and horrific abuses of power, Liberia stands at the precipice of history. The war came to a merciful end in 2003, when Charles Taylor fled into exile, but the war’s ravages were complete. The United States Agency for International Development characterised Liberia’s post-conflict landscape this way:

[...] over 250,000 people, most of them civilian non-combatants, have lost their lives in the civil war. More than 1.3 million have been displaced, including hundreds of thousands who fled the country. Abductions, torture, rape and other human rights abuses have taken place on a massive scale. It is estimated that at least one in ten children may have been recruited into militias at one time or another. A similar percentage has been traumatized by seeing their families and friends murdered and raped (US Agency for International Development, 2004).

Liberia remains dependent upon one of the world’s largest United Nations peacekeeping forces for its survival, and fears are mounting over the looming departure of peacekeepers. Who will provide security then? Will spoilers plunge the country back into violence? How will Liberia ward off potential spillover effects from violence in neighbouring Sierra Leone, Guinea, or Côte d’Ivoire?

These questions were presaged in the peace talks leading up to Taylor’s departure, and it was decided that wholesale transformation of the security sector was required so that Liberia could secure itself and not be forever reliant on international peacekeepers.

Security sector reform (SSR) is a crucial element of peacebuilding, especially in post-conflict settings. SSR is the wholesale transformation of indigenous security organisations into effective, legitimate, apolitical, and accountable institutions that uphold the rule of law and maintain the state’s monopoly on force. At a minimum, the security sector comprises three categories of actors: those directly involved in the protection of civilians and the state from violent harms (e.g. law enforcement or military); institutions that govern these actors (e.g. Ministries of Interior, Defense, Justice); and executive and legislative oversight bodies.

Failure to successfully implement SSR can seriously compromise peacebuilding efforts for several reasons. First, unaccountable and/or unprofessional security forces can become spoilers, which can hold the entire peacebuilding process hostage to their narrow interests under threat of violence. This can lead to a relapse of armed conflict. Second, it can also prolong peacekeeping missions, as security is a precondition of development. Last, SSR is a prerequisite for the exit strategy of costly peacekeeping missions, since it allows countries to secure themselves.

The central question of SSR in a country like Liberia is how to transform the military from a symbol of terror into an
instrument of democracy. The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) was complicit in human rights atrocities and the descent into civil war. Hence, the objective of the Joint US-Liberia SSR programme was to demobilise Liberia’s armed forces and reconstitute the AFL and Ministry of Defence (MOD) in toto.1

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of this innovative programme was the United States’ decision to completely outsource this critical task to private military companies (PMCs). Rarely in modern history has one sovereign nation hired a private entity to raise a military for another sovereign nation. This briefing outlines some of the key elements and outcomes of this prototypical programme, as seen from one of its early architects which may augur future US engagement in Africa. This is especially relevant given the new US military’s Africa Command (AFRICOM), which will likely outsource similar missions to private companies in the future.

The Decision to Outsource

Following Taylor’s departure, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) on 19 September 2003. At the time, it was the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world, growing to 15,000 ‘blue helmets’ with a robust civilian component. Jacques Paul Klein was appointed as the Special Representative of the Secretary General and UNMIL officially took over peacekeeping duties on 1 October 2003. Two months later it began the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) process of approximately 100,000 people.

From 4 June to 18 August 2003 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brokered the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), also known as the ‘Accra Accords’. In Part Four of these Accords on Security Sector Reforms,2 the UN and US agreed to share responsibilities, with the UN agreeing to transform the Liberian National Police and the US the AFL. The US’s commitment was managed by the US Department of State (DOS), which organised an initial assessment trip in January 2004. This was followed by a subject matter expert assessment in May, consisting of personnel from US Department of Defense (DOD) and two companies: DynCorp International (DynCorp) and Pacific Architects and Engineers (PA&E). The purpose of this assessment mission, during which time one of the DOD civilian staff members was murdered, was to determine the operational requirements for SSR of the AFL.

Following the assessment mission, DOD concluded it could not conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints, driven in part by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consequently, the DOS decided to wholly ‘contract out’ the task of reconstituting the AFL and MoD to the private sector. Not long after the assessment trip, DOS tendered a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E. Only these two companies were allowed to submit bids as they had earlier won the five-year Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract from DOS to support peacekeeping and security efforts in Africa. IDIQ contracts essentially act as umbrella contracts between the US government and select companies for a fixed period of time, and are meant to streamline the contracting process. After reviewing both proposals, DOS decided to divide the duties between the two contractors. DynCorp was responsible for demobilising the legacy force and then recruiting, vetting and training the AFL and MoD. PA&E was responsible for fielding the AFL and providing mentorship once the units were in place. Both firms were required to engage in construction of military bases and other facilities as necessary, with authorisation from DOS.
Designing the Force

The SSR process began by informally identifying and engaging key stakeholders, which included the legacy force, former rebels, the host government, civil society, and the international community. To their credit, DynCorp eschewed ill-fitting templates of the US military for the new AFL, and sought to craft – in partnership with the Liberian government – a more appropriate security force, which is discussed below. After a full-year of conversation, a vision of the AFL’s mission, composition, and desired end state was reached. It would be a mistake to assume that there was uniform consensus or that all stakeholders were engaged fully. The prominent voices in the discussion were the US government, which was sponsoring the programme, and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL).

Ultimately the vision entailed a small all-volunteer force (approximately 2,000 persons) that could be scaled upwards in time. It was acknowledged that a 2,000 person force would be insufficient to defend all of Liberia, should a full-scale war erupt. But it was also acknowledged that the size needed to be constrained by the government’s ability to pay soldiers’ salaries on a regular basis, as history suggested that unpaid soldiers were a greater threat to Liberia’s security than threat of an invading army.

It was also agreed that the AFL should have a defence-oriented force posture and light infantry organisational structure that was strong enough to repel cross-border militant attacks but not so strong as to threaten Liberia’s neighbours. This force would maintain a 12th grade functional literacy level, balanced ethnic and gender mix within the ranks, and foster an apolitical professional ethos, especially in the leadership, that respects the rule of law, cultivates a public service ethos, and accepts civilian control of the military. Finally, the AFL and ideally the entire Liberian security sector should embrace a ‘human security’ model.

DynCorp officially proposed the initial force structure and ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ – the blueprint for the new AFL – to the State Department in July 2005. In military parlance, a ‘force structure’ is the wire-diagram of units in the AFL and MoD, from the General Staff down to the basic infantry squad. A ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ is a spreadsheet inventory of personnel and equipment, delineating for each unit the exact rank, title, and military occupational specialty of each soldier and every piece of equipment authorised for the unit. The original blueprint for the AFL totalled 1,928 soldiers: a brigade headquarters company (103 personnel), two light infantry battalions (663 personnel each), an engineer company (162 personnel), a military police company (114 personnel), a training company (180 personnel), and three military personnel at the Ministry of Defense, which was overwhelmingly civilian in composition. Although this blueprint has changed over time, the original concept for the AFL remains consistent.

Establishing the Programme

It is impossible to truncate a multi-year, highly complex process, with more than a few surprises, into a single article. In brief, the AFL SSR programme was originally envisaged to proceed in several phases. Phase I was political consultation with stakeholders and sensitising the public to the creation of a new AFL. The key issues were: identifying and engaging stakeholders; the composition and mission of the AFL; and overcoming the legacy of atrocities it inherited from the civil war. Phase II was safely demobilising the legacy force. The key issues included: who is eligible for demobilisation benefits; finding donor money to pay for those benefits; controls to prevent...
fraud during the demobilisation process; public sensitisation to the programme; and fears that disgruntled demobilised soldiers would incite political violence. At the same time, construction of training facilities commenced. The primary concerns were: negotiating site selection; finding competent construction companies; theft of materials; and significant delays caused by the six-month rainy season.

Phase III was recruiting and vetting the force. The primary concern for recruiting was attracting women and minority ethnic groups to serve in what was traditionally an ethnically Krahn-dominated institution. As for vetting, it is difficult to establish mere identity in post-conflict Liberia, to say nothing of a full background check. Creating a competent vetting programme was a key challenge.

Phase IV was military training and equipping. The chief concerns were lack of literacy, leadership selection and inculcating a professional, apolitical ethos that placed service to the country above tribe or individual. Simultaneously, MoD transformation began, which included hiring and training all civilian personnel, as well as the creation of all AFL policies. Here the challenges were finding qualified mentors and synchronising the development of the MoD with interdependent government institutions.

Phase V was fielding the new force, which meant deployment of soldiers to their permanent duty station. At the time of publication, the programme remains mired in Phase IV due to several reasons, including sensitivity and uniqueness of the task, erratic programme funding by the US, and irregularities of DynCorp management (see Malan, 2008). Last, almost every aspect of this programme is sui generis, as there are no textbooks on comprehensive SSR, and this made progress problematic.

Programme Timeline

2003 August: Charles Taylor flees Liberia and ECOWAS peacekeepers and US troops arrive. The interim government and rebels sign the CPA. Gyude Bryant is chosen to head the interim government (NTGL). September–October: US forces pull out, and UNMIL begins the peacekeeping mission. December: UNMIL begins DDRR for non-statutory (non-AFL) combatants only. AFL personnel are disarmed, but not demobilised, rehabilitated and reintegrated, leaving that to the US government, as agreed to during CPA negotiations.

2004 January: The US Department of State sends a small contingent to Liberia to begin a preliminary assessment. The US is responsible for Part IV, Article Seven of the CPA, which covers SSR for the AFL. DOS is the lead agency within the US government for this task. February: International donors pledge more than US$500 million in reconstruction aid. May: DOS organises a ten-day assessment of SSR for the AFL. The assessment team consists of US personnel (mostly from the military) and two contractor teams: DynCorp and PA&E. A member of the assessment team is murdered in his hotel room during a robbery. June: DoD decides it cannot conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints. DOS decides to contract the SSR programme, and tenders a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E. July: DOS decides to split the contract between the two contractors, making DynCorp responsible for selecting and training the force and PA&E for fielding the force. However, DOS does not officially initiate the programme or release funds until programme preconditions are met (e.g., political support of the NTGL to demobilise legacy AFL veterans). October: Riots in Monrovia leave 16 people dead; UNMIL says former combatants and AFL veterans were behind the violence.
2005 February–March: Consultations with major stakeholders regarding the mission and composition of the future AFL. This includes civil society, the standing AFL, former warring parties and political factions, the NTGL, UNMIL, and other entities. A comprehensive recruiting and vetting plan is devised intended to screen out human rights abusers from joining the AFL. March–May: Consultations with stakeholders continue. Discussions include the problem of safely demobilising the legacy force without provoking political violence, mission and force structure of future AFL, location of training bases, sensitisation campaign for civil society, and arrears owed AFL veterans. The demobilisation plan is drafted and presented to Chairman Bryant, who signs Executive Order 5, authorising the full demobilisation of all legacy AFL units. DOS officially initiates the SSR programme and releases funds to DynCorp to begin recruiting and building. PA&E will begin its programme once training commences. July: The demobilisation and reintegration of 13,770 legacy soldiers commences. DynCorp builds a demobilisation site outside Monrovia. The US government approves the initial blueprint for the new AFL’s force structure. Construction of AFL training facilities commences but is slowed by the monsoon rainy season. September: The NTGL agrees that the international community should supervise its finances in an effort to counter corruption. October: Recruiting and vetting for the new AFL begins. Over 12,000 applicants will be processed in the two years to come. 23 November: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf becomes the first woman to be elected as an African head of state. She takes office the following January.

2006 January: The demobilisation of the AFL is successful completed, the first time in modern African history that an entire standing military was safely demobilised without significant incident. February: A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is set up to investigate human rights abuses between 1979 and 2003. Tensions transpire between the TRC and SSR programme, when the TRC’s request for access to SSR vetting records is denied by the SSR team on account that it might compromise sources and methods, possibly resulting in retribution killings of witnesses who spoke to the SSR vetting team on condition of anonymity about human rights abuses of some AFL candidates. April: MOD transformation begins. Former President Charles Taylor appears before the UN-backed Sierra Leone Special Court on charges of crimes against humanity. In June the International Criminal Court at The Hague agrees to host his trial. May: Brownie Samukai, the Liberian Minister of Defence, spends a week in Washington, DC collaboratively formulating the Liberian National Defence Strategy, modelled on a human security paradigm.

June: A first draft of the National Defence Strategy is written, seeking to align the AFL’s mission with the goals of development for durable stability. Progress is limited because the Government of Liberia, UNMIL, the US government and others are delayed with the National Security Strategy. The UN Security Council eases a ban on weapons sales so that Liberia can arm newly trained security forces. An embargo on Liberian timber exports is lifted shortly afterwards. July: The first class of AFL basic training begins. It is a pilot programme of about 110 candidates, mostly selected for their leadership potential in order to fill the leadership ranks first. DynCorp begins the process of purchasing and importing arms into Liberia for the AFL. President Johnson-Sirleaf switches on generator-powered streetlights in the capital, which has been without electricity for 15 years. August: The first major shipment of arms arrives in Monrovia for the AFL. It is the first legal shipment in 15 years. November: The first AFL basic training class graduates. Training of future classes is halted owing to US budget constraints.
2007 September: 630 recruits have graduated from the Initial Entry Training (IET) course. Owing to cost overruns, IET was shortened from eleven weeks to eight weeks by cutting three weeks that were devoted to human rights, civics, and laws of war training. March: 119 civilian MOD employees graduate a 17-week of SSR programme training course. April: The UN Security Council votes to lift its ban on Liberian diamond exports. The ban was imposed in 2001 to stem the flow of ‘blood diamonds,’ which helped fund the civil war. June: The start of Charles Taylor’s war crimes trial at The Hague, where he stands accused of instigating atrocities in Sierra Leone.

2008 January: 485 soldiers graduated from IET.

Surprises

As with any complex peacebuilding mission, few things went as planned. Some of this was due to the difficulty of the task and environment; however, some was due to the unique relationship between DynCorp, the US government, and Liberian government. To be clear, this trifecta produced both positive and negative results, many of which were unexpected.

Irreconcilable Differences

Profit-motive and public policy can be conflicting interests. DynCorp, like most private companies, is naturally profit-seeking and is guided by market forces in the search for more demand for its services. Government institutions, on the other hand, are primarily interested in achieving public goods through public policy. Profit versus policy can be conflicting goals in public-private partnerships, such as the US and DynCorp, where the government utilises private means to achieve public goods. To resolve this, governments can shape companies’ interests and behaviour through market regulation that incentivise the private sector to realise responsible outcomes. However, current regulation and oversight in the US of this multi-billion dollar industry is diminimus. With a few notable exceptions, there has yet to be a serious discussion within the US government defining the appropriate spheres of activity for private contractors and government personnel in the security sector, much less effective regulatory oversight and concrete accountability mechanisms. Owing to this, the PMC industry behaves like an unguided missile, seeking profit wherever the market will bear it, even if it means a loss for society as a whole (see Avant, 2005).

Another deleterious side effect of this public-private partnership is the evolving co-dependency between government and the industry based on the asymmetries of information that exist between them. This industry has boomed from a multi-million to a multi-billion dollar market since 9/11, owing to the US government’s need of ‘wartime’ muscle. Unfortunately, the US bureaucracy that governs this industry was unable to grow at a commensurate rate, as the public sector is generally less nimble at growth than the private sector. Consequently, there is a paucity of government administrators to oversee these large companies, and those that exist are generally unqualified, ill-equipped and/or over-tasked. In Liberia for example, DynCorp’s contract overseer was a US Navy officer with absolutely no experience in building armies, especially given his background as a sailor. Nor was he a Certified Public Accountant or fully trained contract officer, skilled in managing a multi-million dollar contract with a large, savvy multinational company. Although his efforts were laudable and tireless, the US government simply did not equip him with the requisite tools he needed to achieve his assignment.

Consequently, there was a substantial knowledge gap between the officer in charge of overseeing the contract and the
company, which DynCorp could exploit for profit. He was largely dependent upon DynCorp’s technical opinions in order to make relevant programmatic decisions on behalf of the US government. The problem was that DynCorp have a vested interest in steering the government towards profitable outcomes rather than good public policy. This might include inflating the need for more staff than is required or purchasing more equipment at the government’s expense. DynCorp, like many government contractors, makes its profit on ‘time and materials,’ meaning that they charge the government a premium for every hour an employee works or for every item (no matter how small) that is purchased. How much a premium they charge largely constitutes the company’s profit margin.

There are other ways that DynCorp had the opportunity to manipulate public outcomes for private gains. For example, DynCorp occupied a unique position during the consultations: impromptu facilitator. Achieving some modicum of consent from myriad stakeholders regarding the SSR programme was vital. Ideally, it would have fallen to the US government to drive this conversation. However, US embassy staffing was thin and over-burdened. As a result, the task of engaging stakeholders unofficially fell to DynCorp. Although DynCorp had no ‘vote’ in the outcome of these informal stakeholder consultations, it occupied the privileged position of agenda setter: identifying and sequencing the issues to be discussed; shaping outcomes by strategically proposing solutions for stakeholders to react to; and the de facto selection of stakeholder leadership by choosing whom to engage and when, regardless of whether their opinions represented the group as a whole. Consequently, the company could partly shape outcomes.

In my earlier experience, programme managers at DynCorp did not deliberately manipulate stakeholder consulta-

### Principal-Agent Issues

However, not every aspect of this public-private partnership is negative. These companies can act as institutional ‘free-agents’ who are not beholden to entrenched viewpoints, agendas, interests, budget battles or turf-wars. Consequently, they can propose and implement practical solutions without regard to bureaucratic dogma. This is not to suggest that DynCorp was able to act autonomously in Monrovia: it was not. But DynCorp managers did enjoy a modicum of latitude that US government bureaucrats could not, especially along the inter-agency fault lines between DOD and the US Department of State. Moreover, given the ‘whole of government’ nature of SSR, DynCorp could act as a cross-cutting agent throughout the government (see OECD-DAC, 2007).

In fact, DynCorp could even advocate for the raw interests of Liberians in back offices of the Pentagon and State Department in Washington, DC. For example, it became evident during the consultations that Liberians were strong advocates of gender equality in the ranks while the US government was not. Although this SSR programme was managed by the State Department, it would frequently confer with DOD on technical issues regarding the AFL. Certain elements in DOD opposed the idea of women serving in ‘front line’ combat units, such as the infantry, which is the practice of the US army. Acting as a third-party facilitator, DynCorp was, in some ways, an unwitting arbiter in a debate between the
defence establishment in Washington, DC and the stakeholders in Liberia. As a structural ‘other’ in the process, which was nominally dispassionate on the issue, DynCorp managers could credibly present ideas and recommendations to stakeholders without the burdens of institutional loyalty or prejudice. This helped drive the argument for gender parity, since key managers in DynCorp were persuaded by the Liberians’ case, championing it within the walls of the Washington, DC bureaucracy and eventually giving voice to Liberian interests. Ultimately, DOS opted for gender parity, overturning DOD’s desire to utilise US military templates – such as no women in infantry units – for other nations’ militaries.

Consequently, Liberian women now enjoy greater equality in the ranks than do American women. This remarkable outcome was partly driven by DynCorp’s position as a comparative ‘free agent’ in the US bureaucracy and facilitator in the consultation process. It was also largely driven by individual personalities on the ground rather than any corporate philosophy, demonstrating once more the vulnerability of the process to manipulation, either positive or negative.

Innovative Solutions

Another positive facet of this private-public partnership is innovative thought. As mentioned above, the DOD is often tempted to utilise ill-fitting US templates for foreign militaries, whether they are appropriate or not. US ‘train and equip’ programmes typically overlay US strategy, procedures, doctrine, and other US ‘best practices’ on foreign forces that receive the training. Examples of ‘train and equip’ programmes include: Joint Combined Exchange Training; International Military Education and Training; and Foreign Military Financing. Recently, the US government greatly expanded this capability through ‘1206 funding,’ named for the section of the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act in the 2006 defence budget. This authority allows the DOD, in consultation with the State Department, to spend up to $200 million a year to train and equip the militaries of strategic partners in the US’s global ‘war on terror’.

The problem is that military templates that might work well for the US may not work well for Liberia. Liberia needs a Liberian solution. This requires more than a ‘train and equip’ mentality, which only provides better shooters in newer equipment. These programmes are necessary but insufficient for wholesale SSR, as they fail to address the underlying causes of why security sectors fail: corruption, human rights abuse, incompetent leadership, culture of impunity, lack of ethnic balance, etc.

For instance, during the initial SSR assessment mission to Liberia in May, 2004, the US military proposed a 4,020-person AFL, including a 412-person combat engineer battalion that would conduct tasks such as mine laying, constructing field fortifications, and digging tank traps. However, Liberia is not in danger of a World War Two-style Blitzkrieg from Sierra Leone. Instead, its engineer needs are basic infrastructure repair such as roads, bridges and buildings, to ensure the logistical resupply of bases and humanitarian relief. Also, conspicuously absent from the briefing was any plan to transform the Ministry of Defense and build institutional capacity for the AFL. Also absent was a recruiting, vetting and training plan for the AFL. Last, even though this was only a concept briefing based on a quick trip to Liberia, it lacked significant input from indigenous stakeholders or experts in West African security. In fact, the majority of officers who served on the assessment mission had never set foot in Africa before.

These and other problems were addressed a year later by DynCorp – in
partnership with the NTGL and US government – after consultations with stakeholders and non-US experts, a practice not usually employed by DOD in ‘train and equip’ programmes. This led to innovative recommendations and a more tailored force for Liberia. For example, the force was ‘simplified’ greatly. DynCorp opted for a basic motorised infantry brigade that was not dependent on expensive technologies that are difficult to source and maintain in Africa, no ‘elite’ units such as Taylor’s former ‘Special Anti-Terrorist Unit (SATU)’ which could terrorise the population, or high-caliber weaponry such as tanks or artillery that could threaten neighbours. By eschewing the DOD’s penchant to create miniature US-militaries around the world, Liberia enjoys a more sustainable force that is better tailored for the needs of the country.

There were other significant innovations, three of which warrant further analysis. The first is the creation of a rigorous human rights vetting model for AFL candidates to ensure past human rights abusers do not enter the AFL. This is an enormous challenge in a post-conflict environment where credible public records and other instruments of background checks are utterly lacking (McFate, 2007). The second is the institutionalisation of a special ombudsman-like office within the Ministry of Defense to address issues of tribal and gender equality. During Samuel Doe’s reign, the AFL devolved into a sectarian institution dominated by his Krahn tribe, which at times used the military as a tool for ethnic cleansing. It was important to prevent this from happening again.

The third example was placing human rights, ‘laws of war,’ and civics training equal to combat related training, such as shooting. Given the AFL’s troubled past, stakeholders urged that every soldier must understand that knowing when to pull the trigger was as important as hitting what you were aiming at. Accord-

ingly, three of the eleven weeks of Basic Training (also called Initial Entry Training) were devoted to civics training, an unprecedented development in military training in Africa or elsewhere.

Tragically, DynCorp later opted to cut this training, shortening Basic Training to eight weeks, thus saving money. This is a mistake. As Mark Malan recommends in a recent report on Liberia’s SSR:

> Congress should insist on more credible measures to ensure that civics and human rights become a central element of the US training program for the AFL (Malan, 2008:xi).

**Prelude to Future US Engagement in Africa?**

The US-Liberia SSR Programme may prove a good indicator of future US engagement in Africa, especially given the newly established US military Africa Command or AFRICOM. AFRICOM will likely outsource a good portion of its capabilities to PMCs given the complementary interests of supply and demand. AFRICOM has a huge mandate yet will not be given dedicated military units to accomplish its mission. In fact, no new military units will be created for AFRICOM at all, save the headquarters itself currently located at Stuttgart, Germany. Worse, it cannot expect to ‘borrow’ existing units elsewhere because of the huge demand for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. How will it accomplish its mission? By outsourcing it to PMCs.

Which is exactly what PMCs are waiting for. This multi-billion dollar industry is looking for the next US-sponsored conflict market once the Iraq and Afghanistan ‘bubble bursts,’ and they see that market as Africa, a continent of crisis. Thanks to the wars in the Middle East and opportunities like the US-Liberia SSR Programme in Africa, this industry has honed its services in the areas that
AFRICOM most needs: training and equipping; war-zone logistics; humanitarian response; post-conflict reconstruction; infrastructure repair; and SSR. The symmetry of supply and demand between PMCs and AFRICOM are exquisite.

Conclusion

The US-Liberia SSR Programme is an excellent prism into the future of US engagement on the continent, especially vis-à-vis AFRICOM. The complex outcomes that stem from outsourcing core military tasks, such as making militaries, to PMCs augur insights into how AFRICOM might engage Africa. This article briefly charts some of these outcomes, both positive and negative, from an ‘insider’s’ perspective.

However, larger concerns loom on the horizon. The utilisation of PMCs in Africa is more sensitive than in the Middle East given Africa’s lamentable past experiences with colonialism and mercenaries. This will prove a public diplomacy challenge for AFRICOM, which will seek to win ‘hearts and minds’ for the American cause. Moreover, consistent with the rule of ‘unintended consequences,’ the reliance by AFRICOM on PMCs may unwittingly generate a wider market for force on the continent, attracting future PMCs from Russia or elsewhere, in addition to the possibility of African PMCs. Will demand diversify to encompass multinational companies, NGOs, opposition groups, and private individuals? What will happen if market forces demand greater combat-oriented services? Could, for example, an NGO hire a PMC to conduct an armed humanitarian intervention in Darfur to ‘save lives’ in the name of human rights and the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ doctrine? What are the second, third and fourth order repercussions of this action? Could it exacerbate on-the-ground conflict? Draw the US into a war with Sudan? Trigger a UN Chapter 7 intervention? The implications of this on global security governance are terrifying, and few would welcome the development of an industry vested in conflict in Africa. Yet these critical questions remain scarcely examined.

Sean McFate, Program Director at the Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington, DC. Previously, he was a Program Manager for DynCorp International, where he helped design and lead several peacebuilding programs in Africa for the US government, including in Liberia, Burundi and Sudan; e-mail: sean@mcfate.net

Endnotes

1. The author was a principal architect of this programme; he does not claim credit for its management.

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The Dynamics of Private Security in Senegal
Cyrus O’Brien

The privatisation of security has recently attracted much attention, particularly in light of abuses by private military companies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of this attention sensationalises private security by focusing on private armies unbounded by national boundaries and unencumbered by international law. Recently, however, less dramatic forms of private security such as private guarding, surveillance, alarm systems, and patrolling have become more prevalent worldwide. These more mundane forms of private security are central to the daily operations of many societies.

The expansion of private security in the developing world is nearly always attributed to high levels of insecurity and general instability. Senegal, by contrast, is relatively safe and stable, but nevertheless has a rapidly expanding private security sector. The country is home to more than 150 private security companies that employ between 25,000 and 35,000 people, making Senegal’s private security sector relatively larger per capita than those of more violent countries like Nigeria and Kenya. The vast majority of these companies operate in the informal sector where they avoid taxation and governmental regulation, and like in many other countries, working conditions in the sector are poor. Unlike many other countries, however, Senegal has made significant and successful efforts to prevent international security companies like Group4Securicor from gaining a foothold.

This briefing is based on research conducted on behalf of the gun control organisation Le Mouvement Contre les Armes Légères en Afrique de l’Ouest (MALAO) in Senegal in the spring of 2007. It describes the private security sector, concentrating particularly on Dakar, where international businesses and international organisations (IOs) provide the largest sources of demand for private security. It includes an examination of the economic and political circumstances that have enabled the growth of private security and a discussion of the relationship between private security companies, the government, and business.

The Growth of Private Security Amidst Stability & Peace

In the worldwide proliferation of private security companies (PSCs), Senegal represents a unique case: the private security sector is growing despite political stability and a low crime rate. Previous briefings in this journal have attributed the growth of private security in other countries to ‘high crime rates, combined with the inability of the public security services to provide adequate protection’ (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2005). Indeed, general insecurity has been a key factor driving the sector’s growth in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Nicaragua, and Guatemala (Ibid; Lilly & von Tangen Page, 2002). The situation in Senegal demonstrates that the expansion of private security is not limited to countries where instability and insecurity prevail.

Senegal has the reputation of being West Africa’s most stable country. Since its independence from France in 1960, it has maintained a democratic system of government and regularly holds relatively fair elections. The Senegalese armed forces are firmly under civilian control and have never intervened in politics, making Senegal one of the few African countries to avoid a coup d’état since independence from colonial rule. The Casamance, a breakaway southern province separated from Senegal proper by the Gambia, is the only major source of instability in the country. However, since 2000 the situation has calmed, resulting...
in only occasional violence. Violence has been confined to the Casamance, leaving the majority of Senegal free from political strife.

This climate of political stability has enabled Senegal to maintain a remarkably low crime rate. Winslow (2008), relying on data from Interpol, reported the total crime rate to be 64.29 crimes for every 100,000 people, compared with 1,709.88 for Japan and 5,955.05 for the United Kingdom. The same study showed Senegal’s murder rate to be 0.33 per 100,000 people, or roughly one fifth that of the UK. Although the general crime statistic is surely underreported, the given murder rate is roughly accurate; because murders are rare in Senegal, the press thoroughly reports them. Though not completely reliable, these figures show that Senegal is not a country plagued by crime.

With little else to offer – peanuts are the biggest contributor to the GDP – Senegal markets its stability and peace to attract foreign businesses and organisations. Dakar, the capital, hosts the West African headquarters for many international non-governmental organisations, research institutions, and IOs. Particularly since the war in Ivory Coast, business and organisations have flocked to Senegal. In January of this year, Dubai World paid US$800 million for the rights to administer a free trade zone within Senegal, joining the flow of businesses that see Senegal as a ‘gateway’ into the region (Flynn, 2008).

It is primarily the presence of these businesses and organisations that generates demand for PSCs. Because demand is almost entirely fuelled by foreigners and expatriates, private guards are an almost entirely urban phenomenon. International mining activities, heavily guarded despite their rural location, are the exception. Throughout Dakar, private guards stand in front of nearly every sizable business or organisation guarding everything from banks to bookstores to offices and schools. Nearly every location an expatriate might visit is under private guard. Foreign businesses and organisations contract PSCs to provide security not only for the businesses themselves, but also for the homes of their employees. Paradoxically, then, peace, stability, and a low crime rate fuel the growth of the private security sector because they attract international businesses and organisations.

The police are widely viewed as inept and corrupt, prompting the wealthy to turn to the private sector for security. The majority of the population, however, continues to rely on traditional methods for security. Typical neighbourhoods are some of the safest places in the country, as residents keep a watchful eye on suspicious persons and come quickly to each other’s aid. While usually advantageous, at times such security networks become vigilante groups and occasionally escalate a situation. While statistics are hard to obtain, evidence suggests that vigilante groups account for most of Senegal’s (low) murder rate; upon identifying a thief or criminal, mobs may beat the suspect to death. On the whole, however, traditional security methods help to preserve overall security, making most of Senegal’s villages, neighbourhoods, and towns safe.

**Inequality, Exploitation & Unions**

The private security sector in Senegal mushroomed in the aftermath of the 1994 economic reforms promoted by the IMF and World Bank. Although the first private security companies were founded in the late 1980s, they did not become prevalent until the economic reforms resulted in greater levels of inequality. There are currently over 150 private security companies in Senegal, all but a few created since 1994. The sector’s rapid rate of expansion makes it difficult to estimate the exact number, as new PSCs are formed with incredible frequency.
The 1994 neo-liberal reforms involved the lifting of subsidies and price controls, a steady deregulation of the economy, and a 50% devaluation of the currency. The reforms positively affected Senegal’s macroeconomic outlook; inflation was brought under control, government finances were balanced, and the economy turned around. After contracting in the early 1990s, Senegal’s economy has steadily grown at an annual rate of around 5%.

The economic gains of the 1990s were not distributed across the Senegalese economy. Living conditions for most of the population declined as prices for food and other basic goods were deregulated. The number of street peddlers exploded at this time, as unemployment forced large numbers of people into the informal economy. Today, nearly a quarter of the population survives on less than $1 a day, and more than three-fifths on less than $2 each day. Thus, despite the economic influxes caused by the arrival of international business, intense poverty and inequality are on the rise, and may potentially destabilise the prevailing security environment. As one director of a PSC remarked, the private security sector depends ‘not on a lack of security, but instead on a lack of wealth’.

With nearly half of the workforce unemployed, private guards face a strikingly soft labour market. A typical guard is paid between US$70 and $120 each month, while the most professional companies pay their employees up to $180. In some cases, guards are given monthly transport stipends, but these almost never meet actual costs. Guards work exceedingly long hours and face very high exploitation, taking home only 35-50% of what clients pay for their services.

In my research, I found not one private security company in Senegal that did not violate national regulations in some way. The most common abuses were paying below the minimum wage, demanding that guards work for unreasonable hours, and employing guards on temporary contracts. Senegalese labour codes stipulate that after one temporary six-month contract, employers must hire a worker permanently or dismiss the employee. Even the most professionalised and the highest paying PSCs in Senegal violate this provision in the work code.

There are no strong unions of security guards, although many guards express a desire for one. Many guards are reluctant to establish a union because they fear being laid off when their six-month contract expires. The lack of permanent contracts in the sector increases the vulnerability of guards and prevents them from taking strong positions relating to working conditions.

Cooperation Between PSCs & the Government

Most PSCs are managed or owned by former police and military officials. In some cases, officers will found private security companies while still holding public office, usually passing the day-to-day management responsibilities to a family member. Tightening the relationship between the state security forces and private sector, nearly all security guards in Senegal have completed military service and, for most companies, military or police service is an explicit prerequisite to employment.

One-third of Senegal’s military is comprised of conscripts, each of whom serves two years without the possibility of extension. Although conscription exists, it is not enforced against one’s will. The droves of unemployed find such relatively well-paying vacancies in the military desirable, and the positions are easily filled. After serving two years, conscripts are released from the army and many find jobs in the private security sector. Many guards lament their discharge from the state security forces and some eventually find more lucrative
employment with the police or gendarmerie.

Despite the overlap in personnel, there is little overt cooperation between PSCs and state security forces. Police and private security guards hold positive views of each other but, in contrast to the situation in many countries, the police do not rely on the private sector. The government of Senegal has no contracts with PSCs and all state security functions remain under the purview of the army and police. Public-private partnerships, such as water treatment plants, La Poste, and Senelec (the national electric company), are exceptions and hire PSCs to guard their facilities.

Two private military companies, Northrop Grumman Technical Services (NGTS) and Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), train the Senegalese armed forces as part of the US State Department’s African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) programme. The ACOTA programme, created after the US debacle in Somalia, seeks to train and equip African militaries to conduct peacekeeping missions, thereby minimising the responsibilities of the West. The US Government supplies Senegal with the bulk of its military equipment and hires NGTS and MPRI teams to conduct eight two-month training programmes, focusing primarily on peacekeeping tactics. Senegalese soldiers trained under ACOTA have served as peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Darfur.

In addition to ACOTA, Senegal is a partner in the so-called ‘war on terror’ and currently receives aid through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, a counter-terrorism effort to track activity from the Atlantic Ocean to Chad. The role of private military companies in this programme is unclear.

Regulation & Corruption

The most significant problems facing the private security sector in Senegal result from their poor regulation. More than 80% of PSCs are not registered with the government, do not pay taxes, and operate completely in the informal sector. In 2003, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade issued a decree mandating that all PSCs be owned and operated by Senegalese citizens or companies. At the time, Senegal’s largest private security company, the American owned Sagam Sécurité, was forced to sell. This decree has kept the private security sector entirely in domestic hands and prevented multinationals like Group 4 Securicor from making inroads in Senegal.

Only registered PSCs are permitted to have armed guards. Despite this requirement, some guards in the informal sector are armed. Senegal has largely succeeded in keeping guns out of the country, but steadily grants around 120 licenses each year (Agboton-Johnson et al. 2004). Private security companies win a sizable majority of these licenses, although as licenses are awarded to individuals and their affiliations are not listed, no exact figures are available. Personal ties are important, as companies that have the strongest ties to the state security system or to the state bureaucracy are more likely to win licenses. That said, this research found no evidence of corruption in the form of bribes at the governmental level.

In the private sector, however, corruption is rampant. In order to be paid the amount stipulated by the contract, the manager of a PSC must frequently bribe the contracting company. Only after a bribe of $50-100, is the contracting company likely to pay the PSC. This form of corruption is worst in public-private companies, particularly La Poste.
In 2000, the computer system that the Ministry of the Interior used to track gun licenses failed, evidently one of the few victims of the computer virus Y2K. Since then, licenses have been recorded in piecemeal fashion, and the system is largely disorganised. Every year, the Ministry of the Interior sends the possessor of a gun license a notification of the tax that is owed for each firearm. Several PSC managers reported that the lists from the government omit many of their guns, in some cases up to half of the firearms they actually own. In effect, the government has lost track of many of the arms it has licensed. The absence of state control or records of arms is a dangerous contributor to the growth of private security companies.

The growth of private security in Senegal has been remarkably uncontroversial and has faced little criticism in the press. The majority of the population views private security as the domain of international business and as a form of employment in a struggling economy. The government should be commended for its 2003 efforts to bring the private security sector into domestic hands and under the purview of the Ministry of the Interior. Despite such efforts, however, the private security sector remains largely unregulated.

Private security is likely to play an even more prominent role as increasing economic inequality makes the political situation more volatile. Additionally, the influx of people and arms from Senegal’s war-torn neighbours threatens an already fragile stability. Dakar’s riots in November 2007 are a reminder of how quickly a situation can deteriorate. Nevertheless, Senegal’s stability will likely continue to attract international businesses and international organisations, and the government’s adoption of neoliberalism makes it unlikely that economic inequalities will subside. These conditions virtually guarantee the continued growth of the private security sector, which already rivals or exceeds the state security forces in terms of number of personnel. The size and projected growth of private security, and its corresponding rise in influence, mandate a continuing re-evaluation of the role and scope of private security in Senegal and throughout Africa.

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Bibliography
Prison Privatisation in the African Context
Andrew Coyle

The use of prison as a direct punishment of the court is a relatively modern phenomenon. It began in the 17th and 18th century, principally in Western Europe and North America, and over the succeeding centuries its use has spread to virtually every country in the world. In Africa prior to colonial times there was no indigenous concept of imprisonment as a form of punishment. The idea of taking substantial numbers of predominantly young men, who would otherwise be economically and socially active, locking them behind high walls and making them and their dependants a burden on the rest of society made no economic or cultural sense. As elsewhere in the world the first prisons were built as a tool for the colonial powers to subdue the local populace. Today one can still visit some African towns and see prisons which reflect their French colonial past, while in a number of countries in West and East Africa many prisons are built on a common British model. One suspects that the original construction plan might still be found somewhere in the Public Records Office in Kew near London.

The rate of imprisonment in any country is usually quoted per 100,000 of the total population. On that basis, the average rate of imprisonment around the world is about 140. Rates vary dramatically from country to country. The United States, with about 23% of all the world’s prisoners, has a rate of 751, while India has a rate of 32 (ICPS, 2008). This is not the place to enter into an analysis of what leads to such variations; suffice to say that there is little evidence that they can be explained by differing rates of crime but are more likely to be explained by a variety of economic, cultural and social factors.

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Imprisonment rates within the African continent also vary widely. The Republic of the Congo has the lowest rate of imprisonment in the world, with 22 prisoners per 100,000 of its population, closely followed by Burkina Faso with 23. The median rate for West African countries is 37, while that in southern Africa is 267, with South Africa having the highest rate at 348.

Prisons which are properly constructed and humanely managed are very expensive on the public purse and conditions in many developed countries have been severely criticised by independent bodies such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and Human Rights Watch. In a number of countries in Africa conditions for those held there can only be described as inhuman and degrading. On 5 March 2005 the East African Standard newspaper reported on conditions in one prison in Kenya:

[The prison], built in 1962 to hold about 350 prisoners, is congested with more than 1,450. The jail is a hallmark of neglect and abuse. Child offenders mingle with suspected murderers, violent robbers and rapists. Hardcore convicted criminals share halls with remandees accused of misdemeanours. In the women’s section, infants accompanying their mothers sleep in the same cells with mentally unsound murder suspects.

At one corner in the sickbay, a patient, deeply asleep, snores loudly beside a plastic bucket full of human waste. Another prisoner sits beside the bucket, his eyes wide open as if in a trance. Patients say they use the bucket at night and empty it in the morning for use during the day. The room is crawling with vermin.

In Ward Four, John Ndichu and 235 others spend most of the day and night squatting. This is because if they sit, they would have to stretch their legs and there is no space for that.1
In 2006 the Vice-President of Kenya announced plans to free 15,000 prisoners by the end of July, noting that prisons built to hold a total of 16,000 people were then holding 48,000 inmates country-wide. ‘Most of the prison facilities date back to colonial times, when Kenya’s population was less than 10 million (it is now over 30 million),’ he said adding that the congestion was now posing a health hazard to inmates. This story could be repeated many times in other African countries. Governments recognise the need to improve prison conditions but simply lack the resources to improve them.

**Prison Privatisation**

It is generally accepted that, even in an age of reducing government direct delivery of services and increasing private control of services which are essential for the common good, there are some responsibilities which the state cannot delegate and which it must carry out itself. An example would be defence of the nation from external enemies. All armed services remain under the direct control of the government in democratic countries and private or mercenary armies are not permitted, although as shown in several articles in this Special Issue, private military companies are increasingly integrated into and support national militaries in various ways. The judiciary is another example where private enterprise is eschewed. Protection of the public has become a slightly greyer area in recent years. Private security firms now abound and in some countries outnumber the police but the core responsibility for public order and for investigation of crime still lies with state officials.

Until thirty or so years ago the task of depriving citizens of their liberty was another function which was regarded as a state monopoly for similar reasons. Individual freedom was so sacred that only the state could take it away after due process and only the state could administer the punishment passed by its own courts. That is a position which is still maintained in the majority of democratic countries, but not in all.

The modern phenomenon of prison privatisation can be traced back to 1979 when the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service began contracting commercial companies to detain illegal immigrants who were awaiting deportation hearings (Wood, 2003). By the mid-1980s the number of people in prison in the US was increasing to such an extent that a number of states turned to these private detention companies to provide quick build prisons and detention centres. An added advantage for the state jurisdictions was that the resultant costs could be recorded against revenue or operating budgets rather than as capital costs.

In the course of the following decade governments entered into contracts for private prisons in a number of other countries, including the UK, Australia and New Zealand. This came to be seen increasingly as a lucrative business with the small number of companies involved each chasing its share of ‘the market’. In 2004 one of the companies described the UK as ‘the second largest private correctional market in the world’ (GEO Group, 2004).

In respect of prisons the term ‘privatisation’ covers a wide spectrum. This starts with marginal areas such as issuing commercial contracts for the prison shops or canteens, where prisoners are able to purchase items for personal use. The next stage in privatisation is that in which specific services, such as drug treatment or other programmes for prisoners, are delivered by commercial companies or not-for-profit organisations. Moving along the spectrum, in some cases contracts are issued for the central services within the prison; these can include catering, health care, education
and work for prisoners. The most advanced example of this is in France where a number of prisons are run under a system of dual management, with prison service personnel carrying out what are described as the public service duties (supervision, rehabilitation, registration and management) and commercial companies being responsible for all other functions (maintenance, transportation, accommodation, food service, work and vocational training).

A further phase of privatisation is that in which the entire operation of a prison is contracted to a commercial company or a not-for-profit organisation. In this case the state builds and continues to own the prison buildings and enters into a contract with a company for the management of the prison. Thereafter the state takes no part in the daily management. A number of the earliest examples of prison privatisation in England and Australia followed this model. The ultimate stage of privatisation, so far, is that in which a commercial company takes a prison from drawing board to final operation. This includes its design, construction, financing and management. This is the model now generally followed in the UK and, as we shall see, in South Africa. The mechanism for implementing the private construction and management of new prisons, as with other public institutions, has been the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) or Public Private Partnership (PPP).

Technically, none of these models should be described as privatisation. The legal responsibility for the prisoners who are held in them remains with the state, which contracts out their daily management to the differing degrees described above. Full privatisation would exist only if the state handed over complete responsibility for the citizens sentenced to prison to a commercial company. However, as far as the prisoner in the prison which is managed by a commercial company is concerned, this is a semantic distinction. For all practical purposes, such a prisoner is in the hands of a commercial company. The best of these companies may well set out to treat the prisoners under their control in a decent and humane manner. A few of them succeed better than their counterparts in the public sector. Despite this there is no escaping the fact that the final responsibility of these companies is to their shareholders; they must deliver a profit or they will cease to trade. This is the ultimate difference between a private prison and a public one.

Prison Privatisation in Africa

In 1993 the prison population in South Africa stood at 111,000. By 2002, it had risen to 182,000. At the end of January 2008 it had fallen back to 166,000, while the system had beds for 114,500. The rise in numbers in the decade after 1993 placed intolerable strain on the system and there was international criticism not only of levels of overcrowding but also of corruption and violence inside the prisons. In an attempt to deal with these problems the government turned to prison privatisation.

The issue of prison privatisation in South Africa was discussed at a seminar in Cape Town in 2003 (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003). The introduction to the report of the conference refers to findings by Professor Julia Sloth Nielsen that, the privatisation of state assets was explicitly part of the government’s overall economic programme in the period following 1996, and indeed remains part of government’s chosen strategy. Correctional Services decided to explore the possibility of privatisation as part of a new prisons building programme, one key aim of which was to address overcrowding, inter-alia through the more rapid construction of new facilities.
One of the speakers at the conference, Stephen Nathan, placed this in a wider context when he said,

The backdrop to prison privatisation is the economic restructuring – including privatisation of state assets and services – being imposed on countries by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

At the time of writing South Africa is the only country in Africa which has private prisons. The government initially planned to tender for four private prisons but in the end restricted itself to two tenders for financial reasons. Mangaung Prison, with 3,024 places and now operated by GSL, was opened at Bloemfontein in July 2001 and Kutama-Sinthumule Prison, with 2,928 places and operated by the South African Custodial Services, a subsidiary of the GEO Group, opened in Louis Trichardt in 2002. These are the two largest private prisons in the world. The GEO Group describes itself as a world leader in privatised correctional and detention management, with operations also in the US and the UK.

According to Prison Privatisation Report International (2003), these two prisons have proved to be extremely costly to the Department of Corrections. As early as 2002 the government set up a task force to investigate the prisons’ financing, costs, outputs and risk allocation; to establish a comparison with public sector prisons; and to identify features for renegotiation to address the department of correctional services’ affordability restraints. In November 2002 the task force reported that returns on the company’s investments in Mangaung prison could be as high as 29.9% while returns on Kutama-Sinthumule were as high as 25%. Construction and operating fees at Bloemfontein had increased from R154.41 per prisoner per day at the outset to R215.70, while at Louis Trichardt costs had increased from R139.31 to R160.36. The task force recommended that the contracts for the two prisons should be renegotiated. This proved to be impossible.

The contracts provide for both capital repayments and daily per prisoner costs, adjusted annually for inflation, but based on what have been described as exceedingly unrealistic ‘input specifications’, including a limit of two prisoners per cell and extensive educational and vocational training requirements, to levels which are not available in any publicly managed prison. It has been reported that the two prisons will over the next three years consume between 5.1 and 5.4% of the total Correctional Services Budget (R642.235 million in 2008/9), for facilities housing around 3% of the prison population (Sloth-Nielsen, 2006).

A senior adviser in the South African Treasury is reported to have commented, ‘We ordered a Rolls Royce but we should have ordered a Toyota’ (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003).

In his Budget Vote speech in late 2007 the Corrections Minister announced his intention to invite tenders for the construction of five new prisons on a public-private partnership model ‘once national treasury agrees to cover the project management costs.’ It is by no means clear that the Treasury will give its agreement to this.

The problems faced by a country such as South Africa are compounded if one looks at the situation of its impoverished neighbour, Lesotho. In 2001 the prison population of Lesotho was less than 3,000. The government acknowledged that the conditions in its prisons were appalling and had to be improved yet it lacked the resources to realise its ambition. Enter Group 4 Corrections Services SA (Pty) Ltd. with a solution which was completely alien to the traditions of the country. It offered to build a prison with 3,500 places which would be of a high
physical standard. The price to be paid was that all the prisoners in the country would be located in this single mega prison, very far from their homes and in an environment which would be completely at odds with the culture of the country. Group 4 apparently developed its proposal at the request of the Lesotho Department of Justice, Human Rights and Rehabilitation. Later the Minister who had invited Group 4 to develop its proposal was replaced and the government decided not to pursue the proposal. In May 2008 Group4Securicor, the successor company to Group 4 and the largest private security company in the world, announced that it had taken over GLS, the contractor for Mangaung Prison, thus making it a player in private prisons in South Africa. This amalgamation reinforced the increasing tendency to reduce the extent of competition among the companies involved in this field.

Conclusion

In the UK there is increasing concern about the long term financial costs of private prisons. In addition, the respected independent Chief Inspector of Prisons has issued extremely critical reports on the operation of several of these prisons. In 2001 the National Audit Office published a generally positive report on PFI prisons (National Audit Office, 2001). However, a further report in 2003 (National Audit Office, 2003) was much more cautious and concluded that the use of private prisons ‘is neither a guarantee of success nor the cause of inevitable failure’.

The situation in South Africa is much more problematic, not least because of questions about the competence of the entire system. For example, in 2001 President Thabo Mbeki appointed a Commission of Inquiry to investigate and report on corruption, maladministration, violence, and intimidation in the Department of Correctional Services. The Commission handed its final report to President Mbeki on 15 December 2005, but it took nearly a year and last minute pressure from the Correctional Services Portfolio Committee Chairperson and Judge Jali, the Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry, before the Minister of Correctional Services released the full report to the public in November 2006.3 The report of the Jali Commission makes very uncomfortable reading for the Department of Corrections and the Government of South Africa. Of the Commission’s seven focus areas, none were found to have been immune to corruption and in all nine management areas that were investigated, evidence of corruption, maladministration, and the violation of prisoners’ rights were found. In such an overarching climate one would have to be very cautious about the expansion of commercially managed privatisation.

South Africa is a case study in the way that prison privatisation may well proceed in the coming years. Faced with the reality that profit margins in the developed world are likely to be restricted in future and the fact that returns on investment have to be balanced against greater levels of public scrutiny and potential for embarrassment, the small number of companies involved in the business of prison privatisation are beginning to turn their attention to developing countries. Many of these countries are faced with rising prison populations and with terrible prison conditions. Governments are under increasing pressure to improve the conditions of their prisons, while knowing that they have no resources to do so. These are fertile grounds for private prison companies, who can come into a country, promising to relieve the government of unbearable commitments to capital funding in exchange for a revenue commitment which is attractive in the short term but which will have crippling implications in the longer term. This often suits the wishes of politicians who have short term agendas rather than long term ones. A further attraction for private prison companies is that in
such countries it will often be possible to prepare a contract which meets the needs of the private contractor much better than those of the contracting state in both financial and operational terms. In many developing countries there is a real problem with corruption in the public and private services at an institutional and at an individual level. When prisons are operated on a for-profit basis the danger of this happening is likely to be considerably increased. In addition, the strict monitoring arrangements which exist in some developed countries will be absent, leaving the contracting company free to interpret the conditions of the contract to its own advantage.

There is a more fundamental issue which exists in developed as well as in developing countries. It is that the real issue is not about whether private prisons are cheaper than public ones, nor whether they are managed more effectively and efficiently. The fundamental change which has come about with the introduction of privatisation is the concept of prison as a ‘market-place’ and a business which will inevitably expand. Private prisons have been introduced as a short term response by governments to rising prison populations, to shortage of prison places and to limited public funding to maintain existing prisons and to build new ones. As a result, the financial and social costs of an increasing use of imprisonment have not been subject to public scrutiny. Many of the costs of increased imprisonment are hidden in the short term. In fiscal terms, high capital expenditure can be converted into long term revenue expenditure, which reduces current financial costs term while increasing future costs to the public purse. In social terms, governments have not encouraged public debate about why so many additional prison places are needed, being content to argue that they will provide as many places as are necessary to protect the public. This is an even more dangerous phenomenon in developing countries than it is in developed ones.

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Endnotes

Bibliography


The Nigerian Feminist Movement: Lessons from Women in Nigeria, WIN*

Bene E. Madunagu

In Nigeria, as in other societies, there is, and there has always been a women’s movement or more correctly women’s movements. These existed before, during and after colonialism. Many of these may probably not fit into the conventional definition of a movement. Various forms of interest groups see themselves as movements. I admit that all of these do serve interests that in many ways attempt at addressing inequalities between women and men in society. While this is an acceptable criterion of minimising disagreements in the characterisation of women-based organisations, the reality is that there are still substantial differences in the forms of movements that call themselves ‘women’s movements’. Some ‘movements’ may or may not have clear objectives, mission or vision but exist as ad hoc bodies, useful when the need arises but with little or no coordination, continuity or sustainability. Some may just be limited to specific local struggles.

In Nigeria, the oldest and largest women’s movement can be said to be the National Council of Women’s Societies (NCWS) founded in 1958. Basu’s (1995) definition clearly suits the NCWS.

The Nigerian women’s movement is an unarmed movement. It is non-confrontational. It is a movement for the progressive upliftment of women for motherhood, nationhood and development.

This movement is ‘at home’ with the protection of our culture and tradition as well as with the supremacy of men. It will not rock the boat. It essentially accepts what the tradition has been and what religion sanctions.

There are sectors of this movement that are more radical than the status-quo and that would raise the struggle to a higher level but are still afraid of what the men would say or do. There are gender activists who would rather not be associated with feminism, publicly or privately. Again there are women ‘activists’ in the larger women’s movement who call themselves feminists when they are in the midst of feminists but will quickly condemn ‘those crazy people’, a reference to those who publicly admit and declare that they are feminists. There are yet those who are feminists, ‘but’; these are women who want to be seen truly as feminists but become uncomfortable with discussions on such questions as the totality of who a feminist is and the extent of feminism in terms of core values, principles and praxis. They are satisfied with declaration and participation in meetings and conferences where the term feminism gets mentioned, but are generally silent when issues of sexual rights are discussed. For them, feminism has limits. They are, for instance, totally homophobic.

Feminism in Nigeria

There is no denying the fact that some forms of feminist struggles existed in Nigeria before what was clearly acclaimed and identified openly as a feminist movement: Women in Nigeria (WIN). However such struggles were largely undocumented. I make bold to state that feminism in Nigeria in its present form – consistent, organised, with clear objectives and ideology – came into being with the inauguration, in 1983, of the organisation Women in Nigeria (WIN) following the 1982 national conference on the same theme. WIN was a direct outcome of the conference, envisioned as a feminist movement and named as such.

During its first ten years WIN facilitated the development of many of the self-
identified feminists in Nigeria today. WIN started off with a clearly stated rights-based approach to issues about women in Nigeria and was very clear on the issues of gender and social justice. However, the open policy of WIN of ‘come one – come all’, where anyone, male or female, was accepted as long as such a person accepted the provisions of our Constitution, carried a danger of WIN including persons who have contempt for feminism but come into WIN with their own agenda. There was no punishment for anyone who played no active role as long as such a person showed up once in a while at meetings. In spite of the inherent weaknesses in the nature of membership criteria for WIN, one must always pay tribute to WIN as a training ground for the emergence of organised feminist struggles in Nigeria. WIN’s open policy of membership led to the entry of many persons who had no clue about feminism and gender justice and its core values and principles. Many enthusiastic members equated feminist struggles to abstract class struggle, with total disdain for gender issues. Internal conflicts generated by ignorance and opportunism as well as male chauvinistic understanding of social struggles as not including gender equality and equity as key components of social justice became a cankerworm that progressively weakened WIN as a movement for social transformation – a core focus of feminist struggles.

The Uniqueness & Contribution of WIN to the Nigerian Feminist Movement

From the onset, WIN engaged in research, policy advocacy and activism aimed at transforming the conditions under which women and other underprivileged classes in Nigeria lived. WIN’s further uniqueness was its consciousness of both class and gender in the struggle for the emancipation of women. WIN acknowledged that, although the majority of women, suffered from the exploitative and oppressive character of the Nigerian society, women suffer additional forms of exploitation and oppression – as women. Thus WIN recognised the double forms of exploitation and oppression of women as members of the subordinate class and as women. WIN set out to struggle against both class and gender oppression through promoting the study of conditions of women, disseminating the outcome for policy formulation, defending the rights of women and taking actions to transform the conditions of women.

WIN’s Strategies

WIN started off with the strategy of research, analysis and documentation of conditions of women in various situations in the society. The outcome of this strategy provided the much needed data for advocacy and mobilisation of women to demand their rights. This strategy also led to the practice of holding annual conferences as a means of public education and the creation of awareness, using research data and gender analysis as a convincing tool for demanding for women’s rights. We may also mention the adoption of a clear Constitution that emerged from the involvement and participation of all members, the establishment of WIN as an institution with basic feminist principles and values, the emergence of well-defined organisational structures of leadership and representation at national and in the state branches, and clearly defined roles, responsibilities and obligations.

During these first ten years, WIN never received subvention from government and so was able to maintain its independence. It could therefore take actions without compromising since, as the saying goes, ‘the person that pays the piper dictates the tune’.
WIN’s Publications

As stated earlier, one of the strengths of WIN’s strategies, was documentation of research and analysis from a gender perspective. A research theme was chosen each year by consensus and the outcome was published. The first major publication of WIN was the book, *Women In Nigeria Today* (Zed Books, 1985) that came out of the conference that gave birth to WIN. This inaugural publication was followed by:

- *Women and education* (edited proceedings of the 3rd annual WIN conference) (1992);
- *Child abuse* (1992); *Women in Nigeria – The first ten years* (1993);
- *Women in the transition to democracy in Nigerian politics* (edited proceedings of the 8th annual WIN conference held in Kano (1989);
- *Women and violence: Breaking The Silence: Women Against Violence* (edited proceedings of the 10th anniversary WIN conference, 1993);

These publications became invaluable in the understanding of gender issues in Nigeria. There is no way a collection of persons from different backgrounds, cultures and different experiences could be in serious actions together without conflicts. This would have been unnatural. However, WIN had its in-house policy of conflict resolution, and the principles on which the feminists worked helped in the process of constructive criticism a healthy practice for movement building. WIN succeeded as a training ground for many Nigerian feminists who are still committed in many ways to feminist struggles.

Beyond WIN

A lot has happened since the transformation of WIN from its initial focus and content to the present period when in almost every feminist gathering, questions arise that raise doubts. The Nigerian feminist movement has a forum – Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) – which is larger and more coherent than WIN.

The NFF was launched in January 2008 after an incubation period that started with the launching of the African Feminist Forum (AFF) in Accra, Ghana in 2006. As a chapter of the African Feminist Forum, the Nigerian Feminist Forum is bound by the values and principles of the AFF. The NFF has effectively replaced WIN as the Nigerian Feminist Movement, and it has gone beyond the historical stage of isolated country movements to become part of the continental (Pan African) feminist movement. AFF documents clearly state the content, context, values and principles of the present vibrant Nigerian feminist movement. Let me quickly point out that we in the NFF know that there are many self-identified Nigerian feminists within Nigeria and in the diaspora who are yet to be part of the NFF, which is still very young. Hence NFF is not a closed club nor is it a ‘come one, come all’ club. We have learned from the past. There are clear guidelines and conditions for becoming a part of the NFF. The secretariat of both the AFF and the NFF are ever ready to furnish potential, interested feminists who wish to be members with information on how to do join.

The information is contained in the Charter of the Feminist Principles for African Feminists clearly states how African and Nigerian feminists alike define themselves, the understanding Feminism and Patriarchy, our identity as African and Nigerian feminists, our ethics as individual and institutional African and Nigerian feminists, and our understanding of feminist leadership. The charter of the feminist principles of the AFF is binding on all the country level feminist forums including Nigerian Feminist Forum.
From WIN to NFF

WIN’s lessons and experiences for the NFF as a new formation include the need for the adoption of basic principles of organisation and action. There is also the need to agree on responsibilities as well as structures for coordination and leadership to ensure organised actions and sustainability. This is already being practised in the NFF with a central organising committee serviced by a joint secretariat of two feminist organisations, both located in Lagos.

Two recent events have tested the strength of NFF. One was the rallying of Nigerian feminists and many other progressive sectors of Nigerian society to put an end to attempts by a private university to force virginity and HIV testing on Nigerian girls entering the institution. Another was the mobilisation against a state attempt to ban the use of condoms. Nigerian feminists along with various institutions caused the state to annul the policy, thereby putting an end to the matter. The most recent had to do with a proposed federal bill, introduced by the female chairperson of the Nigerian Senate Committee for Women and Youths, to institutionalise a dress-code for women. The NFF, together with several women organisations, put an end to the proposed bill through several press conferences and the weight of Nigerian women’s mobilisation to fill the hall where the public hearings on the bill took place. There are many other situations that show the resurgence and revitalisation of feminist activism in Nigeria.

We celebrate these victories. It is gratifying that this can happen in present primitive neo-colonial Nigeria (and Africa), where laws are imposed by the imperialist ‘International Community’; our leaders have kept us in the backyard of that global community to serve as the dustbins or refuse dump for what does not work or what is dangerous to the community of the G8 countries. Our leaders are prepared to sign imperialist conditionalities drafted by the ailing IMF and the World Bank. These conditionalities for unequal trade agreements and perpetual indebtedness of the developing or retrogressing world where we are located, create and deepen poverty with women bearing the greatest burden imposed by culture and tradition and reinforced by the new forms of imperialist-driven religious evangelism. To worsen this already bad situation from present-day globalisation policies of re-colonisation of Africa (in particular, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, etc.), the United States and the rest of the West have come with poverty alleviation strategies and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to divert our attention from the cruel poverty imposed by their policies and the excruciating challenges women in particular face from the new importation of imperialist style of democracy. Hence, if in spite of these burdens, feminists, the larger women’s movement, and our allies have been able to challenge effectively these offshoots of imperialist-directed democracy in our country, we have cause to celebrate – with our eyes open, of course, to see when they try other gimmicks.

This is the present state of the Nigerian feminist movement and its relationship with the larger Nigerian Feminist Movement, an offshoot of the Pan-African Feminist Movement (AFF).

I FORESEE A SUSTAINED ACTIVE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA THAT WILL PLAY A STRONG ROLE IN THE AFRICAN FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND IN THE GLOBAL FEMINIST MOVEMENT AS A FORCE TO BE RECOGNISED AND RESPECTED. THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!!
APPENDIX: Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists

The African Feminist Forum took place from 15-19 November 2006 in Accra, Ghana. The meeting brought together over 100 feminist activists from all over the region and the diaspora. The space was crafted as an autonomous space in which African feminists from all walks of life, at different levels of engagement within the feminist movement such as mobilizing at local levels for women’s empowerment to academia, could reflect on a collective basis and chart ways to strengthen and grow the feminist movement on the continent.

A key outcome of the forum was the adoption of the Charter of Feminist Principles, which was agreed by the Regional Working group for the Forum, to be one of its principle aims. It was felt that we need something to help us define and affirm our commitment to feminist principles, which will guide our analysis, and practice. As such the Charter sets out the collective values that we hold as key to our work and to our lives as African feminists. It charts the change we wish to see in our communities, and also how this change is to be achieved. In addition it spells out our individual and collective responsibilities to the movement and to one another within the movement.

With this Charter, we reaffirm our commitment to dismantling patriarchy in all its manifestations in Africa. We remind ourselves of our duty to defend and respect the rights of all women, without qualification. We commit to protecting the legacy of our feminist ancestors who made numerous sacrifices, in order that we can exercise greater autonomy.

PREAMBLE: NAMING OURSELVES AS FEMINISTS

We define and name ourselves publicly as Feminists because we celebrate our feminist identities and politics. We recognise that the work of fighting for women’s rights is deeply political, and the process of naming is political too. Choosing to name ourselves Feminist places us in a clear ideological position. By naming ourselves as Feminists we politicise the struggle for women’s rights, we question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated, and we develop tools for transformative analysis and action. We have multiple and varied identities as African Feminists. We are African women – we live here in Africa and even when we live elsewhere, our focus is on the lives of African women on the continent. Our feminist identity is not qualified with ‘Ifs’, ‘Buts’, or ‘However’. We are Feminists. Full stop.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF FEMINISM & PATRIARCHY

As African feminists our understanding of feminism places patriarchal social relations structures and systems which are embedded in other oppressive and exploitative structures at the centre of our analysis. Patriarchy is a system of male authority which legitimizes the oppression of women through political, social, economic, legal cultural, religious and military institutions. Men’s access to, and control over resources and rewards within the private and public sphere derives its legitimacy from the patriarchal ideology of male dominance. Patriarchy varies in time and space, meaning that it changes over time, and varies according to class, race, ethnic, religious and global-imperial relationships and structures. Furthermore, in the current conjunctures, patriarchy does not simply change according to these factors, but is inter-related with and informs relationships of class, race, ethnic, religious, and global-imperialism. Thus to challenge patriarchy effectively also requires challenging other systems of oppression and exploitation, which frequently mutually support each other.

Our understanding of Patriarchy is crucial because it provides for us as feminists, a framework within which to express the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations which affect African women. Patriarchal ideology enables and legitimizes the structuring of every aspect of our lives by establishing the framework within which society defines and views men and women and constructs male supremacy. Our ideological task as feminists is to understand this system and our political task is to end it. Our focus is fighting against patriarchy as a system rather than fighting individual men or women. Therefore, as feminists, we define our work as investing individual and institutional energies in the struggle against all forms of patriarchal oppression and exploitation.

OUR IDENTITY AS AFRICAN FEMINISTS

As Feminists who come from/work/live in Africa, we claim the right and the space to be Feminist and African. We recognise that we do not have a homogenous identity as feminists - we acknowledge and celebrate our diversities and our shared commitment to a transformative agenda for African societies and African women in particular. This is what gives us our common feminist identity.
Our current struggles as African Feminists are inextricably linked to our past as a continent—diverse pre-colonial contexts, slavery, colonisation, liberation struggles, neo-colonialism, globalization. Modern African States were built off the backs of African Feminists who fought alongside men for the liberation of the continent. As we craft new African States in this new millennium, we also craft new identities for African women, identities as full citizens, free from patriarchal oppression, with rights of access, ownership and control over resources and our own bodies and utilizing positive aspects of our cultures in liberating and nurturing ways. We also recognise that our pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories and herstories require special measures to be taken in favour of particular African women in different contexts.

We acknowledge the historical and significant gains that have been made by the African Women’s Movement over the past forty years, and we make bold to lay claim to these gains as African feminists – they happened because African Feminists led the way, from the grassroots level and up; they strategised, organised, networked, went on strike and marched in protest, and did the research, analysis, lobbying, institution building and all that it took for States, employers and institutions to acknowledge women’s personhood.

As African feminists, we are also part of a global feminist movement against patriarchal oppression in all its manifestations. Our experiences are linked to that of women in other parts of the world with whom we have shared solidarity and support over the years. As we assert our space as African feminists, we also draw inspiration from our feminist ancestors who blazed the trail and made it possible to affirm the rights of African women. As we invoke the memory of those women whose names are hardly ever recorded in any history books, we insist that it is a profound insult to claim that feminism was imported into Africa from the West. We reclaim and assert the long and rich tradition of African women’s resistance to patriarchy in Africa. We henceforth claim the right to theorise for ourselves, write for ourselves, strategise for ourselves and speak for ourselves as African feminists.

**INDIVIDUAL ETHICS**

As individual feminists, we are committed to and believe in gender equality based on feminist principles which are:

- The indivisibility, inalienability and universality of women’s human rights;
- The effective participation in building and strengthening progressive African feminist organizing and networking to bring about transformatory change;
- A spirit of feminist solidarity and mutual respect based on frank, honest and open discussion of difference with each other;
- The support, nurture, and care of other African feminists, along with the care for our own well-being;
- The practice of non-violence and the achievement of non-violent societies;
- The right of all women to live free of patriarchal oppression, discrimination and violence;
- The right of all women to have access to sustainable and just livelihoods as well as welfare provision, including quality health care, education, water and sanitation;
- Freedom of choice and autonomy regarding bodily integrity issues, including reproductive rights, abortion, sexual identity and sexual orientation;
- A critical engagement with discourses of religion, culture, tradition and domesticity with a focus on the centrality of women’s rights;
- The recognition and presentation of African women as the subjects not the objects of our work, and as agents in their lives and societies;
- The right to healthy, mutually respectful and fulfilling personal relationships;
- The right to express our spirituality within or outside of organised religions;
- The acknowledgment of the feminist agency of African women which has a rich Herstory that has been largely undocumented and ignored.

**INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS**

As feminist organisations we commit to the following:

- Advocating for openness, transparency, equality and accountability in feminist-led institutions and organisations;
- Affirming that being a feminist institution is not incompatible with being professional, efficient, disciplined and accountable;
- Insisting on and supporting African women’s labour rights, including egalitarian governance, fair and equal remuneration and maternity policies;
Using power and authority responsibly, and managing institutional hierarchies with respect for all concerned. We believe that feminist spaces are created to empower and uplift women. At no time should we allow our institutional spaces to degenerate into sites of oppression and undermining of other women;

- Exercising responsible leadership and management of organisations whether in a paid or unpaid capacity and striving to uphold critical feminist values and principles at all times;

- Exercising accountable leadership in feminist organisations, taking into consideration the needs of others for self-fulfilment and professional development. This includes creating spaces for power-sharing across generations;

- Creating and sustaining feminist organisations to foster women’s leadership. Women’s organisations and networks should be led and managed by women. It is a contradiction of feminist leadership principles to have men leading, managing and being spokespersons for women’s organizations;

- Feminist organisations as models of good practice in the community of civil society organizations, ensuring that the financial and material resources mobilised in the name of African women are put to the service of African women and not diverted to serve personal interests. Systems and structures with appropriate Codes of Conduct to prevent corruption and fraud, and to manage disputes and complaints fairly, are the means of ensuring our organisations;

- Striving to inform our activism with theoretical analysis and to connect the practice of activism to our theoretical understanding of African feminism;

- Being open to critically assessing our impact as feminist organisations, and being honest and pro-active with regards to our role in the movement;

- Opposing the subversion and/or hijacking of autonomous feminist spaces to serve right wing, conservative agendas;

- Ensuring that feminist non-governmental or mass organisations are created in response to real needs expressed by women that need to be met, and not to serve selfish interests, and unaccountable income-generating agendas.

**FEMINIST LEADERSHIP**

As leaders in the feminist movement, we recognise that feminist agency has popularised the notion of women as leaders. As feminist leaders we are committed to making a critical difference in leadership, based on the understanding that the quality of women’s leadership is even more important than the numbers of women in leadership. We believe in and commit ourselves to the following:

- Disciplined work ethics guided by integrity and accountability at all times;

- Expanding and strengthening a multi-generational network and pool of feminist leaders across the continent;

- Ensuring that the feminist movement is recognised as a legitimate constituency for women in leadership positions;

- Building and expanding our knowledge and information base on an ongoing basis, as the foundation for shaping our analysis and strategies and for championing a culture of learning beginning with ourselves within the feminist movement;

- Nurturing, mentoring and providing opportunities for young feminists in a non-matronising manner;

- Crediting African women’s labour, intellectual and otherwise in our work;

- Creating time to respond in a competent, credible and reliable manner to other feminists in need of solidarity and support whether political, practical or emotional;

- Being open to giving and receiving peer reviews and constructive feedback from other feminists.

**References**


**Endnote**

* This briefing was originally published in 1986: A. Mohammed & Bene E. Madunagu (1986), ‘WIN: A Militant Approach to the Mobilisation of Women’, ROAPE 13:37, 103-105. Many thanks to Bene for this very timely up-date (editors).
Angolans Vote for Peace

On 5 September 2008 Angola held its first election since its protracted conflict was put to an end in April 2002. MPLA’s victory in the 1992 legislative elections was contested by UNITA and the subsequent crisis resulted in the resumption of the civil war. This historical precedent triggered a degree apprehension vis-à-vis the electoral process amongst most Angolans. The organisation of the 2008 legislative elections was managed by the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Election Process. Both bodies were largely made up of elements of the ruling party albeit the CNE had some representatives from opposition parties. The government developed a sophisticated and costly electoral system including electoral materials produced by the multinational company INDRA based in Spain.

The organisation of the elections began in 2006. The voter registration process was a paramount undertaking due to the absence of a census list of the Angolan population since 1975. The survey was carried out by several registration brigades and was observed by party agents; as a result over 8 million Angolans were registered. Nonetheless, the process was not absent of controversy since the opposition parties denounced that the traditional authorities, the so-called Sobas, in connivance with the barrios (neighbourhood) coordinators collected voters ID cards in order to elaborate a parallel register list of voters. According to the main opposition party UNITA, this was a strategy to coerce villagers into voting for MPLA. In addition, UNITA accused the CNE of recruiting polling staff members mainly amongst members of MPLA. Nevertheless, these alleged irregularities did not outweigh opposition parties’ eagerness to participate in the electoral process. In addition, the government put in place a program to induce civilian disarmament for the purpose of fostering people’s confidence in a peaceful electoral outcome.

Since May 2008 MPLA and UNITA ran a pre-election campaign leading up to the electoral campaign which started officially on 7 August 2008. According to electoral law, the 14 parties that were registered were to receive $1.1 million each for the electoral campaign three months before E-day. However, these state funds were only distributed to the political parties at the beginning of August. Opposition parties had meagre private means of financing the campaign and lacked propaganda materials and even means of transport to reach their constituencies. Hence, opposition parties mainly conducted a door to door campaign. Meanwhile, MPLA was accused by the opposition parties of using state resources for its campaign (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement1). MPLA used a wide range of means of transport (small airplanes, school buses, 4x4 vehicles, motorbikes, bikes, etc.) and displayed generous campaign resources including the distribution of a wide range of electoral materials. In addition, MPLA conducted a very well orchestrated electoral propaganda campaign in the national mass media, namely the National Angolan Radio (RPA), the National Angolan TV (TPA) and the governmental Jornal de Angola. Media opposition such as the weekly journal O Novo Jornal enjoyed limited distribution and the church run Radio Igreja could only be broadcasted in Luanda. The opposition parties struggled to get their message across to the population in the provinces due to limited means and poor organisational planning in some cases.

The MPLA campaign focused on the government’s role in sustaining 6 years of peace, social progress and economic development. José Eduardo Dos Santos, MPLA’s president and Angola’s Head of State for the last 30 years was described

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in mass meetings and rallies as a successful peacemaker. Governmental achievements made recurrently the headlines of national news programs i.e. inauguration of hospitals, schools, running water plants, infrastructures or new branches of the state-owned network of supermarkets nosso super. The Angolan media generously publicised China’s leading role in re-building the country’s infrastructures in exchange for oil supplies.

In recent years, the Angolan economy has had an annual real growth rate over 15%, its inflation stays in double digits and revenues result mainly from the booming oil industry and the extraction of minerals and diamonds. In 2008 Angola became Africa’s largest oil producer overtaking Nigeria. The Angolan Finance minister José Pedro de Morais received the prize of Best African Finance Minister in 2007 from the Financial Times magazine The Banker and he was also recently nominated among the Personalities of the Year by the Foreign Direct Investment Magazine (FDIM). The country attracts international investment and duly pays back its foreign debt to international creditors. Angolan companies linked to the Government of Angola are also striving to take control of the banking sector traditionally dominated by Portuguese firms.

The booming economy has been cleverly exploited by MPLA campaigners as being the engine for social progress to address deficits in health, education, clean water, electricity and infrastructures. Despite MPLA’s optimistic vision, Angola is still amongst the world’s least developed nations and occupies the 162nd position in the 2007-2008 UNDP development index rankings. Individuals closely connected to the MPLA leadership manage the main sources of the country’s capitalist development such as oil, construction, telecommunications and hotel industries whilst most Angolans live in precarious conditions, in shanty towns or in small villages in the rural countryside, below minimum hygiene standards, often without easy access to clean water resulting in outbreaks of contagious diseases such as cholera and chronic diarrhoea among children who suffer also from nutritional disorders. Malaria remains the most common cause of infant mortality. Despite a widespread social perception of corruption amongst certain elements of the ruling party, MPLA’s landslide victory in the elections was determined by the Angolan people’s desire to maintain peace and their expectations on the development prospects resulting from country’s emerging role in the energy sector.

In the era of globalisation, MPLA is the only game in town. Since pre-campaigning began, significant members of UNITA: some of them concerned about maintaining their positions as administrators of the current Government of National Unity: defected from UNITA and subsequently expressed their support to MPLA. Their move to the ruling party was widely publicised by state media on E-day week. Despite questions raised on the confusion between state structures and the MPLA party, elections have been deemed by all international observation missions as transparent, and all opposition parties have accepted the results, whilst allegations of vote rigging have almost been non-existent. Seemingly, international observers highlighted the process was hampered to some extent by organisational pitfalls such as delays in the distribution of materials which then obliged many polling stations to re-open in Luanda on E-day + 1, delays in the accreditation of opposition party observers and inconsistencies in the interpretation of counting procedures (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement).

MPLA obtained a landslide victory receiving 81% of the votes. UNITA and
PRS received respectively 10% and 3% of the votes. UNITA’s resounding defeat has been aggravated by its sharply declining influence in its traditional strongholds. On the other hand, PRS slightly improved its 1992 results by focusing its campaign on the promotion of federalism, i.e. provincial management of revenues as the recipe to address corruption and shorten the gap between a rich urban elite based in Luanda and poverty-stricken peasants living in the provinces; significantly, PRS obtained over 40% of the votes cast in diamond-rich province of Lunda Sul.

Needless to emphasise that MPLA’s main challenge ahead is to maintain these excellent electoral results; the electorate gave credit to the leadership who managed to sustain 6 years of peace but in future contests the government’s capacity to deliver socio-economic development will be scrutinised more closely. These elections have been conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner and Angola has taken a step forward towards political stability; as in 1992, most Angolans voted for MPLA but the country’s path towards development could benefit from governmental efforts to enable constructive criticism in the public arena. Opposition parties and independent civil society organisations are irreplaceable assets in the priceless business of sustaining Angola’s hard-won peace.

Endnotes
2. Oil in Angola is a state subsidised product. Super oil price is less than .50 cents per litre.
3. The Portuguese Bank BPI sold 49.9% of Banco de Fomento Angola, the southern African country’s largest private sector bank, to Angola’s mobile phone operator, Unitel. For further information see Peter Wise, Financial Times.com (15 September 2008).

Angola Election: 2008: Final Results

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<th>Party</th>
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<tr>
<td>MPLA</td>
<td>81.64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNITA</td>
<td>10.39%</td>
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<td>PRS</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
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<td>FOFA</td>
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The Full Cabinet List

President: José Eduardo dos Santos
Prime Minister: António Paulo Kassoma
Minister of National Defence: Kundi Paihama
Minister of Interior: Roberto Leal Ramos Monteiro
Minister of Foreign Affairs: Assunção Afonso dos Anjos
Minister of Economy: Manuel Nunes Júnior
Minister of Territory Administration: Virgílio Ferreira de Fontes Pereira
Minister of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security: António Domingos Pitra
Costa Neto
Minister of Justice: Guilhermina Coutreiras da Costa Prata
Minister of Finance: Eduardo Leopoldo Severin de Morais
Minister of Planning: Ana Alfonso Dias Lourenço
Minister of Commerce: Maria Idalina de Oliveira Valente
Minister of Hotel and Tourism: Pedro Mutindi
Minister of Agriculture: Afonso Pedro Canga
Minister of Fisheries: Salamão José Luete Chirimbimbi
Minister of Industry: Joaquim Duarte de Costa David
Minister of Oil: José Maria Botelho de Vasconcelos
Minister of Geology and Mining: Makenda Ambroise
Minister of Environment: Maria de Fátima Monteiro Jardim
Minister of Science and Technology: Maria Cândida Teixeira
Minister of Urbanisation and Housing: Diakumpuna Sita José
Minister of Public Works: Francisco Higino Lopes Carneiro
Minister of Transport: Augusto da Silva Tomás
Minister of Energy: Emanuela Afonso Viera Lopes
Minister of Telecommunication and Information Technology: José Carvalho da Rocha
Minister of Health: José Viera Dias Van-Dúnem
Minister of Education: António Buriti da Silva Neto
Minister of Culture: Rosa Maria Martins da Cruz e Silva
Minister of Social Welfare: João Baptista Kussumua
Minister of Family & Women Promotion: Genoveva da Conceição Lino
Minister of Former Combatants and War Veterans: Pedro José Van-Dúnem
Minister of Youth and Sports: Gonçalves Manuel Muandumba
Minister of Social Communication: Manuel António Rabelais
Minister without portfolio: António Bento Bembe
Minister without portfolio: Francisca de Fátima do Espírito Santo de Carvalho Almeida
Secretary of State for Rural Development: Maria Filomena de Fátima Lobão Teló Delgado
Secretary of State for Higher Education: Adão Gaspar Pereira do Nascimento

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Chris Allen
8 December 1942 – 29 September 2008

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Chris, one of the founding editors of this journal, died in Coulestrine, France on the 29th of September. We will be publishing tributes and a selection of his writing in the March 2009 issue of ROAPE. Our love to Frances and their daughters, Kate and Jude.

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Briefings

Outsourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp International as Sovereign Agent

Sean McFate

After over 150 years of troubled history, fourteen years of civil war, war crimes and horrific abuses of power, Liberia stands at the precipice of history. The war came to a merciful end in 2003, when Charles Taylor fled into exile, but the war’s ravages were complete. The United States Agency for International Development characterised Liberia’s post-conflict landscape this way:

[...]er 250,000 people, most of them civilian non-combatants, have lost their lives in the civil war. More than 1.3 million have been displaced, including hundreds of thousands who fled the country. Abductions, torture, rape and other human rights abuses have taken place on a massive scale. It is estimated that at least one in ten children may have been recruited into militias at one time or another. A similar percentage has been traumatized by seeing their families and friends murdered and raped (US Agency for International Development, 2004).

Liberia remains dependent upon one of the world’s largest United Nations peacekeeping forces for its survival, and fears are mounting over the looming departure of peacekeepers. Who will provide security then? Will spoilers plunge the country back into violence? How will Liberia ward off potential spillover effects from violence in neighbouring Sierra Leone, Guinea, or Côte d’Ivoire?

These questions were presaged in the peace talks leading up to Taylor’s departure, and it was decided that wholesale transformation of the security sector was required so that Liberia could secure itself and not be forever reliant on international peacekeepers.

Security sector reform (SSR) is a crucial element of peacebuilding, especially in post-conflict settings. SSR is the wholesale transformation of indigenous security organisations into effective, legitimate, apolitical, and accountable institutions that uphold the rule of law and maintain the state’s monopoly on force. At a minimum, the security sector comprises three categories of actors: those directly involved in the protection of civilians and the state from violent harms (e.g. law enforcement or military); institutions that govern these actors (e.g. Ministries of Interior, Defense, Justice); and executive and legislative oversight bodies.

Failure to successfully implement SSR can seriously compromise peacebuilding efforts for several reasons. First, unaccountable and/or unprofessional security forces can become spoilers, which can hold the entire peacebuilding process hostage to their narrow interests under threat of violence. This can lead to a relapse of armed conflict. Second, it can also prolong peacekeeping missions, as security is a precondition of development. Last, SSR is a prerequisite for the exit strategy of costly peacekeeping missions, since it allows countries to secure themselves.

The central question of SSR in a country like Liberia is how to transform the military from a symbol of terror into an...
instrument of democracy. The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) was complicit in human rights atrocities and the descent into civil war. Hence, the objective of the Joint US-Liberia SSR programme was to demobilise Liberia’s armed forces and reconstitute the AFL and Ministry of Defence (MOD) in toto.1

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of this innovative programme was the United States’ decision to completely outsource this critical task to private military companies (PMCs). Rarely in modern history has one sovereign nation hired a private entity to raise a military for another sovereign nation. This briefing outlines some of the key elements and outcomes of this prototypical programme, as seen from one of its early architects which may augur future US engagement in Africa. This is especially relevant given the new US military’s Africa Command (AFRICOM), which will likely outsource similar missions to private companies in the future.

The Decision to Outsource

Following Taylor’s departure, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) on 19 September 2003. At the time, it was the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world, growing to 15,000 ‘blue helmets’ with a robust civilian component. Jacques Paul Klein was appointed as the Special Representative of the Secretary General and UNMIL officially took over peacekeeping duties on 1 October 2003. Two months later it began the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) process of approximately 100,000 people.

From 4 June to 18 August 2003 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brokered the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), also known as the ‘Accra Accords’. In Part Four of these Accords on Security Sector Reforms,2 the UN and US agreed to share responsibilities, with the UN agreeing to transform the Liberian National Police and the US the AFL. The US’s commitment was managed by the US Department of State (DOS), which organised an initial assessment trip in January 2004. This was followed by a subject matter expert assessment in May, consisting of personnel from US Department of Defense (DOD) and two companies: DynCorp International (DynCorp) and Pacific Architects and Engineers (PA&E). The purpose of this assessment mission, during which time one of the DOD civilian staff members was murdered, was to determine the operational requirements for SSR of the AFL.

Following the assessment mission, DOD concluded it could not conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints, driven in part by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consequently, the DOS decided to wholly ‘contract out’ the task of reconstituting the AFL and MoD to the private sector. Not long after the assessment trip, DOS tendered a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E. Only these two companies were allowed to submit bids as they had earlier won the five-year Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract from DOS to support peacekeeping and security efforts in Africa. IDIQ contracts essentially act as umbrella contracts between the US government and select companies for a fixed period of time, and are meant to streamline the contracting process. After reviewing both proposals, DOS decided to divide the duties between the two contractors. DynCorp was responsible for demobilising the legacy force and then recruiting, vetting and training the AFL and MoD. PA&E was responsible for fielding the AFL and providing mentorship once the units were in place. Both firms were required to engage in construction of military bases and other facilities as necessary, with authorisation from DOS.
Designing the Force

The SSR process began by informally identifying and engaging key stakeholders, which included the legacy force, former rebels, the host government, civil society, and the international community. To their credit, DynCorp eschewed ill-fitting templates of the US military for the new AFL, and sought to craft – in partnership with the Liberian government – a more appropriate security force, which is discussed below. After a full-year of conversation, a vision of the AFL’s mission, composition, and desired end state was reached. It would be a mistake to assume that there was uniform consensus or that all stakeholders were engaged fully. The prominent voices in the discussion were the US government, which was sponsoring the programme, and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL).

Ultimately the vision entailed a small all-volunteer force (approximately 2,000 persons) that could be scaled upwards in time. It was acknowledged that a 2,000 person force would be insufficient to defend all of Liberia, should a full-scale war erupt. But it was also acknowledged that the size needed to be constrained by the government’s ability to pay soldiers’ salaries on a regular basis, as history suggested that unpaid soldiers were a greater threat to Liberia’s security than threat of an invading army.

It was also agreed that the AFL should have a defence-oriented force posture and light infantry organisational structure that was strong enough to repel cross-border militant attacks but not so strong as to threaten Liberia’s neighbours. This force would maintain a 12th grade functional literacy level, balanced ethnic and gender mix within the ranks, and foster an apolitical professional ethos, especially in the leadership, that respects the rule of law, cultivates a public service ethos, and accepts civilian control of the military. Finally, the AFL and ideally the entire Liberian security sector should embrace a ‘human security’ model.

DynCorp officially proposed the initial force structure and ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ – the blueprint for the new AFL – to the State Department in July 2005. In military parlance, a ‘force structure’ is the wire-diagram of units in the AFL and MoD, from the General Staff down to the basic infantry squad. A ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ is a spreadsheet inventory of personnel and equipment, delineating for each unit the exact rank, title, and military occupational specialty of each soldier and every piece of equipment authorised for the unit. The original blueprint for the AFL totalled 1,928 soldiers: a brigade headquarters company (103 personnel), two light infantry battalions (663 personnel each), an engineer company (162 personnel), a military police company (114 personnel), a training company (180 personnel), a military band (40 personnel), and three military personnel at the Ministry of Defense, which was overwhelmingly civilian in composition. Although this blueprint has changed over time, the original concept for the AFL remains consistent.

Establishing the Programme

It is impossible to truncate a multi-year, highly complex process, with more than a few surprises, into a single article. In brief, the AFL SSR programme was originally envisaged to proceed in several phases. Phase I was political consultation with stakeholders and sensitising the public to the creation of a new AFL. The key issues were: identifying and engaging stakeholders; the composition and mission of the AFL; and overcoming the legacy of atrocities it inherited from the civil war. Phase II was safely demobilising the legacy force. The key issues included: who is eligible for demobilisation benefits; finding donor money to pay for those benefits; controls to prevent
fraud during the demobilisation process; public sensitisation to the programme; and fears that disgruntled demobilised soldiers would incite political violence. At the same time, construction of training facilities commenced. The primary concerns were: negotiating site selection; finding competent construction companies; theft of materials; and significant delays caused by the six-month rainy season.

Phase III was recruiting and vetting the force. The primary concern for recruiting was attracting women and minority ethnic groups to serve in what was traditionally an ethnically Krahn-dominated institution. As for vetting, it is difficult to establish mere identity in post-conflict Liberia, to say nothing of a full background check. Creating a competent vetting programme was a key challenge.

Phase IV was military training and equipping. The chief concerns were lack of literacy, leadership selection and instilling a professional, apolitical ethos that placed service to the country above tribe or individual. Simultaneously, MoD transformation began, which included hiring and training all civilian personnel, as well as the creation of all AFL policies. Here the challenges were finding qualified mentors and synchronising the development of the MoD with interdependent government institutions.

Phase V was fielding the new force, which meant deployment of soldiers to their permanent duty station. At the time of publication, the programme remains mired in Phase IV due to several reasons, including sensitivity and uniqueness of the task, erratic programme funding by the US, and irregularities of DynCorp management (see Malan, 2008). Last, almost every aspect of this programme is sui generis, as there are no textbooks on comprehensive SSR, and this made progress problematic.

**Programme Timeline**

**2003**
- **August:** Charles Taylor flees Liberia and ECOWAS peacekeepers and US troops arrive. The interim government and rebels sign the CPA. Gyude Bryant is chosen to head the interim government (NTGL).
- **September–October:** US forces pull out, and UNMIL begins the peacekeeping mission.
- **December:** UNMIL begins DDRR for non-statutory (non-AFL) combatants only. AFL personnel are disarmed, but not demobilised, rehabilitated and reintegrated, leaving that to the US government, as agreed to during CPA negotiations.

**2004**
- **January:** The US Department of State sends a small contingent to Liberia to begin a preliminary assessment. The US is responsible for Part IV, Article Seven of the CPA, which covers SSR for the AFL. DOS is the lead agency within the US government for this task.
- **February:** International donors pledge more than US$500 million in reconstruction aid.
- **May:** DOS organises a ten-day assessment of SSR for the AFL. The assessment team consists of US personnel (mostly from the military) and two contractor teams: DynCorp and PA&E. A member of the assessment team is murdered in his hotel room during a robbery.
- **June:** DoD decides it cannot conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints. DOS decides to contract the SSR programme, and tenders a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E.
- **July:** DOS decides to split the contract between the two contractors, making DynCorp responsible for selecting and training the force and PA&E for fielding the force. However, DOS does not officially initiate the programme or release funds until programme preconditions are met (e.g., political support of the NTGL to demobilise legacy AFL veterans).
- **October:** Riots in Monrovia leave 16 people dead; UNMIL says former combatants and AFL veterans were behind the violence.
2005  February–March: Consultations with major stakeholders regarding the mission and composition of the future AFL. This includes civil society, the standing AFL, former warring parties and political factions, the NTGL, UNMIL, and other entities. A comprehensive recruiting and vetting plan is devised intended to screen out human rights abusers from joining the AFL. March–May: Consultations with stakeholders continue. Discussions include the problem of safely demobilising the legacy force without provoking political violence, mission and force structure of future AFL, location of training bases, sensitisation campaign for civil society, and arrears owed AFL veterans. The demobilisation plan is drafted and presented to Chairman Bryant, who signs Executive Order 5, authorising the full demobilisation of all legacy AFL units. DOS officially initiates the SSR programme and releases funds to DynCorp to begin recruiting and building. PA&E will begin its programme once training commences. July: The demobilisation and reintegation of 13,770 legacy soldiers commences. DynCorp builds a demobilisation site outside Monrovia. The US government approves the initial blueprint for the new AFL’s force structure. Construction of AFL training facilities commences but is slowed by the monsoon rainy season. September: The NTGL agrees that the international community should supervise its finances in an effort to counter corruption. October: Recruiting and vetting for the new AFL begins. Over 12,000 applicants will be processed in the two years to come. 23 November: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf becomes the first woman to be elected as an African head of state. She takes office the following January.

2006  January: The demobilisation of the AFL is successful completed, the first time in modern African history that an entire standing military was safely demobilised without significant incident. February: A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is set up to investigate human rights abuses between 1979 and 2003. Tensions transpire between the TRC and SSR programme, when the TRC’s request for access to SSR vetting records is denied by the SSR team on account that it might compromise sources and methods, possibly resulting in reprisal killings of witnesses who spoke to the SSR vetting team on condition of anonymity about human rights abuses of some AFL candidates. April: MOD transformation begins. Former President Charles Taylor appears before the UN-backed Sierra Leone Special Court on charges of crimes against humanity. In June the International Criminal Court at The Hague agrees to host his trial. May: Brownie Samukai, the Liberian Minister of Defence, spends a week in Washington, DC collaboratively formulating the Liberian National Defence Strategy, modelled on a human security paradigm.

June: A first draft of the National Defence Strategy is written, seeking to align the AFL’s mission with the goals of development for durable stability. Progress is limited because the Government of Liberia, UNMIL, the US government and others are delayed with the National Security Strategy. The UN Security Council eases a ban on weapons sales so that Liberia can arm newly trained security forces. An embargo on Liberian timber exports is lifted shortly afterwards. July: The first class of AFL basic training begins. It is a pilot programme of about 110 candidates, mostly selected for their leadership potential in order to fill the leadership ranks first. DynCorp begins the process of purchasing and importing arms into Liberia for the AFL. President Johnson-Sirleaf switches on generator-powered streetlights in the capital, which has been without electricity for 15 years. August: The first major shipment of arms arrives in Monrovia for the AFL. It is the first legal shipment in 15 years. November: The first AFL basic training class graduates. Training of future classes is halted owing to US budget constraints.
2007  September: 630 recruits have graduated from the Initial Entry Training (IET) course. Owing to cost overruns, IET was shortened from eleven weeks to eight weeks by cutting three weeks that were devoted to human rights, civics, and laws of war training.  March: 119 civilian MOD employees graduate a 17-week of SSR programme training course.  April: The UN Security Council votes to lift its ban on Liberian diamond exports. The ban was imposed in 2001 to stem the flow of ‘blood diamonds,’ which helped fund the civil war.  June: The start of Charles Taylor’s war crimes trial at The Hague, where he stands accused of instigating atrocities in Sierra Leone.

2008  January: 485 soldiers graduated from IET.

Surprises

As with any complex peacebuilding mission, few things went as planned. Some of this was due to the difficulty of the task and environment; however, some was due to the unique relationship between DynCorp, the US government, and Liberian government. To be clear, this trifecta produced both positive and negative results, many of which were unexpected.

Irreconcilable Differences

Profit-motive and public policy can be conflicting interests. DynCorp, like most private companies, is naturally profit-seeking and is guided by market forces in the search for more demand for its services. Government institutions, on the other hand, are primarily interested in achieving public goods through public policy. Profit versus policy can be conflicting goals in public-private partnerships, such as the US and DynCorp, where the government utilises private means to achieve public goods. To resolve this, governments can shape companies’ interests and behaviour through market regulation that incentivise the private sector to realise responsible outcomes. However, current regulation and oversight in the US of this multi-billion dollar industry is diminimus. With a few notable exceptions, there has yet to be a serious discussion within the US government defining the appropriate spheres of activity for private contractors and government personnel in the security sector, much less effective regulatory oversight and concrete accountability mechanisms. Owing to this, the PMC industry behaves like an unguided missile, seeking profit wherever the market will bear it, even if it means a loss for society as a whole (see Avant, 2005).

Another deleterious side effect of this public-private partnership is the evolving co-dependency between government and the industry based on the asymmetries of information that exist between them. This industry has boomed from a multi-million to a multi-billion dollar market since 9/11, owing to the US government’s need of ‘wartime’ muscle. Unfortunately, the US bureaucracy that governs this industry was unable to grow at a commensurate rate, as the public sector is generally less nimble at growth than the private sector. Consequently, there is a paucity of government administrators to oversee these large companies, and those that exist are generally unqualified, ill-equipped and/or over-tasked. In Liberia for example, DynCorp’s contract overseer was a US Navy officer with absolutely no experience in building armies, especially given his background as a sailor. Nor was he a Certified Public Accountant or fully trained contract officer, skilled in managing a multi-million dollar contract with a large, savvy multinational company. Although his efforts were laudable and tireless, the US government simply did not equip him with the requisite tools he needed to achieve his assignment.

Consequently, there was a substantial knowledge gap between the officer in charge of overseeing the contract and the
company, which DynCorp could exploit for profit. He was largely dependent upon DynCorp’s technical opinions in order to make relevant programmatic decisions on behalf of the US government. The problem was that DynCorp have a vested interest in steering the government towards profitable outcomes rather than good public policy. This might include inflating the need for more staff than is required or purchasing more equipment at the government’s expense. DynCorp, like many government contractors, makes its profit on ‘time and materials,’ meaning that they charge the government a premium for every hour an employee works or for every item (no matter how small) that is purchased. How much a premium they charge largely constitutes the company’s profit margin.

There are other ways that DynCorp had the opportunity to manipulate public outcomes for private gains. For example, DynCorp occupied a unique position during the consultations: impromptu facilitator. Achieving some modicum of consent from myriad stakeholders regarding the SSR programme was vital. Ideally, it would have fallen to the US government to drive this conversation. However, US embassy staffing was thin and over-burdened. As a result, the task of engaging stakeholders unofficially fell to DynCorp. Although DynCorp occupied the privileged position of agenda setter: identifying and sequencing the issues to be discussed; shaping outcomes by strategically proposing solutions for stakeholders to react to; and the de facto selection of stakeholder leadership by choosing whom to engage and when, regardless of whether their opinions represented the group as a whole. Consequently, the company could partly shape outcomes.

In my earlier experience, programme managers at DynCorp did not deliberately manipulate stakeholder consulta-

Principal-Agent Issues

However, not every aspect of this public-private partnership is negative. These companies can act as institutional ‘freecrons’ who are not beholden to entrenched viewpoints, agendas, interests, budget battles or turf-wars. Consequently, they can propose and implement practical solutions without regard to bureaucratic dogma. This is not to suggest that DynCorp was able to act autonomously in Monrovia: it was not. But DynCorp managers did enjoy a modicum of latitude that US government bureaucrats could not, especially along the interagency fault lines between DOD and the US Department of State. Moreover, given the ‘whole of government’ nature of SSR, DynCorp could act as a cross-cutting agent throughout the government (see OECD-DAC, 2007).

In fact, DynCorp could even advocate for the raw interests of Liberians in back offices of the Pentagon and State Department in Washington, DC. For example, it became evident during the consultations that Liberians were strong advocates of gender equality in the ranks while the US government was not. Although this SSR programme was managed by the State Department, it would frequently confer with DOD on technical issues regarding the AFL. Certain elements in DOD opposed the idea of women serving in ‘front line’ combat units, such as the infantry, which is the practice of the US army. Acting as a third-party facilitator, DynCorp was, in some ways, an unwitting arbitrator in a debate between the
defence establishment in Washington, DC and the stakeholders in Liberia. As a structural ‘other’ in the process, which was nominally dispassionate on the issue, DynCorp managers could credibly present ideas and recommendations to stakeholders without the burdens of institutional loyalty or prejudice. This helped drive the argument for gender parity, since key managers in DynCorp were persuaded by the Liberians’ case, championing it within the walls of the Washington, DC bureaucracy and effectively giving voice to Liberian interests. Ultimately, DOS opted for gender parity, overturning DOD’s desire to utilise US military templates – such as no women in infantry units – for other nations’ militaries.

Consequently, Liberian women now enjoy greater equality in the ranks than do American women. This remarkable outcome was partly driven by DynCorp’s position as a comparative ‘free agent’ in the US bureaucracy and facilitator in the consultation process. It was also largely driven by individual personalities on the ground rather than any corporate philosophy, demonstrating once more the vulnerability of the process to manipulation, either positive or negative.

Innovative Solutions

Another positive facet of this private-public partnership is innovative thought. As mentioned above, the DOD is often tempted to utilise ill-fitting US templates for foreign militaries, whether they are appropriate or not. US ‘train and equip’ programmes typically overlay US strategy, procedures, doctrine, and other US ‘best practices’ on foreign forces that receive the training. Examples of ‘train and equip’ programmes include: Joint Combined Exchange Training; International Military Education and Training; and Foreign Military Financing. Recently, the US government greatly expanded this capability through ‘1206 funding,’ named for the section of the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act in the 2006 defence budget. This authority allows the DOD, in consultation with the State Department, to spend up to $200 million a year to train and equip the militaries of strategic partners in the US’s global ‘war on terror’.

The problem is that military templates that might work well for the US may not work well for Liberia. Liberia needs a Liberian solution. This requires more than a ‘train and equip’ mentality, which only provides better shooters in newer equipment. These programmes are necessary but insufficient for wholesale SSR, as they fail to address the underlying causes of why security sectors fail: corruption, human rights abuse, incompetent leadership, culture of impunity, lack of ethnic balance, etc.

For instance, during the initial SSR assessment mission to Liberia in May, 2004, the US military proposed a 4,020-person AFL, including a 412-person combat engineer battalion that would conduct tasks such as mine laying, constructing field fortifications, and digging tank traps. However, Liberia is not in danger of a World War Two-style blitzkrieg from Sierra Leone. Instead, its engineer needs are basic infrastructure repair such as roads, bridges and buildings, to ensure the logistical resupply of bases and humanitarian relief. Also, conspicuously absent from the briefing was any plan to transform the Ministry of Defense and build institutional capacity for the AFL. Also absent was a recruiting, vetting and training plan for the AFL. Last, even though this was only a concept briefing based on a quick trip to Liberia, it lacked significant input from indigenous stakeholders or experts in West African security. In fact, the majority of officers who served on the assessment mission had never set foot in Africa before.

These and other problems were addressed a year later by DynCorp – in
partnership with the NTGL and US government – after consultations with stakeholders and non-US experts, a practice not usually employed by DOD in ‘train and equip’ programmes. This led to innovative recommendations and a more tailored force for Liberia. For example, the force was ‘simplified’ greatly. DynCorp opted for a basic motorised infantry brigade that was not dependent on expensive technologies that are difficult to source and maintain in Africa, no ‘elite’ units such as Taylor’s former ‘Special Anti-Terrorist Unit (SATU)’ which could terrorise the population, or high-caliber weaponry such as tanks or artillery that could threaten neighbours. By eschewing the DOD’s penchant to create miniature US-militaries around the world, Liberia enjoys a more sustainable force that is better tailored for the needs of the country.

There were other significant innovations, three of which warrant further analysis. The first is the creation of a rigorous human rights vetting model for AFL candidates to ensure past human rights abusers do not enter the AFL. This is an enormous challenge in a post-conflict environment where credible public records and other instruments of background checks are utterly lacking (McFate, 2007). The second is the institutionalisation of a special ombudsman-like office within the Ministry of Defense to address issues of tribal and gender equality. During Samuel Doe’s reign, the AFL devolved into a sectarian institution dominated by his Krahn tribe, which at times used the military as a tool for ethnic cleansing. It was important to prevent this from happening again.

The third example was placing human rights, ‘laws of war,’ and civics training equal to combat related training, such as shooting. Given the AFL’s troubled past, stakeholders urged that every soldier must understand that knowing when to pull the trigger was as important as hitting what you were aiming at. Accordingly, three of the eleven weeks of Basic Training (also called Initial Entry Training) were devoted to civics training, an unprecedented development in military training in Africa or elsewhere.

Tragically, DynCorp later opted to cut this training, shortening Basic Training to eight weeks, thus saving money. This is a mistake. As Mark Malan recommends in a recent report on Liberia’s SSR:

> Congress should insist on more credible measures to ensure that civics and human rights become a central element of the US training program for the AFL (Malan, 2008:xi).

**Prelude to Future US Engagement in Africa?**

The US-Liberia SSR Programme may prove a good indicator of future US engagement in Africa, especially given the newly established US military Africa Command or AFRICOM. AFRICOM will likely outsource a good portion of its capabilities to PMCs given the complementary interests of supply and demand. AFRICOM has a huge mandate yet will not be given dedicated military units to accomplish its mission. In fact, no new military units will be created for AFRICOM at all, save the headquarters itself currently located at Stuttgart, Germany. Worse, it cannot expect to ‘borrow’ existing units elsewhere because of the huge demand for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. How will it accomplish its mission? By outsourcing it to PMCs.

Which is exactly what PMCs are waiting for. This multi-billion dollar industry is looking for the next US-sponsored conflict market once the Iraq and Afghanistan ‘bubble bursts,’ and they see that market as Africa, a continent of crisis. Thanks to the wars in the Middle East and opportunities like the US-Liberia SSR Programme in Africa, this industry has honed its services in the areas that
AFRICOM most needs: training and equipping; war-zone logistics; humanitarian response; post-conflict reconstruction; infrastructure repair; and SSR. The symmetry of supply and demand between PMCs and AFRICOM are exquisite.

Conclusion

The US-Liberia SSR Programme is an excellent prism into the future of US engagement on the continent, especially vis-à-vis AFRICOM. The complex outcomes that stem from outsourcing core military tasks, such as making militaries, to PMCs augur insights into how AFRICOM might engage Africa. This article briefly charts some of these outcomes, both positive and negative, from an ‘insider’s’ perspective.

However, larger concerns loom on the horizon. The utilisation of PMCs in Africa is more sensitive than in the Middle East given Africa’s lamentable past experiences with colonialism and mercenaries. This will prove a public diplomacy challenge for AFRICOM, which will seek to win ‘hearts and minds’ for the American cause. Moreover, consistent with the rule of ‘unintended consequences,’ the reliance by AFRICOM on PMCs may unwittingly generate a wider market for force on the continent, attracting future PMCs from Russia or elsewhere, in addition to the possibility of African PMCs. Will demand diversify to encompass multinational companies, NGOs, opposition groups, and private individuals? What will happen if market forces demand greater combat-oriented services? Could, for example, an NGO hire a PMC to conduct an armed humanitarian intervention in Darfur to ‘save lives’ in the name of human rights and the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ doctrine? What are the second, third and fourth order repercussions of this action? Could it exacerbate on-the-ground conflict? Draw the US into a war with Sudan? Trigger a UN Chapter 7 intervention? The implications of this on global security governance are terrifying, and few would welcome the development of an industry vested in conflict in Africa. Yet these critical questions remain scarcely examined.

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Endnotes

1. The author was a principal architect of this programme; he does not claim credit for its management.

Bibliography


The Dynamics of Private Security in Senegal

Cyrus O’Brien

The privatisation of security has recently attracted much attention, particularly in light of abuses by private military companies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of this attention sensationalises private security by focusing on private armies unbounded by national boundaries and unencumbered by international law. Recently, however, less dramatic forms of private security such as private guarding, surveillance, alarm systems, and patrolling have become more prevalent worldwide. These more mundane forms of private security are central to the daily operations of many societies.

The expansion of private security in the developing world is nearly always attributed to high levels of insecurity and general instability. Senegal, by contrast, is relatively safe and stable, but nevertheless has a rapidly expanding private security sector. The country is home to more than 150 private security companies that employ between 25,000 and 35,000 people, making Senegal’s private security sector relatively larger per capita than those of more violent countries like Nigeria and Kenya. The vast majority of these companies operate in the informal sector where they avoid taxation and governmental regulation, and like in many other countries, working conditions in the sector are poor. Unlike many other countries, however, Senegal has made significant and successful efforts to prevent international security companies like Group4Securicor from gaining a foothold.

This briefing is based on research conducted on behalf of the gun control organisation Le Mouvement Contre les Armes Légères en Afrique de l’Ouest (MALAO) in Senegal in the spring of 2007. It describes the private security sector, concentrating particularly on Dakar, where international businesses and international organisations (IOs) provide the largest sources of demand for private security. It includes an examination of the economic and political circumstances that have enabled the growth of private security and a discussion of the relationship between private security companies, the government, and business.

The Growth of Private Security Amidst Stability & Peace

In the worldwide proliferation of private security companies (PSCs), Senegal represents a unique case: the private security sector is growing despite political stability and a low crime rate. Previous briefings in this journal have attributed the growth of private security in other countries to ‘high crime rates, combined with the inability of the public security services to provide adequate protection’ (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2005). Indeed, general insecurity has been a key factor driving the sector’s growth in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Nicaragua, and Guatemala (Ibid; Lilly & von Tangen Page, 2002). The situation in Senegal demonstrates that the expansion of private security is not limited to countries where instability and insecurity prevail.

Senegal has the reputation of being West Africa’s most stable country. Since its independence from France in 1960, it has maintained a democratic system of government and regularly holds relatively fair elections. The Senegalese armed forces are firmly under civilian control and have never intervened in politics, making Senegal one of the few African countries to avoid a coup d’état since independence from colonial rule. The Casamance, a breakaway southern province separated from Senegal proper by the Gambia, is the only major source of instability in the country. However, since 2000 the situation has calmed, resulting
in only occasional violence. Violence has been confined to the Casamance, leaving the majority of Senegal free from political strife.

This climate of political stability has enabled Senegal to maintain a remarkably low crime rate. Winslow (2008), relying on data from Interpol, reported the total crime rate to be 64.29 crimes for every 100,000 people, compared with 1,709.88 for Japan and 5,955.05 for the United Kingdom. The same study showed Senegal’s murder rate to be 0.33 per 100,000 people, or roughly one fifth that of the UK. Although the general crime statistic is surely underreported, the given murder rate is roughly accurate; because murders are rare in Senegal, the press thoroughly reports them. Though not completely reliable, these figures show that Senegal is not a country plagued by crime.

With little else to offer – peanuts are the biggest contributor to the GDP – Senegal markets its stability and peace to attract foreign businesses and organisations. Dakar, the capital, hosts the West African headquarters for many international non-governmental organisations, research institutions, and IOs. Particularly since the war in Ivory Coast, business and organisations have flocked to Senegal. In January of this year, Dubai World paid US$800 million for the rights to administer a free trade zone within Senegal, joining the flow of businesses that see Senegal as a ‘gateway’ into the region (Flynn, 2008).

It is primarily the presence of these businesses and organisations that generates demand for PSCs. Because demand is almost entirely fuelled by foreigners and expatriates, private guards are an almost entirely urban phenomenon. International mining activities, heavily guarded despite their rural location, are the exception. Throughout Dakar, private guards stand in front of nearly every sizable business or organisation guarding everything from banks to bookstores to offices and schools. Nearly every location an expatriate might visit is under private guard. Foreign businesses and organisations contract PSCs to provide security not only for the businesses themselves, but also for the homes of their employees. Paradoxically, then, peace, stability, and a low crime rate fuel the growth of the private security sector because they attract international businesses and organisations.

The police are widely viewed as inept and corrupt, prompting the wealthy to turn to the private sector for security. The majority of the population, however, continues to rely on traditional methods for security. Typical neighbourhoods are some of the safest places in the country, as residents keep a watchful eye on suspicious persons and come quickly to each other’s aid. While usually advantageous, at times such security networks become vigilante groups and occasionally escalate a situation. While statistics are hard to obtain, evidence suggests that vigilante groups account for most of Senegal’s (low) murder rate; upon identifying a thief or criminal, mobs may beat the suspect to death. On the whole, however, traditional security methods help to preserve overall security, making most of Senegal’s villages, neighbourhoods, and towns safe.

Inequality, Exploitation & Unions

The private security sector in Senegal mushroomed in the aftermath of the 1994 economic reforms promoted by the IMF and World Bank. Although the first private security companies were founded in the late 1980s, they did not become prevalent until the economic reforms resulted in greater levels of inequality. There are currently over 150 private security companies in Senegal, all but a few created since 1994. The sector’s rapid rate of expansion makes it difficult to estimate the exact number, as new PSCs are formed with incredible frequency.
The 1994 neo-liberal reforms involved the lifting of subsidies and price controls, a steady deregulation of the economy, and a 50% devaluation of the currency. The reforms positively affected Senegal’s macroeconomic outlook; inflation was brought under control, government finances were balanced, and the economy turned around. After contracting in the early 1990s, Senegal’s economy has steadily grown at an annual rate of around 5%.

The economic gains of the 1990s were not distributed across the Senegalese economy. Living conditions for most of the population declined as prices for food and other basic goods were deregulated. The number of street peddlers exploded at this time, as unemployment forced large numbers of people into the informal economy. Today, nearly a quarter of the population survives on less than $1 a day, and more than three-fifths on less than $2 each day. Thus, despite the economic influxes caused by the arrival of international business, intense poverty and inequality are on the rise, and may potentially destabilise the prevailing security environment. As one director of a PSC remarked, the private security sector depends ‘not on a lack of security, but instead on a lack of wealth’.

With nearly half of the workforce unemployed, private guards face a strikingly soft labour market. A typical guard is paid between US$70 and $120 each month, while the most professional companies pay their employees up to $180. In some cases, guards are given monthly transport stipends, but these almost never meet actual costs. Guards work exceedingly long hours and face very high exploitation, taking home only 35-50% of what clients pay for their services.

In my research, I found not one private security company in Senegal that did not violate national regulations in some way. The most common abuses were paying below the minimum wage, demanding that guards work for unreasonable hours, and employing guards on temporary contracts. Senegalese labour codes stipulate that after one temporary six-month contract, employers must hire a worker permanently or dismiss the employee. Even the most professionalised and the highest paying PSCs in Senegal violate this provision in the work code.

There are no strong unions of security guards, although many guards express a desire for one. Many guards are reluctant to establish a union because they fear being laid off when their six-month contract expires. The lack of permanent contracts in the sector increases the vulnerability of guards and prevents them from taking strong positions relating to working conditions.

**Cooperation Between PSCs & the Government**

Most PSCs are managed or owned by former police and military officials. In some cases, officers will found private security companies while still holding public office, usually passing the day-to-day management responsibilities to a family member. Tightening the relationship between the state security forces and private sector, nearly all security guards in Senegal have completed military service and, for most companies, military or police service is an explicit prerequisite to employment.

One-third of Senegal’s military is comprised of conscripts, each of whom serves two years without the possibility of extension. Although conscription exists, it is not enforced against one’s will. The droves of unemployed find such relatively well-paying vacancies in the military desirable, and the positions are easily filled. After serving two years, conscripts are released from the army and many find jobs in the private security sector. Many guards lament their discharge from the state security forces and some eventually find more lucrative
employment with the police or gendarmerie.

Despite the overlap in personnel, there is little overt cooperation between PSCs and state security forces. Police and private security guards hold positive views of each other but, in contrast to the situation in many countries, the police do not rely on the private sector. The government of Senegal has no contracts with PSCs and all state security functions remain under the purview of the army and police. Public-private partnerships, such as water treatment plants, La Poste, and Senelec (the national electric company), are exceptions and hire PSCs to guard their facilities.

Two private military companies, Northrop Grumman Technical Services (NGTS) and Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), train the Senegalese armed forces as part of the US State Department's African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) programme. The ACOTA programme, created after the US debacle in Somalia, seeks to train and equip African militaries to conduct peacekeeping missions, thereby minimising the responsibilities of the West. The US Government supplies Senegal with the bulk of its military equipment and hires NGTS and MPRI teams to conduct eight two-month training programmes, focusing primarily on peacekeeping tactics. Senegalese soldiers trained under ACOTA have served as peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Darfur.

In addition to ACOTA, Senegal is a partner in the so-called ‘war on terror’ and currently receives aid through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, a counter-terrorism effort to track activity from the Atlantic Ocean to Chad. The role of private military companies in this programme is unclear.

**Regulation & Corruption**

The most significant problems facing the private security sector in Senegal result from their poor regulation. More than 80% of PSCs are not registered with the government, do not pay taxes, and operate completely in the informal sector. In 2003, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade issued a decree mandating that all PSCs be owned and operated by Senegalese citizens or companies. At the time, Senegal’s largest private security company, the American owned Sagam Sécurité, was forced to sell. This decree has kept the private security sector entirely in domestic hands and prevented multinationals like Group4Securicor from making inroads in Senegal.

Only registered PSCs are permitted to have armed guards. Despite this requirement, some guards in the informal sector are armed. Senegal has largely succeeded in keeping guns out of the country, but steadily grants around 120 licenses each year (Agboton-Johnson et al. 2004). Private security companies win a sizable majority of these licenses, although as licenses are awarded to individuals and their affiliations are not listed, no exact figures are available. Personal ties are important, as companies that have the strongest ties to the state security system or to the state bureaucracy are more likely to win licenses. That said, this research found no evidence of corruption in the form of bribes at the governmental level.

In the private sector, however, corruption is rampant. In order to be paid the amount stipulated by the contract, the manager of a PSC must frequently bribe the contracting company. Only after a bribe of $50-100, is the contracting company likely to pay the PSC. This form of corruption is worst in public-private companies, particularly La Poste.
In 2000, the computer system that the Ministry of the Interior used to track gun licenses failed, evidently one of the few victims of the computer virus Y2K. Since then, licenses have been recorded in piecemeal fashion, and the system is largely disorganised. Every year, the Ministry of the Interior sends the possessor of a gun license a notification of the tax that is owed for each firearm. Several PSC managers reported that the lists from the government omit many of their guns, in some cases up to half of the firearms they actually own. In effect, the government has lost track of many of the arms it has licensed. The absence of state control or records of arms is a dangerous contributor to the growth of private security companies.

The growth of private security in Senegal has been remarkably uncontroversial and has faced little criticism in the press. The majority of the population views private security as the domain of international business and as a form of employment in a struggling economy. The government should be commended for its 2003 efforts to bring the private security sector into domestic hands and under the purview of the Ministry of the Interior. Despite such efforts, however, the private security sector remains largely unregulated.

Private security is likely to play an even more prominent role as increasing economic inequality makes the political situation more volatile. Additionally, the influx of people and arms from Senegal’s war-torn neighbours threatens an already fragile stability. Dakar’s riots in November 2007 are a reminder of how quickly a situation can deteriorate. Nevertheless, Senegal’s stability will likely continue to attract international businesses and international organisations, and the government’s adoption of neoliberalism makes it unlikely that economic inequalities will subside. These conditions virtually guarantee the continued growth of the private security sector, which already rivals or exceeds the state security forces in terms of number of personnel. The size and projected growth of private security, and its corresponding rise in influence, mandate a continuing re-evaluation of the role and scope of private security in Senegal and throughout Africa.

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Bibliography
Prison Privatisation in the African Context
Andrew Coyle

The use of prison as a direct punishment of the court is a relatively modern phenomenon. It began in the 17th and 18th century, principally in Western Europe and North America, and over the succeeding centuries its use has spread to virtually every country in the world. In Africa prior to colonial times there was no indigenous concept of imprisonment as a form of punishment. The idea of taking substantial numbers of predominantly young men, who would otherwise be economically and socially active, locking them behind high walls and making them and their dependants a burden on the rest of society made no economic or cultural sense. As elsewhere in the world the first prisons were built as a tool for the colonial powers to subdue the local populace. Today one can still visit some African towns and see prisons which reflect their French colonial past, while in a number of countries in West and East Africa many prisons are built on a common British model. One suspects that the original construction plan might still be found somewhere in the Public Records Office in Kew near London.

The rate of imprisonment in any country is usually quoted per 100,000 of the total population. On that basis, the average rate of imprisonment around the world is about 140. Rates vary dramatically from country to country. The United States, with about 23% of all the world’s prisoners, has a rate of 751, while India has a rate of 32 (ICPS, 2008). This is not the place to enter into an analysis of what leads to such variations; suffice to say that there is little evidence that they can be explained by differing rates of crime but are more likely to be explained by a variety of economic, cultural and social factors.

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Imprisonment rates within the African continent also vary widely. The Republic of the Congo has the lowest rate of imprisonment in the world, with 22 prisoners per 100,000 of its population, closely followed by Burkina Faso with 23. The median rate for West African countries is 37, while that in southern Africa is 267, with South Africa having the highest rate at 348.

Prisons which are properly constructed and humanely managed are very expensive on the public purse and conditions in many developed countries have been severely criticised by independent bodies such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and Human Rights Watch. In a number of countries in Africa conditions for those held there can only be described as inhuman and degrading. On 5 March 2005 the East African Standard newspaper reported on conditions in one prison in Kenya:

[The prison], built in 1962 to hold about 350 prisoners, is congested with more than 1,450. The jail is a hallmark of neglect and abuse. Child offenders mingle with suspected murderers, violent robbers and rapists. Hardcore convicted criminals share halls with remandees accused of misdemeanours. In the women’s section, infants accompanying their mothers sleep in the same cells with mentally unsound murder suspects.

At one corner in the sickbay, a patient, deeply asleep, snores loudly beside a plastic bucket full of human waste. Another prisoner sits beside the bucket, his eyes wide open as if in a trance. Patients say they use the bucket at night and empty it in the morning for use during the day. The room is crawling with vermin.

In Ward Four, John Ndichu and 235 others spend most of the day and night squatting. This is because if they sit, they would have to stretch their legs and there is no space for that.
In 2006 the Vice-President of Kenya announced plans to free 15,000 prisoners by the end of July, noting that prisons built to hold a total of 16,000 people were then holding 48,000 inmates country-wide. Most of the prison facilities date back to colonial times, when Kenya’s population was less than 10 million (it is now over 30 million), he said adding that the congestion was now posing a health hazard to inmates. This story could be repeated many times in other African countries. Governments recognise the need to improve prison conditions but simply lack the resources to improve them.

**Prison Privatisation**

It is generally accepted that, even in an age of reducing government direct delivery of services and increasing private control of services which are essential for the common good, there are some responsibilities which the state cannot delegate and which it must carry out itself. An example would be defence of the nation from external enemies. All armed services remain under the direct control of the government in democratic countries and private or mercenary armies are not permitted, although as shown in several articles in this Special Issue, private military companies are increasingly integrated into and support national militaries in various ways. The judiciary is another example where private enterprise is eschewed. Protection of the public has become a slightly greyer area in recent years. Private security firms now abound and in some countries outnumber the police but the core responsibility for public order and for investigation of crime still lies with state officials.

Until thirty or so years ago the task of depriving citizens of their liberty was another function which was regarded as a state monopoly for similar reasons. Individual freedom was so sacred that only the state could take it away after due process and only the state could administer the punishment passed by its own courts. That is a position which is still maintained in the majority of democratic countries, but not in all.

The modern phenomenon of prison privatisation can be traced back to 1979 when the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service began contracting commercial companies to detain illegal immigrants who were awaiting deportation hearings (Wood, 2003). By the mid-1980s the number of people in prison in the US was increasing to such an extent that a number of states turned to these private detention companies to provide quick build prisons and detention centres. An added advantage for the state jurisdictions was that the resultant costs could be recorded against revenue or operating budgets rather than as capital costs.

In the course of the following decade governments entered into contracts for private prisons in a number of other countries, including the UK, Australia and New Zealand. This came to be seen increasingly as a lucrative business with the small number of companies involved each chasing its share of ‘the market’. In 2004 one of the companies described the UK as ‘the second largest private correctional market in the world’ (GEO Group, 2004).

In respect of prisons the term ‘privatisation’ covers a wide spectrum. This starts with marginal areas such as issuing commercial contracts for the prison shops or canteens, where prisoners are able to purchase items for personal use. The next stage in privatisation is that in which specific services, such as drug treatment or other programmes for prisoners, are delivered by commercial companies or not-for-profit organisations. Moving along the spectrum, in some cases contracts are issued for the central services within the prison; these can include catering, health care, education
and work for prisoners. The most advanced example of this is in France where a number of prisons are run under a system of dual management, with prison service personnel carrying out what are described as the public service duties (supervision, rehabilitation, registration and management) and commercial companies being responsible for all other functions (maintenance, transportation, accommodation, food service, work and vocational training).

A further phase of privatisation is that in which the entire operation of a prison is contracted to a commercial company or a not-for-profit organisation. In this case the state builds and continues to own the prison buildings and enters into a contract with a company for the management of the prison. Thereafter the state takes no part in the daily management. A number of the earliest examples of prison privatisation in England and Australia followed this model. The ultimate stage of privatisation, so far, is that in which a commercial company takes a prison from drawing board to final operation. This includes its design, construction, financing and management. This is the model now generally followed in the UK and, as we shall see, in South Africa. The mechanism for implementing the private construction and management of new prisons, as with other public institutions, has been the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) or Public Private Partnership (PPP).

Technically, none of these models should be described as privatisation. The legal responsibility for the prisoners who are held in them remains with the state, which contracts out their daily management to the differing degrees described above. Full privatisation would exist only if the state handed over complete responsibility for the citizens sentenced to prison to a commercial company. However, as far as the prisoner in the prison which is managed by a commercial company is concerned, this is a semantic distinction. For all practical purposes, such a prisoner is in the hands of a commercial company. The best of these companies may well set out to treat the prisoners under their control in a decent and humane manner. A few of them succeed better than their counterparts in the public sector. Despite this there is no escaping the fact that the final responsibility of these companies is to their shareholders; they must deliver a profit or they will cease to trade. This is the ultimate difference between a private prison and a public one.

Prison Privatisation in Africa

In 1993 the prison population in South Africa stood at 111,000. By 2002, it had risen to 182,000. At the end of January 2008 it had fallen back to 166,000, while the system had beds for 114,500. The rise in numbers in the decade after 1993 placed intolerable strain on the system and there was international criticism not only of levels of overcrowding but also of corruption and violence inside the prisons. In an attempt to deal with these problems the government turned to prison privatisation.

The issue of prison privatisation in South Africa was discussed at a seminar in Cape Town in 2003 (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003). The introduction to the report of the conference refers to findings by Professor Julia Sloth Nielsen that, the privatisation of state assets was explicitly part of the government’s overall economic programme in the period following 1996, and indeed remains part of government’s chosen strategy. Correctional Services decided to explore the possibility of privatisation as part of a new prisons building programme, one key aim of which was to address overcrowding, inter-alia through the more rapid construction of new facilities.
One of the speakers at the conference, Stephen Nathan, placed this in a wider context when he said,

_The backdrop to prison privatisation is the economic restructuring – including privatisation of state assets and services – being imposed on countries by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank._

At the time of writing South Africa is the only country in Africa which has private prisons. The government initially planned to tender for four private prisons but in the end restricted itself to two tenders for financial reasons. Mangaung Prison, with 3,024 places and now operated by GSL, was opened at Bloemfontein in July 2001 and Kutama-Sinthumule Prison, with 2,928 places and operated by the South African Custodial Services, a subsidiary of the GEO Group, opened in Louis Trichardt in 2002. These are the two largest private prisons in the world. The GEO Group describes itself as a world leader in privatised correctional and detention management, with operations also in the US and the UK.

According to Prison Privatisation Report International (2003), these two prisons have proved to be extremely costly to the Department of Corrections. As early as 2002 the government set up a task force to investigate the prisons’ financing, costs, outputs and risk allocation; to establish a comparison with public sector prisons; and to identify features for renegotiation to address the department of correctional services’ affordability restraints. In November 2002 the task force reported that returns on the company’s investments in Mangaung prison could be as high as 29.9% while returns on Kutama-Sinthumule were as high as 25%. Construction and operating fees at Bloemfontein had increased from R154.41 per prisoner per day at the outset to R215.70, while at Louis Trichardt costs had increased from R139.31 to R160.36. The task force recommended that the contracts for the two prisons should be renegotiated. This proved to be impossible.

The contracts provide for both capital repayments and daily per prisoner costs, adjusted annually for inflation, but based on what have been described as exceedingly unrealistic ‘input specifications’, including a limit of two prisoners per cell and extensive educational and vocational training requirements, to levels which are not available in any publicly managed prison. It has been reported that the two prisons will over the next three years consume between 5.1 and 5.4% of the total Correctional Services Budget (R642,235 million in 2008/9), for facilities housing around 3% of the prison population (Sloth-Nielsen, 2006).

A senior adviser in the South African Treasury is reported to have commented, ‘We ordered a Rolls Royce but we should have ordered a Toyota’ (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003).

In his Budget Vote speech in late 2007 the Corrections Minister announced his intention to invite tenders for the construction of five new prisons on a public-private partnership model ‘once national treasury agrees to cover the project management costs.’ It is by no means clear that the Treasury will give its agreement to this.

The problems faced by a country such as South Africa are compounded if one looks at the situation of its impoverished neighbour, Lesotho. In 2001 the prison population of Lesotho was less than 3,000. The government acknowledged that the conditions in its prisons were appalling and had to be improved yet it lacked the resources to realise its ambition. Enter Group 4 Corrections Services SA (Pty) Ltd. with a solution which was completely alien to the traditions of the country. It offered to build a prison with 3,500 places which would be of a high
physical standard. The price to be paid was that all the prisoners in the country would be located in this single mega prison, very far from their homes and in an environment which would be completely at odds with the culture of the country. Group 4 apparently developed its proposal at the request of the Lesotho Department of Justice, Human Rights and Rehabilitation. Later the Minister who had invited Group 4 to develop its proposal was replaced and the government decided not to pursue the proposal. In May 2008 Group 4 Securicor, the successor company to Group 4 and the largest private security company in the world, announced that it had taken over GLS, the contractor for Mangaung Prison, thus making it a player in private prisons in South Africa. This amalgamation reinforced the increasing tendency to reduce the extent of competition among the companies involved in this field.

Conclusion

In the UK there is increasing concern about the long term financial costs of private prisons. In addition, the respected independent Chief Inspector of Prisons has issued extremely critical reports on the operation of several of these prisons. In 2001 the National Audit Office published a generally positive report on PFI prisons (National Audit Office, 2001). However, a further report in 2003 (National Audit Office, 2003) was much more cautious and concluded that the use of private prisons ‘is neither a guarantee of success nor the cause of inevitable failure’.

The situation in South Africa is much more problematic, not least because of questions about the competence of the entire system. For example, in 2001 President Thabo Mbeki appointed a Commission of Inquiry to investigate and report on corruption, maladministration, violence, and intimidation in the Department of Correctional Services. The Commission handed its final report to President Mbeki on 15 December 2005, but it took nearly a year and last minute pressure from the Correctional Services Portfolio Committee Chairperson and Judge Jali, the Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry, before the Minister of Correctional Services released the full report to the public in November 2006. The report of the Jali Commission makes very uncomfortable reading for the Department of Corrections and the Government of South Africa. Of the Commission’s seven focus areas, none were found to have been immune to corruption and in all nine management areas that were investigated, evidence of corruption, maladministration, and the violation of prisoners’ rights were found. In such an overarching climate one would have to be very cautious about the expansion of commercially managed privatisation.

South Africa is a case study in the way that prison privatisation may well proceed in the coming years. Faced with the reality that profit margins in the developed world are likely to be restricted in future and the fact that returns on investment have to be balanced against greater levels of public scrutiny and potential for embarrassment, the small number of companies involved in the business of prison privatisation are beginning to turn their attention to developing countries. Many of these countries are faced with rising prison populations and with terrible prison conditions. Governments are under increasing pressure to improve the conditions of their prisons, while knowing that they have no resources to do so. These are fertile grounds for private prison companies, who can come into a country, promising to relieve the government of unbearable commitments to capital funding in exchange for a revenue commitment which is attractive in the short term but which will have crippling implications in the longer term. This often suits the wishes of politicians who have short term agendas rather than long term ones. A further attraction for private prison companies is that in
such countries it will often be possible to prepare a contract which meets the needs of the private contractor much better than those of the contracting state in both financial and operational terms. In many developing countries there is a real problem with corruption in the public and private services at an institutional and at an individual level. When prisons are operated on a for-profit basis the danger of this happening is likely to be considerably increased. In addition, the strict monitoring arrangements which exist in some developed countries will be absent, leaving the contracting company free to interpret the conditions of the contract to its own advantage.

There is a more fundamental issue which exists in developed as well as in developing countries. It is that the real issue is not about whether private prisons are cheaper than public ones, nor whether they are managed more effectively and efficiently. The fundamental change which has come about with the introduction of privatisation is the concept of prison as a ‘market-place’ and a business which will inevitably expand. Private prisons have been introduced as a short term response by governments to rising prison populations, to shortage of prison places and to limited public funding to maintain existing prisons and to build new ones. As a result, the financial and social costs of an increasing use of imprisonment have not been subject to public scrutiny. Many of the costs of increased imprisonment are hidden in the short term. In fiscal terms, high capital expenditure can be converted into long term revenue expenditure, which reduces current financial costs while increasing future costs to the public purse. In social terms, governments have not encouraged public debate about why so many additional prison places are needed, being content to argue that they will provide as many places as are necessary to protect the public. This is an even more dangerous phenomenon in developing countries than it is in developed ones.

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Endnotes

Bibliography
The Nigerian Feminist Movement: Lessons from Women in Nigeria, WIN*

Bene E. Madunagu

In Nigeria, as in other societies, there is, and there has always been a women’s movement or more correctly women’s movements. These existed before, during and after colonialism. Many of these may probably not fit into the conventional definition of a movement. Various forms of interest groups see themselves as movements. I admit that all of these do serve interests that in many ways attempt at addressing inequalities between women and men in society. While this is an acceptable criterion of minimising disagreements in the characterisation of women-based organisations, the reality is that there are still substantial differences in the forms of movements that call themselves ‘women’s movements’. Some ‘movements’ may or may not have clear objectives, mission or vision but exist as ad hoc bodies, useful when the need arises but with little or no coordination, continuity or sustainability. Some may just be limited to specific local struggles.

In Nigeria, the oldest and largest women’s movement can be said to be the National Council of Women’s Societies (NCWS) founded in 1958. Basu’s (1995) definition clearly suits the NCWS.

The Nigerian women’s movement is an unarmed movement. It is non-confrontational. It is a movement for the progressive upliftment of women for motherhood, nationhood and development.

This movement is ‘at home’ with the protection of our culture and tradition as well as with the supremacy of men. It will not rock the boat. It essentially accepts what the tradition has been and what religion sanctions.

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There are sectors of this movement that are more radical than the status-quo and that would raise the struggle to a higher level but are still afraid of what the men would say or do. There are gender activists who would rather not be associated with feminism, publicly or privately. Again there are women ‘activists’ in the larger women’s movement who call themselves feminists when they are in the midst of feminists but will quickly condemn ‘those crazy people’, a reference to those who publicly admit and declare that they are feminists. There are yet those who are feminists, ‘but’; these are women who want to be seen truly as feminists but become uncomfortable with discussions on such questions as the totality of who a feminist is and the extent of feminism in terms of core values, principles and praxis. They are satisfied with declaration and participation in meetings and conferences where the term feminism gets mentioned, but are generally silent when issues of sexual rights are discussed. For them, feminism has limits. They are, for instance, totally homophobic.

Feminism in Nigeria

There is no denying the fact that some forms of feminist struggles existed in Nigeria before what was clearly acclaimed and identified openly as a feminist movement: Women in Nigeria (WIN). However such struggles were largely undocumented. I make bold to state that feminism in Nigeria in its present form – consistent, organised, with clear objectives and ideology – came into being with the inauguration, in 1983, of the organisation Women in Nigeria (WIN) following the 1982 national conference on the same theme. WIN was a direct outcome of the conference, envisioned as a feminist movement and named as such.

During its first ten years WIN facilitated the development of many of the self-
identified feminists in Nigeria today. WIN started off with a clearly stated rights-based approach to issues about women in Nigeria and was very clear on the issues of gender and social justice. However, the open policy of WIN of 'come one – come all', where anyone, male or female, was accepted as long as such a person accepted the provisions of our Constitution, carried a danger of WIN including persons who have contempt for feminism but come into WIN with their own agenda. There was no punishment for anyone who played no active role as long as such a person showed up once in a while at meetings. In spite of the inherent weaknesses in the nature of membership criteria for WIN, one must always pay tribute to WIN as a training ground for the emergence of organised feminist struggles in Nigeria. WIN’s open policy of membership led to the entry of many persons who had no clue about feminism and gender justice and its core values and principles. Many enthusiastic members equated feminist struggles to abstract class struggle, with total disdain for gender issues. Internal conflicts generated by ignorance and opportunism as well as male chauvinistic understanding of social struggles as not including gender equality and equity as key components of social justice became a cankerworm that progressively weakened WIN as a movement for social transformation – a core focus of feminist struggles.

The Uniqueness & Contribution of WIN to the Nigerian Feminist Movement

From the onset, WIN engaged in research, policy advocacy and activism aimed at transforming the conditions under which women and other underprivileged classes in Nigeria lived. WIN’s further uniqueness was its consciousness of both class and gender in the struggle for the emancipation of women. WIN acknowledged that, although the majority of women, suffered from the exploitative and oppressive character of the Nigerian society, women suffer additional forms of exploitation and oppression – as women. Thus WIN recognised the double forms of exploitation and oppression of women as members of the subordinate class and as women. WIN set out to struggle against both class and gender oppression through promoting the study of conditions of women, disseminating the outcome for policy formulation, defending the rights of women and taking actions to transform the conditions of women.

WIN’s Strategies

WIN started off with the strategy of research, analysis and documentation of conditions of women in various situations in the society. The outcome of this strategy provided the much needed data for advocacy and mobilisation of women to demand their rights. This strategy also led to the practice of holding annual conferences as a means of public education and the creation of awareness, using research data and gender analysis as convincing tool for demanding for women’s rights. We may also mention the adoption of a clear Constitution that emerged from the involvement and participation of all members, the establishment of WIN as an institution with basic feminist principles and values, the emergence of well-defined organisational structures of leadership and representation at national and in the state branches, and clearly defined roles, responsibilities and obligations.

During these first ten years, WIN never received subvention from government and so was able to maintain its independence. It could therefore take actions without compromising since, as the saying goes, 'the person that pays the piper dictates the tune'.
WIN’s Publications

As stated earlier, one of the strengths of WIN’s strategies, was documentation of research and analysis from a gender perspective. A research theme was chosen each year by consensus and the outcome was published. The first major publication of WIN was the book, Women In Nigeria Today (Zed Books, 1985) that came out of the conference that gave birth to WIN. This inaugural publication was followed by:

- *Women and education* (edited proceedings of the 3rd annual WIN conference) (1992);
- *Child abuse* (1992);
- *Women in Nigeria – The first ten years* (1993);
- *Women in the transition to democracy in Nigerian politics* (edited proceedings of the 8th annual WIN conference held in Kano (1989);
- *Women and violence: Breaking The Silence: Women Against Violence* (edited proceedings of the 10th anniversary WIN conference, 1993);

These publications became invaluable in the understanding of gender issues in Nigeria. There is no way a collection of persons from different backgrounds, cultures and different experiences could be in serious actions together without conflicts. This would have been unnatural. However, WIN had its in-house policy of conflict resolution, and the principles on which the feminists worked helped in the process of constructive criticism a healthy practice for movement building. WIN succeeded as a training ground for many Nigerian feminists who are still committed in many ways to feminist struggles.

Beyond WIN

A lot has happened since the transformation of WIN from its initial focus and content to the present period when in almost every feminist gathering, questions arise that raise doubts. The Nigerian feminist movement has a forum – Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) – which is larger and more coherent than WIN.

The NFF was launched in January 2008 after an incubation period that started with the launching of the African Feminist Forum (AFF) in Accra, Ghana in 2006. As a chapter of the African Feminist Forum, the Nigerian Feminist Forum is bound by the values and principles of the AFF. The NFF has effectively replaced WIN as the Nigerian Feminist Movement, and it has gone beyond the historical stage of isolated country movements to become part of the continental (Pan African) feminist movement. AFF documents clearly state the content, context, values and principles of the present vibrant Nigerian feminist movement. Let me quickly point out that we in the NFF know that there are many self-identified Nigerian feminists within Nigeria and in the diaspora who are yet to be part of the NFF, which is still very young. Hence NFF is not a closed club nor is it a ‘come one, come all’ club. We have learned from the past. There are clear guidelines and conditions for becoming a part of the NFF. The secretariat of both the AFF and the NFF are ever ready to furnish potential, interested feminists who wish to be members with information on how to do join.

The information is contained in the Charter of the Feminist Principles for African Feminists clearly states how African and Nigerian feminists alike define themselves, the understanding Feminism and Patriarchy, our identity as African and Nigerian feminists, our ethics as individual and institutional African and Nigerian feminists, and our understanding of feminist leadership. The charter of the feminist principles of the AFF is binding on all the country level feminist forums including Nigerian Feminist Forum.
From WIN to NFF

WIN’s lessons and experiences for the NFF as a new formation include the need for the adoption of basic principles of organisation and action. There is also the need to agree on responsibilities as well as structures for coordination and leadership to ensure organised actions and sustainability. This is already being practised in the NFF with a central organising committee serviced by a joint secretariat of two feminist organisations, both located in Lagos.

Two recent events have tested the strength of NFF. One was the rallying of Nigerian feminists and many other progressive sectors of Nigerian society to put an end to attempts by a private university to force virginity and HIV testing on Nigerian girls entering the institution. Another was the mobilisation against a state attempt to ban the use of condoms. Nigerian feminists along with various institutions caused the state to annul the policy, thereby putting an end to the matter. The most recent had to do with a proposed federal bill, introduced by the female chairperson of the Nigerian Senate Committee for Women and Youths, to institutionalise a dress-code for women. The NFF, together with several women organisations, put an end to the proposed bill through several press conferences and the weight of Nigerian women’s mobilisation to fill the hall where the public hearings on the bill took place. There are many other situations that show the resurgence and revitalisation of feminist activism in Nigeria.

We celebrate these victories. It is gratifying that this can happen in present primitive neo-colonial Nigeria (and Africa), where laws are imposed by the imperialist ‘International Community’; our leaders have kept us in the backyard of that global community to serve as the dustbins or refuse dump for what does not work or what is dangerous to the community of the G8 countries. Our leaders are prepared to sign imperialist conditionalities drafted by the ailing IMF and the World Bank. These conditionalities for unequal trade agreements and perpetual indebtedness of the developing or retrogressing world where we are located, create and deepen poverty with women bearing the greatest burden imposed by culture and tradition and reinforced by the new forms of imperialist-driven religious evangelism.

To worsen this already bad situation from present-day globalisation policies of re-colonisation of Africa (in particular, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, etc.), the United States and the rest of the West have come with poverty alleviation strategies and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to divert our attention from the cruel poverty imposed by their policies and the excruciating challenges women in particular face from the new importation of imperialist style of democracy. Hence, if in spite of these burdens, feminists, the larger women’s movement, and our allies have been able to challenge effectively these offshoots of imperialist-directed democracy in our country, we have cause to celebrate – with our eyes open, of course, to see when they try other gimmicks.

This is the present state of the Nigerian feminist movement and its relationship with the larger Nigerian Feminist Movement, an offshoot of the Pan-African Feminist Movement (AFF).

I FORESEE A SUSTAINED ACTIVE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA THAT WILL PLAY A STRONG ROLE IN THE AFRICAN FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND IN THE GLOBAL FEMINIST MOVEMENT AS A FORCE TO BE RECOGNISED AND RESPECTED. THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!!
APPENDIX: Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists

The African Feminist Forum took place from 15-19 November 2006 in Accra, Ghana. The meeting brought together over 100 feminist activists from all over the region and the diaspora. The space was crafted as an autonomous space in which African feminists from all walks of life, at different levels of engagement within the feminist movement such as mobilizing at local levels for women’s empowerment to academia, could reflect on a collective basis and chart ways to strengthen and grow the feminist movement on the continent.

A key outcome of the forum was the adoption of the Charter of Feminist Principles, which was agreed by the Regional Working group for the Forum, to be one of its principle aims. It was felt that we need something to help us define and affirm our commitment to feminist principles, which will guide our analysis, and practice. As such the Charter sets out the collective values that we hold as key to our work and to our lives as African feminists. It charts the change we wish to see in our communities, and also how this change is to be achieved. In addition it spells out our individual and collective responsibilities to the movement and to one another within the movement.

With this Charter, we reaffirm our commitment to dismantling patriarchy in all its manifestations in Africa. We remind ourselves of our duty to defend and respect the rights of all women, without qualification. We commit to protecting the legacy of our feminist ancestors who made numerous sacrifices, in order that we can exercise greater autonomy.

PREAMBLE: NAMING OURSELVES AS FEMINISTS

We define and name ourselves publicly as Feminists because we celebrate our feminist identities and politics. We recognize that the work of fighting for women’s rights is deeply political, and the process of naming is political too. Choosing to name ourselves Feminist places us in a clear ideological position. By naming ourselves as Feminists we politicise the struggle for women’s rights, we question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated, and we develop tools for transformative analysis and action. We have multiple and varied identities as African Feminists. We are African women – we live here in Africa and even when we live elsewhere, our focus is on the lives of African women on the continent. Our feminist identity is not qualified with ‘Ifs’, ‘Buts’, or ‘However’s’. We are Feminists. Full stop.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF FEMINISM & PATRIARCHY

As African feminists our understanding of feminism places patriarchal social relations structures and systems which are embedded in other oppressive and exploitative structures at the centre of our analysis. Patriarchy is a system of male authority which legitimizes the oppression of women through political, social, economic, legal cultural, religious and military institutions. Men’s access to, and control over resources and rewards within the private and public sphere derives its legitimacy from the patriarchal ideology of male dominance. Patriarchy varies in time and space, meaning that it changes over time, and varies according to class, race, ethnic, religious and global-imperial relationships and structures. Furthermore, in the current conjunctures, patriarchy does not simply change according to these factors, but is inter-related with and informs relationships of class, race, ethnic, religious, and global-imperialism. Thus to challenge patriarchy effectively also requires challenging other systems of oppression and exploitation, which frequently mutually support each other.

Our understanding of Patriarchy is crucial because it provides for us as feminists, a framework within which to express the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations which affect African women. Patriarchal ideology enables and legitimizes the structuring of every aspect of our lives by establishing the framework within which society defines and views men and women and constructs male supremacy. Our ideological task as feminists is to understand this system and our political task is to end it. Our focus is fighting against patriarchy as a system rather than fighting individual men or women. Therefore, as feminists, we define our work as investing individual and institutional energies in the struggle against all forms of patriarchal oppression and exploitation.

OUR IDENTITY AS AFRICAN FEMINISTS

As Feminists who come from/work/live in Africa, we claim the right and the space to be Feminist and African. We recognize that we do not have a homogenous identity as feminists – we acknowledge and celebrate our diversities and our shared commitment to a transformative agenda for African societies and African women in particular. This is what gives us our common feminist identity.
Our current struggles as African Feminists are inextricably linked to our past as a continent—diverse pre-colonial contexts, slavery, colonization, liberation struggles, neo-colonialism, globalization. Modern African States were built off the backs of African Feminists who fought alongside men for the liberation of the continent. As we craft new African States in this new millennium, we also craft new identities for African women, identities as full citizens, free from patriarchal oppression, with rights of access, ownership and control over resources and our own bodies and utilizing positive aspects of our cultures in liberating and nurturing ways. We also recognise that our pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories and herstories require special measures to be taken in favour of particular African women in different contexts.

We acknowledge the historical and significant gains that have been made by the African Women’s Movement over the past forty years, and we make bold to lay claim to these gains as African feminists – they happened because African Feminists led the way, from the grassroots level and up; they strategised, organised, networked, went on strike and marched in protest, and did the research, analysis, lobbying, institution building and all that it took for States, employers and institutions to acknowledge women’s personhood.

As African feminists, we are also part of a global feminist movement against patriarchal oppression in all its manifestations. Our experiences are linked to that of women in other parts of the world with whom we have shared solidarity and support over the years. As we assert our space as African feminists, we also draw inspiration from our feminist ancestors who blazed the trail and made it possible to affirm the rights of African women. As we invoke the memory of those women whose names are hardly ever recorded in any history books, we insist that it is a profound insult to claim that feminism was imported into Africa from the West. We reclaim and assert the long and rich tradition of African women’s resistance to patriarchy in Africa. We henceforth claim the right to theorise for ourselves, write for ourselves, strategise for ourselves and speak for ourselves as African feminists.

INDIVIDUAL ETHICS

As individual feminists, we are committed to and believe in gender equality based on feminist principles which are:

- The indivisibility, inalienability and universality of women’s human rights;
- The effective participation in building and strengthening progressive African feminist organizing and networking to bring about transformatory change;
- A spirit of feminist solidarity and mutual respect based on frank, honest and open discussion of difference with each other;
- The support, nurture, and care of other African feminists, along with the care for our own well-being;
- The practice of non-violence and the achievement of non-violent societies;
- The right of all women to live free of patriarchal oppression, discrimination and violence;
- The right of all women to have access to sustainable and just livelihoods as well as welfare provision, including quality health care, education, water and sanitation;
- Freedom of choice and autonomy regarding bodily integrity issues, including reproductive rights, abortion, sexual identity and sexual orientation;
- A critical engagement with discourses of religion, culture, tradition and domesticity with a focus on the centrality of women’s rights;
- The recognition and presentation of African women as the subjects not the objects of our work, and as agents in their lives and societies;
- The right to healthy, mutually respectful and fulfilling personal relationships;
- The right to express our spirituality within or outside of organised religions;
- The acknowledgment of the feminist agency of African women which has a rich Herstory that has been largely undocumented and ignored.

INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS

As feminist organisations we commit to the following:

- Advocating for openness, transparency, equality and accountability in feminist-led institutions and organisations;
- Affirming that being a feminist institution is not incompatible with being professional, efficient, disciplined and accountable;
- Insisting on and supporting African women’s labour rights, including egalitarian governance, fair and equal remuneration and maternity policies;
Using power and authority responsibly, and managing institutional hierarchies with respect for all concerned. We believe that feminist spaces are created to empower and uplift women. At no time should we allow our institutional spaces to degenerate into sites of oppression and undermining of other women;

- Exercising responsible leadership and management of organisations whether in a paid or unpaid capacity and striving to uphold critical feminist values and principles at all times;
- Exercising accountable leadership in feminist organisations, taking into consideration the needs of others for self-fulfillment and professional development. This includes creating spaces for power-sharing across generations;
- Creating and sustaining feminist organisations to foster women’s leadership. Women’s organisations and networks should be led and managed by women. It is a contradiction of feminist leadership principles to have men leading, managing and being spokespersons for women’s organisations;
- Feminist organisations as models of good practice in the community of civil society organizations, ensuring that the financial and material resources mobilised in the name of African women are put to the service of African women and not diverted to serve personal interests. Systems and structures with appropriate Codes of Conduct to prevent corruption and fraud, and to manage disputes and complaints fairly, are the means of ensuring our organisations;
- Striving to inform our activism with theoretical analysis and to connect the practice of activism to our theoretical understanding of African feminism;
- Being open to critically assessing our impact as feminist organisations, and being honest and pro-active with regards to our role in the movement;
- Opposing the subversion and/or hijacking of autonomous feminist spaces to serve right wing, conservative agendas;
- Ensuring that feminist non-governmental or mass organisations are created in response to real needs expressed by women that need to be met, and not to serve selfish interests, and unaccountable income-generating agendas.

**FEMINIST LEADERSHIP**

As leaders in the feminist movement, we recognise that feminist agency has popularised the notion of women as leaders. As feminist leaders we are committed to making a critical difference in leadership, based on the understanding that the quality of women’s leadership is even more important than the numbers of women in leadership. We believe in and commit ourselves to the following:

- Disciplined work ethics guided by integrity and accountability at all times;
- Expanding and strengthening a multi-generational network and pool of feminist leaders across the continent;
- Ensuring that the feminist movement is recognised as a legitimate constituency for women in leadership positions;
- Building and expanding our knowledge and information base on an ongoing basis, as the foundation for shaping our analysis and strategies and for championing a culture of learning beginning with ourselves within the feminist movement;
- Nurturing, mentoring and providing opportunities for young feminists in a non-matronising manner;
- Crediting African women’s labour, intellectual and otherwise in our work;
- Creating time to respond in a competent, credible and reliable manner to other feminists in need of solidarity and support whether political, practical or emotional;
- Being open to giving and receiving peer reviews and constructive feedback from other feminists.

**References**


**Endnote**

- This briefing was originally published in 1986: A. Mohammed & Bene E. Madunagu (1986), ‘WIN: A Militant Approach to the Mobilisation of Women’, ROAPE 13:37, 103-105. Many thanks to Bene for this very timely up-date (editors).
Angolans Vote for Peace

On 5 September 2008 Angola held its first election since its protracted conflict was put to an end in April 2002. MPLA’s victory in the 1992 legislative elections was contested by UNITA and the subsequent crisis resulted in the resumption of the civil war. This historical precedent triggered a degree apprehension vis-à-vis the electoral process amongst most Angolans. The organisation of the 2008 legislative elections was managed by the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Election Process. Both bodies were largely made up of elements of the ruling party albeit the CNE had some representatives from opposition parties. The government developed a sophisticated and costly electoral system including electoral materials produced by the multinational company INDRA based in Spain.

The organisation of the elections began in 2006. The voter registration process was a paramount undertaking due to the absence of a census list of the Angolan population since 1975. The survey was carried out by several registration brigades and was observed by party agents; as a result over 8 million Angolans were registered. Nonetheless, the process was not absent of controversy since the opposition parties denounced that the traditional authorities, the so-called Sobas, in connivance with the barrios (neighbourhood) coordinators collected voters ID cards in order to elaborate a parallel register list of voters. According to the main opposition party UNITA, this was a strategy to coerce villagers into voting for MPLA. In addition, UNITA accused the CNE of recruiting polling staff members mainly amongst members of MPLA. Nevertheless, these alleged irregularities did not outweigh opposition parties’ eagerness to participate in the electoral process. In addition, the government put in place a program to induce civilian disarmament for the purpose of fostering people’s confidence in a peaceful electoral outcome.

Since May 2008 MPLA and UNITA ran a pre-election campaign leading up to the electoral campaign which started officially on 7 August 2008. According to electoral law, the 14 parties that were registered were to receive $1.1 million each for the electoral campaign three months before E-day. However, these state funds were only distributed to the political parties at the beginning of August. Opposition parties had meagre private means of financing the campaign and lacked propaganda materials and even means of transport to reach their constituencies. Hence, opposition parties mainly conducted a door to door campaign. Meanwhile, MPLA was accused by the opposition parties of using state resources for its campaign (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement¹). MPLA used a wide range of means of transport (small airplanes, school buses, 4x4 vehicles, motorbikes, bikes, etc.) and displayed generous campaign resources including the distribution of a wide range of electoral materials. In addition, MPLA conducted a very well orchestrated electoral propaganda campaign in the national mass media, namely the National Angolan Radio (RPA), the National Angolan TV (TPA) and the governmental Jornal de Angola. Media opposition such as the weekly journal O Novo Jornal enjoyed limited distribution and the church run Radio Igreja could only be broadcasted in Luanda. The opposition parties struggled to get their message across to the population in the provinces due to limited means and poor organisational planning in some cases.

The MPLA campaign focused on the government’s role in sustaining 6 years of peace, social progress and economic development. José Eduardo Dos Santos, MPLA’s president and Angola’s Head of State for the last 30 years was described

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in mass meetings and rallies as a successful peacemaker. Governmental achievements made recurrently the headlines of national news programs i.e. inauguration of hospitals, schools, running water plants, infrastructures or new branches of the state-owned network of supermarkets *nossa super*. The Angolan media generously publicised China’s leading role in re-building the country’s infrastructures in exchange for oil supplies.

In recent years, the Angolan economy has had an annual real growth rate over 15%, its inflation stays in double digits and revenues result mainly from the booming oil industry and the extraction of minerals and diamonds. In 2008 Angola became Africa’s largest oil producer overtaking Nigeria. The Angolan Finance minister José Pedro de Morais received the prize of Best African Finance Minister in 2007 from the *Financial Times* magazine *The Banker* and he was also recently nominated among the Personalities of the Year by the *Foreign Direct Investment* Magazine (FDIM). The country attracts international investment and duly pays back its foreign debt to international creditors. Angolan companies linked to the Government of Angola are also striving to take control of the banking sector traditionally dominated by Portuguese firms.

The booming economy has been cleverly exploited by MPLA campaigners as being the engine for social progress to address deficits in health, education, clean water, electricity and infrastructures. Despite MPLA’s optimistic vision, Angola is still amongst the world’s least developed nations and occupies the 162nd position in the 2007-2008 UNDP development index rankings. Individuals closely connected to the MPLA leadership manage the main sources of the country’s capitalist development such as oil, construction, telecommunications and hotel industries whilst most Angolans live in precarious conditions, in shanty towns or in small villages in the rural countryside, below minimum hygiene standards, often without easy access to clean water resulting in outbreaks of contagious diseases such as cholera and chronic diarrhoea among children who suffer also from nutritional disorders. Malaria remains the most common cause of infant mortality. Despite a widespread social perception of corruption amongst certain elements of the ruling party, MPLA’s landslide victory in the elections was determined by the Angolan people’s desire to maintain peace and their expectations on the development prospects resulting from the country’s emerging role in the energy sector.

In the era of globalisation, MPLA is the only game in town. Since pre-campaigning began, significant members of UNITA: some of them concerned about maintaining their positions as administrators of the current Government of National Unity: defected from UNITA and subsequently expressed their support to MPLA. Their move to the ruling party was widely publicised by state media on E-day week. Despite questions raised on the confusion between state structures and the MPLA party, elections have been deemed by all international observation missions as transparent, and all opposition parties have accepted the results, whilst allegations of vote rigging have almost been non-existent. Seemingly, international observers highlighted the process was hampered to some extent by organisational pitfalls such as delays in the distribution of materials which then obliged many polling stations to re-open in Luanda on E-day + 1, delays in the accreditation of opposition party observers and inconsistencies in the interpretation of counting procedures (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement).

MPLA obtained a landslide victory receiving 81% of the votes. UNITA and
PRS received respectively 10% and 3% of the votes. UNITA’s resounding defeat has been aggravated by its sharply declining influence in its traditional strongholds. On the other hand, PRS slightly improved its 1992 results by focusing its campaign on the promotion of federalism, i.e. provincial management of revenues as the recipe to address corruption and shorten the gap between a rich urban elite based in Luanda and poverty-stricken peasants living in the provinces; significantly, PRS obtained over 40% of the votes casted in diamond-rich province of Lunda Sul.

Needless to emphasise that MPLA’s main challenge ahead is to maintain these excellent electoral results; the electorate gave credit to the leadership who managed to sustain 6 years of peace but in future contests the government’s capacity to deliver socio-economic development will be scrutinised more closely. These elections have been conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner and Angola has taken a step forward towards political stability; as in 1992, most Angolans voted for MPLA but the country’s path towards development could benefit from governmental efforts to enable constructive criticism in the public arena. Opposition parties and independent civil society organisations are irreplaceable assets in the priceless business of sustaining Angola’s hard-won peace.

Endnotes

2. Oil in Angola is a state subsidised product. Super oil price is less than .50 cents per litre.
3. The Portuguese Bank BPI sold 49.9% of Banco de Fomento Angola, the southern African country’s largest private sector bank, to Angola’s mobile phone operator, Unitel. For further information see Peter Wise, Financial Times.com (15 September 2008).

Angola Election: 2008: Final Results

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<th>Party</th>
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<tr>
<td>MPLA</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNITA</td>
<td>10.39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRS</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
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The Full Cabinet List

President: José Eduardo dos Santos
Prime Minister: António Paulo Kassoma
Minister of National Defence: Kundi Paihama
Minister of Interior: Roberto Leal Ramos Monteiro
Minister of Foreign Affairs: Assunção Afonso dos Anjos
Minister of Economy: Manuel Nunes Júnior
Minister of Territory Administration: Virgílio Ferreira de Fontes Pereira
Minister of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security: António Domingos Pitra Costa Neto
Minister of Justice: Guilhermina Contreiras da Costa Prata
Minister of Finance: Eduardo Leopoldo Severin de Morais
Minister of Planning: Ana Afonso dos Anjos
Minister of Commerce: Maria Idalina de Oliveira Valente
Minister of Hotel and Tourism: Pedro Mutindi
Minister of Agriculture: Afonso Pedro Canga
Minister of Fisheries: Salamão José Luete Chirimbimbi
Minister of Industry: Joaquim Duarte da Costa David
Minister of Oil: José Maria Botelho de Vasconcelos
Minister of Geology and Mining: Makenda Ambroise
Minister of Environment: Maria de Fátima Monteiro Jardim
Minister of Science and Technology: Maria Cândida Teixeira
Minister of Urbanisation and Housing: Diakumpuna Sita José
Minister of Public Works: Francisco Higino Lopes Carneiro
Minister of Transport: Augusto da Silva Tomás
Minister of Energy: Emanuela Afonso Viera Lopes
Minister of Telecommunication and Information Technology: José Carvalho da Rocha
Minister of Health: José Viera Dias Van-Dünen
Minister of Education: António Burtita da Silva Neto
Minister of Culture: Rosa Maria Martins da Cruz e Silva
Minister of Social Welfare: João Baptista Kussumua
Minister of Family & Women Promotion: Genoveva da Conceição Lino
Minister of Former Combatants and War Veterans: Pedro José Van-Dünen
Minister of Youth and Sports: Gonçalves Manuel Muandumba
Minister of Social Communication: Manuel António Rabelais
Minister without portfolio: António Bento Bembe
Minister without portfolio: Francisca de Fátima do Espírito Santo de Carvalho Almeida
Secretary of State for Rural Development: Maria Filomena de Fátima Lobão Teló Delgado
Secretary of State for Higher Education: Adão Gaspar Pereira do Nascimento

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**Chris Allen**

8 December 1942 – 29 September 2008

Chris, one of the founding editors of this journal, died in Coulestrine, France on the 29th of September. We will be publishing tributes and a selection of his writing in the March 2009 issue of ROAPE. Our love to Frances and their daughters, Kate and Jude.

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Outsourcing the Making of Militaries: DynCorp International as Sovereign Agent

Sean McFate

After over 150 years of troubled history, fourteen years of civil war, war crimes and horrific abuses of power, Liberia stands at the precipice of history. The war came to a merciful end in 2003, when Charles Taylor fled into exile, but the war’s ravages were complete. The United States Agency for International Development characterised Liberia’s post-conflict landscape this way:

> [o]ver 250,000 people, most of them civilian non-combatants, have lost their lives in the civil war. More than 1.3 million have been displaced, including hundreds of thousands who fled the country. Abductions, torture, rape and other human rights abuses have taken place on a massive scale. It is estimated that at least one in ten children may have been recruited into militias at one time or another. A similar percentage has been traumatized by seeing their families and friends murdered and raped (US Agency for International Development, 2004).

Liberia remains dependent upon one of the world’s largest United Nations peacekeeping forces for its survival, and fears are mounting over the looming departure of peacekeepers. Who will provide security then? Will spoilers plunge the country back into violence? How will Liberia ward off potential spillover effects from violence in neighbouring Sierra Leone, Guinea, or Côte d’Ivoire?

Security sector reform (SSR) is a crucial element of peacebuilding, especially in post-conflict settings. SSR is the wholesale transformation of indigenous security organisations into effective, legitimate, apolitical, and accountable institutions that uphold the rule of law and maintain the state’s monopoly on force. At a minimum, the security sector comprises three categories of actors: those directly involved in the protection of civilians and the state from violent harms (e.g. law enforcement or military); institutions that govern these actors (e.g. Ministries of Interior, Defense, Justice); and executive and legislative oversight bodies.

Failure to successfully implement SSR can seriously compromise peacebuilding efforts for several reasons. First, unaccountable and/or unprofessional security forces can become spoilers, which can hold the entire peacebuilding process hostage to their narrow interests under threat of violence. This can lead to a relapse of armed conflict. Second, it can also prolong peacekeeping missions, as security is a precondition of development. Last, SSR is a prerequisite for the exit strategy of costly peacekeeping missions, since it allows countries to secure themselves.

The central question of SSR in a country like Liberia is how to transform the military from a symbol of terror into an...
instrument of democracy. The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) was complicit in human rights atrocities and the descent into civil war. Hence, the objective of the Joint US-Liberia SSR programme was to demobilise Liberia’s armed forces and reconstitute the AFL and Ministry of Defence (MOD) in toto.1

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of this innovative programme was the United States’ decision to completely outsource this critical task to private military companies (PMCs). Rarely in modern history has one sovereign nation hired a private entity to raise a military for another sovereign nation. This briefing outlines some of the key elements and outcomes of this prototypical programme, as seen from one of its early architects which may augur future US engagement in Africa. This is especially relevant given the new US military’s Africa Command (AFRICOM), which will likely outsource similar missions to private companies in the future.

The Decision to Outsource

Following Taylor’s departure, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) on 19 September 2003. At the time, it was the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world, growing to 15,000 ‘blue helmets’ with a robust civilian component. Jacques Paul Klein was appointed as the Special Representative of the Secretary General and UNMIL officially took over peacekeeping duties on 1 October 2003. Two months later it began the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) process of approximately 100,000 people.

From 4 June to 18 August 2003 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brokered the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), also known as the ‘Accra Accords’. In Part Four of these Accords on Security Sector Reforms,2 the UN and US agreed to share responsibilities, with the UN agreeing to transform the Liberian National Police and the US the AFL. The US’s commitment was managed by the US Department of State (DOS), which organised an initial assessment trip in January 2004. This was followed by a subject matter expert assessment in May, consisting of personnel from US Department of Defense (DOD) and two companies: DynCorp International (DynCorp) and Pacific Architects and Engineers (PA&E). The purpose of this assessment mission, during which time one of the DOD civilian staff members was murdered, was to determine the operational requirements for SSR of the AFL.

Following the assessment mission, DOD concluded it could not conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints, driven in part by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consequently, the DOS decided to wholly ‘contract out’ the task of reconstituting the AFL and MoD to the private sector. Not long after the assessment trip, DOS tendered a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E. Only these two companies were allowed to submit bids as they had earlier won the five-year Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract from DOS to support peacekeeping and security efforts in Africa. IDIQ contracts essentially act as umbrella contracts between the US government and select companies for a fixed period of time, and are meant to streamline the contracting process. After reviewing both proposals, DOS decided to divide the duties between the two contractors. DynCorp was responsible for disarming, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) process of approximately 100,000 people.

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Designing the Force

The SSR process began by informally identifying and engaging key stakeholders, which included the legacy force, former rebels, the host government, civil society, and the international community. To their credit, DynCorp eschewed ill-fitting templates of the US military for the new AFL, and sought to craft – in partnership with the Liberian government – a more appropriate security force, which is discussed below. After a full-year of conversation, a vision of the AFL’s mission, composition, and desired end state was reached. It would be a mistake to assume that there was uniform consensus or that all stakeholders were engaged fully. The prominent voices in the discussion were the US government, which was sponsoring the programme, and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL).

Ultimately the vision entailed a small all-volunteer force (approximately 2,000 persons) that could be scaled upwards in time. It was acknowledged that a 2,000 person force would be insufficient to defend all of Liberia, should a full-scale war erupt. But it was also acknowledged that the size needed to be constrained by the government’s ability to pay soldiers’ salaries on a regular basis, as history suggested that unpaid soldiers were a greater threat to Liberia’s security than threat of an invading army.

It was also agreed that the AFL should have a defence-oriented force posture and light infantry organisational structure that was strong enough to repel cross-border militant attacks but not so strong as to threaten Liberia’s neighbours. This force would maintain a 12th grade functional literacy level, balanced ethnic and gender mix within the ranks, and foster an apolitical professional ethos, especially in the leadership, that respects the rule of law, cultivates a public service ethos, and accepts civilian control of the military. Finally, the AFL and ideally the entire Liberian security sector should embrace a ‘human security’ model.

DynCorp officially proposed the initial force structure and ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ – the blueprint for the new AFL – to the State Department in July 2005. In military parlance, a ‘force structure’ is the wire-diagram of units in the AFL and MoD, from the General Staff down to the basic infantry squad. A ‘Table of Organization and Equipment’ is a spreadsheet inventory of personnel and equipment, delineating for each unit the exact rank, title, and military occupational specialty of each soldier and every piece of equipment authorised for the unit. The original blueprint for the AFL totalled 1,928 soldiers: a brigade headquarters company (103 personnel), two light infantry battalions (663 personnel each), an engineer company (162 personnel), a military police company (114 personnel), a training company (180 personnel), and three military personnel at the Ministry of Defense, which was overwhelmingly civilian in composition. Although this blueprint has changed over time, the original concept for the AFL remains consistent.

Establishing the Programme

It is impossible to truncate a multi-year, highly complex process, with more than a few surprises, into a single article. In brief, the AFL SSR programme was originally envisaged to proceed in several phases. Phase I was political consultation with stakeholders and sensitising the public to the creation of a new AFL. The key issues were: identifying and engaging stakeholders; the composition and mission of the AFL; and overcoming the legacy of atrocities it inherited from the civil war. Phase II was safely demobilising the legacy force. The key issues included: who is eligible for demobilisation benefits; finding donor money to pay for those benefits; controls to prevent...
fraud during the demobilisation process; public sensitisation to the programme; and fears that disgruntled demobilised soldiers would incite political violence. At the same time, construction of training facilities commenced. The primary concerns were: negotiating site selection; finding competent construction companies; theft of materials; and significant delays caused by the six-month rainy season.

Phase III was recruiting and vetting the force. The primary concern for recruiting was attracting women and minority ethnic groups to serve in what was traditionally an ethnically Krahn-dominated institution. As for vetting, it is difficult to establish mere identity in post-conflict Liberia, to say nothing of a full background check. Creating a competent vetting programme was a key challenge.

Phase IV was military training and equipping. The chief concerns were lack of literacy, leadership selection and instilling a professional, apolitical ethos that placed service to the country above tribe or individual. Simultaneously, MoD transformation began, which included hiring and training all civilian personnel, as well as the creation of all AFL policies. Here the challenges were finding qualified mentors and synchronising the development of the MoD with interdependent government institutions.

Phase V was fielding the new force, which meant deployment of soldiers to their permanent duty station. At the time of publication, the programme remains mired in Phase IV due to several reasons, including sensitivity and uniqueness of the task, erratic programme funding by the US, and irregularities of DynCorp management (see Malan, 2008). Last, almost every aspect of this programme is *sui generis*, as there are no textbooks on comprehensive SSR, and this made progress problematic.

**Programme Timeline**

**2003**  *August*: Charles Taylor flees Liberia and ECOWAS peacekeepers and US troops arrive. The interim government and rebels sign the CPA. Gyude Bryant is chosen to head the interim government (NTGL).  *September–October*: US forces pull out, and UNMIL begins the peacekeeping mission.  *December*: UNMIL begins DDRR for non-statutory (non-AFL) combatants only. AFL personnel are disarmed, but not demobilised, rehabilitated and reintegrated, leaving that to the US government, as agreed to during CPA negotiations.

**2004**  *January*: The US Department of State sends a small contingent to Liberia to begin a preliminary assessment. The US is responsible for Part IV, Article Seven of the CPA, which covers SSR for the AFL. DOS is the lead agency within the US government for this task.  *February*: International donors pledge more than US$500 million in reconstruction aid.  *May*: DOS organises a ten-day assessment of SSR for the AFL. The assessment team consists of US personnel (mostly from the military) and two contractor teams: DynCorp and PA&E. A member of the assessment team is murdered in his hotel room during a robbery.  *June*: DoD decides it cannot conduct the SSR programme owing to resource constraints. DOS decides to contract the SSR programme, and tenders a ‘Request for Proposal’ to DynCorp and PA&E.  *July*: DOS decides to split the contract between the two contractors, making DynCorp responsible for selecting and training the force and PA&E for fielding the force. However, DOS does not officially initiate the programme or release funds until programme preconditions are met (e.g., political support of the NTGL to demobilise legacy AFL veterans).  *October*: Riots in Monrovia leave 16 people dead; UNMIL says former combatants and AFL veterans were behind the violence.
2005  **February–March:** Consultations with major stakeholders regarding the mission and composition of the future AFL. This includes civil society, the standing AFL, former warring parties and political factions, the NTGL, UNMIL, and other entities. A comprehensive recruiting and vetting plan is devised intended to screen out human rights abusers from joining the AFL. **March–May:** Consultations with stakeholders continue. Discussions include the problem of safely demobilising the legacy force without provoking political violence, mission and force structure of future AFL, location of training bases, sensitisation campaign for civil society, and arrears owed AFL veterans. The demobilisation plan is drafted and presented to Chairman Bryant, who signs **Executive Order 5**, authorising the full demobilisation of all legacy AFL units. DOS officially initiates the SSR programme and releases funds to DynCorp to begin recruiting and building. PA&E will begin its programme once training commences. **July:** The demobilisation and reintegration of 13,770 legacy soldiers commences. DynCorp builds a demobilisation site outside Monrovia. The US government approves the initial blueprint for the new AFL’s force structure. Construction of AFL training facilities commences but is slowed by the monsoon rainy season. **September:** The NTGL agrees that the international community should supervise its finances in an effort to counter corruption. **October:** Recruiting and vetting for the new AFL begins. Over 12,000 applicants will be processed in the two years to come. 23 **November:** Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf becomes the first woman to be elected as an African head of state. She takes office the following January.

2006  **January:** The demobilisation of the AFL is successful completed, the first time in modern African history that an entire standing military was safely demobilised without significant incident. **February:** A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is set up to investigate human rights abuses between 1979 and 2003. Tensions transpire between the TRC and SSR programme, when the TRC’s request for access to SSR vetting records is denied by the SSR team on account that it might compromise sources and methods, possibly resulting in reprisal killings of witnesses who spoke to the SSR vetting team on condition of anonymity about human rights abuses of some AFL candidates. **April:** MOD transformation begins. Former President Charles Taylor appears before the UN-backed Sierra Leone Special Court on charges of crimes against humanity. In June the International Criminal Court at The Hague agrees to host his trial. **May:** Brownie Samukai, the Liberian Minister of Defence, spends a week in Washington, DC collaboratively formulating the Liberian National Defence Strategy, modelled on a human security paradigm. **June:** A first draft of the National Defence Strategy is written, seeking to align the AFL’s mission with the goals of development for durable stability. Progress is limited because the Government of Liberia, UNMIL, the US government and others are delayed with the National Security Strategy. The UN Security Council eases a ban on weapons sales so that Liberia can arm newly trained security forces. An embargo on Liberian timber exports is lifted shortly afterwards. **July:** The first class of AFL basic training begins. It is a pilot programme of about 110 candidates, mostly selected for their leadership potential in order to fill the leadership ranks first. DynCorp begins the process of purchasing and importing arms into Liberia for the AFL. President Johnson-Sirleaf switches on generator-powered streetlights in the capital, which has been without electricity for 15 years. **August:** The first major shipment of arms arrives in Monrovia for the AFL. It is the first legal shipment in 15 years. **November:** The first AFL basic training class graduates. Training of future classes is halted owing to US budget constraints.
2007 September: 630 recruits have graduated from the Initial Entry Training (IET) course. Owing to cost overruns, IET was shortened from eleven weeks to eight weeks by cutting three weeks that were devoted to human rights, civics, and laws of war training. March: 119 civilian MOD employees graduate a 17-week of SSR programme training course. April: The UN Security Council votes to lift its ban on Liberian diamond exports. The ban was imposed in 2001 to stem the flow of ‘blood diamonds,’ which helped fund the civil war. June: The start of Charles Taylor’s war crimes trial at The Hague, where he stands accused of instigating atrocities in Sierra Leone.

2008 January: 485 soldiers graduated from IET.

Surprises

As with any complex peacebuilding mission, few things went as planned. Some of this was due to the difficulty of the task and environment; however, some was due to the unique relationship between DynCorp, the US government, and Liberian government. To be clear, this trifecta produced both positive and negative results, many of which were unexpected.

Irreconcilable Differences

Profit-motive and public policy can be conflicting interests. DynCorp, like most private companies, is naturally profit-seeking and is guided by market forces in the search for more demand for its services. Government institutions, on the other hand, are primarily interested in achieving public goods through public policy. Profit versus policy can be conflicting goals in public-private partnerships, such as the US and DynCorp, where the government utilises private means to achieve public goods. To resolve this, governments can shape companies’ interests and behaviour through market regulation that incentivise the private sector to realise responsible outcomes. However, current regulation and oversight in the US of this multi-billion dollar industry is diminimus. With a few notable exceptions, there has yet to be a serious discussion within the US government defining the appropriate spheres of activity for private contractors and government personnel in the security sector, much less effective regulatory oversight and concrete accountability mechanisms. Owing to this, the PMC industry behaves like an unguided missile, seeking profit wherever the market will bear it, even if it means a loss for society as a whole (see Avant, 2005).

Another deleterious side effect of this public-private partnership is the evolving co-dependency between government and the industry based on the asymmetries of information that exist between them. This industry has boomed from a multi-million to a multi-billion dollar market since 9/11, owing to the US government’s need of ‘wartime’ muscle. Unfortunately, the US bureaucracy that governs this industry was unable to grow at a commensurate rate, as the public sector is generally less nimble at growth than the private sector. Consequently, there is a paucity of government administrators to oversee these large companies, and those that exist are generally unqualified, ill-equipped and/or over-tasked. In Liberia for example, DynCorp’s contract overseer was a US Navy officer with absolutely no experience in building armies, especially given his background as a sailor. Nor was he a Certified Public Accountant or fully trained contract officer, skilled in managing a multi-million dollar contract with a large, savvy multinational company. Although his efforts were laudable and tireless, the US government simply did not equip him with the requisite tools he needed to achieve his assignment.

Consequently, there was a substantial knowledge gap between the officer in charge of overseeing the contract and the...
company, which DynCorp could exploit for profit. He was largely dependent upon DynCorp’s technical opinions in order to make relevant programmatic decisions on behalf of the US government. The problem was that DynCorp have a vested interest in steering the government towards profitable outcomes rather than good public policy. This might include inflating the need for more staff than is required or purchasing more equipment at the government’s expense. DynCorp, like many government contractors, makes its profit on ‘time and materials,’ meaning that they charge the government a premium for every hour an employee works or for every item (no matter how small) that is purchased. How much a premium they charge largely constitutes the company’s profit margin.

There are other ways that DynCorp had the opportunity to manipulate public outcomes for private gains. For example, DynCorp occupied a unique position during the consultations: impromptu facilitator. Achieving some modicum of consent from myriad stakeholders regarding the SSR programme was vital. Ideally, it would have fallen to the US government to drive this conversation. However, US embassy staffing was thin and over-burdened. As a result, the task of engaging stakeholders unofficially fell to DynCorp. Although DynCorp had no ‘vote’ in the outcome of these informal stakeholder consultations, it occupied the privileged position of agenda setter: identifying and sequencing the issues to be discussed; shaping outcomes by strategically proposing solutions for stakeholders to react to; and the de facto selection of stakeholder leadership by choosing whom to engage and when, regardless of whether their opinions represented the group as a whole. Consequently, the company could partly shape outcomes.

In my earlier experience, programme managers at DynCorp did not deliberately manipulate stakeholder consulta-

Principal-Agent Issues

However, not every aspect of this public-private partnership is negative. These companies can act as institutional ‘free-agents’ who are not beholden to entrenched viewpoints, agendas, interests, budget battles or turf-wars. Consequently, they can propose and implement practical solutions without regard to bureaucratic dogma. This is not to suggest that DynCorp was able to act autonomously in Monrovia: it was not. But DynCorp managers did enjoy a modicum of latitude that US government bureaucrats could not, especially along the inter-agency fault lines between DOD and the US Department of State. Moreover, given the ‘whole of government’ nature of SSR, DynCorp could act as a cross-cutting agent throughout the government (see OECD-DAC, 2007).

In fact, DynCorp could even advocate for the raw interests of Liberians in back offices of the Pentagon and State Department in Washington, DC. For example, it became evident during the consultations that Liberians were strong advocates of gender equality in the ranks while the US government was not. Although this SSR programme was managed by the State Department, it would frequently confer with DOD on technical issues regarding the AFL. Certain elements in DOD opposed the idea of women serving in ‘front line’ combat units, such as the infantry, which is the practice of the US army. Acting as a third-party facilitator, DynCorp was, in some ways, an unwitting arbitrator in a debate between the
defence establishment in Washington, DC and the stakeholders in Liberia. As a structural ‘other’ in the process, which was nominally dispassionate on the issue, DynCorp managers could credibly present ideas and recommendations to stakeholders without the burdens of institutional loyalty or prejudice. This helped drive the argument for gender parity, since key managers in DynCorp were persuaded by the Liberians’ case, championing it within the walls of the Washington, DC bureaucracy and effectively giving voice to Liberian interests. Ultimately, DOS opted for gender parity, overturning DOD’s desire to utilise US military templates – such as no women in infantry units – for other nations’ militaries.

Consequently, Liberian women now enjoy greater equality in the ranks than do American women. This remarkable outcome was partly driven by DynCorp’s position as a comparative ‘free agent’ in the US bureaucracy and facilitator in the consultation process. It was also largely driven by individual personalities on the ground rather than any corporate philosophy, demonstrating once more the vulnerability of the process to manipulation, either positive or negative.

Innovative Solutions

Another positive facet of this private-public partnership is innovative thought. As mentioned above, the DOD is often tempted to utilise ill-fitting US templates for foreign militaries, whether they are appropriate or not. US ‘train and equip’ programmes typically overlay US strategy, procedures, doctrine, and other US ‘best practices’ on foreign forces that receive the training. Examples of ‘train and equip’ programmes include: Joint Combined Exchange Training; International Military Education and Training; and Foreign Military Financing. Recently, the US government greatly expanded this capability through ‘1206 funding,’ named for the section of the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act in the 2006 defence budget. This authority allows the DOD, in consultation with the State Department, to spend up to $200 million a year to train and equip the militaries of strategic partners in the US’s global ‘war on terror’.

The problem is that military templates that might work well for the US may not work well for Liberia. Liberia needs a Liberian solution. This requires more than a ‘train and equip’ mentality, which only provides better shooters in newer equipment. These programmes are necessary but insufficient for wholesale SSR, as they fail to address the underlying causes of why security sectors fail: corruption, human rights abuse, incompetent leadership, culture of impunity, lack of ethnic balance, etc.

For instance, during the initial SSR assessment mission to Liberia in May, 2004, the US military proposed a 4,020-person AFL, including a 412-person combat engineer battalion that would conduct tasks such as mine laying, constructing field fortifications, and digging tank traps. However, Liberia is not in danger of a World War Two-style blitzkrieg from Sierra Leone. Instead, its engineer needs are basic infrastructure repair such as roads, bridges and buildings, to ensure the logistical resupply of bases and humanitarian relief. Also, conspicuously absent from the briefing was any plan to transform the Ministry of Defense and build institutional capacity for the AFL. Also absent was a recruiting, vetting and training plan for the AFL. Last, even though this was only a concept briefing based on a quick trip to Liberia, it lacked significant input from indigenous stakeholders or experts in West African security. In fact, the majority of officers who served on the assessment mission had never set foot in Africa before.

These and other problems were addressed a year later by DynCorp – in
partnership with the NTGL and US government – after consultations with stakeholders and non-US experts, a practice not usually employed by DOD in ‘train and equip’ programmes. This led to innovative recommendations and a more tailored force for Liberia. For example, the force was ‘simplified’ greatly. DynCorp opted for a basic motorised infantry brigade that was not dependent on expensive technologies that are difficult to source and maintain in Africa, no ‘elite’ units such as Taylor’s former ‘Special Anti-Terrorist Unit (SATU)’ which could terrorise the population, or high-caliber weaponry such as tanks or artillery that could threaten neighbours. By eschewing the DOD’s penchant to create miniature US-militaries around the world, Liberia enjoys a more sustainable force that is better tailored for the needs of the country.

There were other significant innovations, three of which warrant further analysis. The first is the creation of a rigorous human rights vetting model for AFL candidates to ensure past human rights abusers do not enter the AFL. This is an enormous challenge in a post-conflict environment where credible public records and other instruments of background checks are utterly lacking (McFate, 2007). The second is the institutionalisation of a special ombudsman-like office within the Ministry of Defense to address issues of tribal and gender equality. During Samuel Doe’s reign, the AFL devolved into a sectarian institution dominated by his Krahn tribe, which at times used the military as a tool for ethnic cleansing. It was important to prevent this from happening again.

The third example was placing human rights, ‘laws of war,’ and civics training equal to combat related training, such as shooting. Given the AFL’s troubled past, stakeholders urged that every soldier must understand that knowing when to pull the trigger was as important as hitting what you were aiming at. Accordingly, three of the eleven weeks of Basic Training (also called Initial Entry Training) were devoted to civics training, an unprecedented development in military training in Africa or elsewhere.

Tragically, DynCorp later opted to cut this training, shortening Basic Training to eight weeks, thus saving money. This is a mistake. As Mark Malan recommends in a recent report on Liberia’s SSR:

> Congress should insist on more credible measures to ensure that civics and human rights become a central element of the US training program for the AFL (Malan, 2008:xii).

Prelude to Future US Engagement in Africa?

The US-Liberia SSR Programme may prove a good indicator of future US engagement in Africa, especially given the newly established US military Africa Command or AFRICOM. AFRICOM will likely outsource a good portion of its capabilities to PMCs given the complementary interests of supply and demand. AFRICOM has a huge mandate yet will not be given dedicated military units to accomplish its mission. In fact, no new military units will be created for AFRICOM at all, save the headquarters itself currently located at Stuttgart, Germany. Worse, it cannot expect to ‘borrow’ existing units elsewhere because of the huge demand for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. How will it accomplish its mission? By outsourcing it to PMCs.

Which is exactly what PMCs are waiting for. This multi-billion dollar industry is looking for the next US-sponsored conflict market once the Iraq and Afghanistan ‘bubble bursts,’ and they see that market as Africa, a continent of crisis. Thanks to the wars in the Middle East and opportunities like the US-Liberia SSR Programme in Africa, this industry has honed its services in the areas that
AFRICOM most needs: training and equipping; war-zone logistics; humanitarian response; post-conflict reconstruction; infrastructure repair; and SSR. The symmetry of supply and demand between PMCs and AFRICOM are exquisite.

Conclusion

The US-Liberia SSR Programme is an excellent prism into the future of US engagement on the continent, especially vis-à-vis AFRICOM. The complex outcomes that stem from outsourcing core military tasks, such as making militaries, to PMCs augur insights into how AFRICOM might engage Africa. This article briefly charts some of these outcomes, both positive and negative, from an ‘insider’s’ perspective.

However, larger concerns loom on the horizon. The utilisation of PMCs in Africa is more sensitive than in the Middle East given Africa’s lamentable past experiences with colonialism and mercenaries. This will prove a public diplomacy challenge for AFRICOM, which will seek to win ‘hearts and minds’ for the American cause. Moreover, consistent with the rule of ‘unintended consequences,’ the reliance by AFRICOM on PMCs may unwittingly generate a wider market for force on the continent, attracting future PMCs from Russia or elsewhere, in addition to the possibility of African PMCs. Will demand diversify to encompass multinational companies, NGOs, opposition groups, and private individuals? What will happen if market forces demand greater combat-oriented services? Could, for example, an NGO hire a PMC to conduct an armed humanitarian intervention in Darfur to ‘save lives’ in the name of human rights and the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ doctrine? What are the second, third and fourth order repercussions of this action? Could it exacerbate on-the-ground conflict? Draw the US into a war with Sudan? Trigger a UN Chapter 7 intervention? The implications of this on global security governance are terrifying, and few would welcome the development of an industry vested in conflict in Africa. Yet these critical questions remain scarcely examined.

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Endnotes

1. The author was a principal architect of this programme; he does not claim credit for its management.

Bibliography

The Dynamics of Private Security in Senegal

Cyrus O’Brien

The privatisation of security has recently attracted much attention, particularly in light of abuses by private military companies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of this attention sensationalises private security by focusing on private armies unbounded by national boundaries and unencumbered by international law. Recently, however, less dramatic forms of private security such as private guarding, surveillance, alarm systems, and patrolling have become more prevalent worldwide. These more mundane forms of private security are central to the daily operations of many societies.

The expansion of private security in the developing world is nearly always attributed to high levels of insecurity and general instability. Senegal, by contrast, is relatively safe and stable, but nevertheless has a rapidly expanding private security sector. The country is home to more than 150 private security companies that employ between 25,000 and 35,000 people, making Senegal’s private security sector relatively larger per capita than those of more violent countries like Nigeria and Kenya. The vast majority of these companies operate in the informal sector where they avoid taxation and governmental regulation, and like in many other countries, working conditions in the sector are poor. Unlike many other countries, however, Senegal has made significant and successful efforts to prevent international security companies like Group 4 Securicor from gaining a foothold.

This briefing is based on research conducted on behalf of the gun control organisation Le Mouvement Contre les Armes Légères en Afrique de l’Ouest (MALAO) in Senegal in the spring of 2007. It describes the private security sector, concentrating particularly on Dakar, where international businesses and international organisations (IOs) provide the largest sources of demand for private security. It includes an examination of the economic and political circumstances that have enabled the growth of private security and a discussion of the relationship between private security companies, the government, and business.

The Growth of Private Security Amidst Stability & Peace

In the worldwide proliferation of private security companies (PSCs), Senegal represents a unique case: the private security sector is growing despite political stability and a low crime rate. Previous briefings in this journal have attributed the growth of private security in other countries to ‘high crime rates, combined with the inability of the public security services to provide adequate protection’ (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2005). Indeed, general insecurity has been a key factor driving the sector’s growth in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Nicaragua, and Guatemala (Ibid; Lilly & von Tangen Page, 2002). The situation in Senegal demonstrates that the expansion of private security is not limited to countries where instability and insecurity prevail.

Senegal has the reputation of being West Africa’s most stable country. Since its independence from France in 1960, it has maintained a democratic system of government and regularly holds relatively fair elections. The Senegalese armed forces are firmly under civilian control and have never intervened in politics, making Senegal one of the few African countries to avoid a coup d’état since independence from colonial rule. The Casamance, a breakaway southern province separated from Senegal proper by the Gambia, is the only major source of instability in the country. However, since 2000 the situation has calmed, resulting...
in only occasional violence. Violence has been confined to the Casamance, leaving the majority of Senegal free from political strife.

This climate of political stability has enabled Senegal to maintain a remarkably low crime rate. Winslow (2008), relying on data from Interpol, reported the total crime rate to be 64.29 crimes for every 100,000 people, compared with 1,709.88 for Japan and 5,955.05 for the United Kingdom. The same study showed Senegal’s murder rate to be 0.33 per 100,000 people, or roughly one fifth that of the UK. Although the general crime statistic is surely underreported, the given murder rate is roughly accurate; because murders are rare in Senegal, the press thoroughly reports them. Though not completely reliable, these figures show that Senegal is not a country plagued by crime.

With little else to offer – peanuts are the biggest contributor to the GDP – Senegal markets its stability and peace to attract foreign businesses and organisations. Dakar, the capital, hosts the West African headquarters for many international non-governmental organisations, research institutions, and IOs. Particularly since the war in Ivory Coast, business and organisations have flocked to Senegal. In January of this year, Dubai World paid US$800 million for the rights to administer a free trade zone within Senegal, joining the flow of businesses that see Senegal as a ‘gateway’ into the region (Flynn, 2008).

It is primarily the presence of these businesses and organisations that generates demand for PSCs. Because demand is almost entirely fuelled by foreigners and expatriates, private guards are an almost entirely urban phenomenon. International mining activities, heavily guarded despite their rural location, are the exception. Throughout Dakar, private guards stand in front of nearly every sizable business or organisation guarding everything from banks to bookstores to offices and schools. Nearly every location an expatriate might visit is under private guard. Foreign businesses and organisations contract PSCs to provide security not only for the businesses themselves, but also for the homes of their employees. Paradoxically, then, peace, stability, and a low crime rate fuel the growth of the private security sector because they attract international businesses and organisations.

The police are widely viewed as inept and corrupt, prompting the wealthy to turn to the private sector for security. The majority of the population, however, continues to rely on traditional methods for security. Typical neighbourhoods are some of the safest places in the country, as residents keep a watchful eye on suspicious persons and come quickly to each other’s aid. While usually advantageous, at times such security networks become vigilante groups and occasionally escalate a situation. While statistics are hard to obtain, evidence suggests that vigilante groups account for most of Senegal’s (low) murder rate; upon identifying a thief or criminal, mobs may beat the suspect to death. On the whole, however, traditional security methods help to preserve overall security, making most of Senegal’s villages, neighbourhoods, and towns safe.

Inequality, Exploitation & Unions

The private security sector in Senegal mushroomed in the aftermath of the 1994 economic reforms promoted by the IMF and World Bank. Although the first private security companies were founded in the late 1980s, they did not become prevalent until the economic reforms resulted in greater levels of inequality. There are currently over 150 private security companies in Senegal, all but a few created since 1994. The sector’s rapid rate of expansion makes it difficult to estimate the exact number, as new PSCs are formed with incredible frequency.
The 1994 neo-liberal reforms involved the lifting of subsidies and price controls, a steady deregulation of the economy, and a 50% devaluation of the currency. The reforms positively affected Senegal’s macroeconomic outlook; inflation was brought under control, government finances were balanced, and the economy turned around. After contracting in the early 1990s, Senegal’s economy has steadily grown at an annual rate of around 5%.

The economic gains of the 1990s were not distributed across the Senegalese economy. Living conditions for most of the population declined as prices for food and other basic goods were deregulated. The number of street peddlers exploded at this time, as unemployment forced large numbers of people into the informal economy. Today, nearly a quarter of the population survives on less than $1 a day, and more than three-fifths on less than $2 each day. Thus, despite the economic influxes caused by the arrival of international business, intense poverty and inequality are on the rise, and may potentially destabilise the prevailing security environment. As one director of a PSC remarked, the private security sector depends ‘not on a lack of security, but instead on a lack of wealth’.

With nearly half of the workforce unemployed, private guards face a strikingly soft labour market. A typical guard is paid between US$70 and $120 each month, while the most professional companies pay their employees up to $180. In some cases, guards are given monthly transport stipends, but these almost never meet actual costs. Guards work exceedingly long hours and face very high exploitation, taking home only 35-50% of what clients pay for their services.

In my research, I found not one private security company in Senegal that did not violate national regulations in some way. The most common abuses were paying below the minimum wage, demanding that guards work for unreasonable hours, and employing guards on temporary contracts. Senegalese labour codes stipulate that after one temporary six-month contract, employers must hire a worker permanently or dismiss the employee. Even the most professionalised and the highest paying PSCs in Senegal violate this provision in the work code.

There are no strong unions of security guards, although many guards express a desire for one. Many guards are reluctant to establish a union because they fear being laid off when their six-month contract expires. The lack of permanent contracts in the sector increases the vulnerability of guards and prevents them from taking strong positions relating to working conditions.

**Cooperation Between PSCs & the Government**

Most PSCs are managed or owned by former police and military officials. In some cases, officers will found private security companies while still holding public office, usually passing the day-to-day management responsibilities to a family member. Tightening the relationship between the state security forces and private sector, nearly all security guards in Senegal have completed military service and, for most companies, military or police service is an explicit prerequisite to employment.

One-third of Senegal’s military is comprised of conscripts, each of whom serves two years without the possibility of extension. Although conscription exists, it is not enforced against one’s will. The droves of unemployed find such relatively well-paying vacancies in the military desirable, and the positions are easily filled. After serving two years, conscripts are released from the army and many find jobs in the private security sector. Many guards lament their discharge from the state security forces and some eventually find more lucrative
employment with the police or gendarmerie.

Despite the overlap in personnel, there is little overt cooperation between PSCs and state security forces. Police and private security guards hold positive views of each other but, in contrast to the situation in many countries, the police do not rely on the private sector. The government of Senegal has no contracts with PSCs and all state security functions remain under the purview of the army and police. Public-private partnerships, such as water treatment plants, La Poste, and Senelec (the national electric company), are exceptions and hire PSCs to guard their facilities.

Two private military companies, Northrop Grumman Technical Services (NGTS) and Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), train the Senegalese armed forces as part of the US State Department's African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) programme. The ACOTA programme, created after the US debacle in Somalia, seeks to train and equip African militaries to conduct peacekeeping missions, thereby minimising the responsibilities of the West. The US Government supplies Senegal with the bulk of its military equipment and hires NGTS and MPRI teams to conduct eight two-month training programmes, focusing primarily on peacekeeping tactics. Senegalese soldiers trained under ACOTA have served as peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Darfur.

In addition to ACOTA, Senegal is a partner in the so-called ‘war on terror’ and currently receives aid through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, a counter-terrorism effort to track activity from the Atlantic Ocean to Chad. The role of private military companies in this programme is unclear.

Regulation & Corruption

The most significant problems facing the private security sector in Senegal result from their poor regulation. More than 80% of PSCs are not registered with the government, do not pay taxes, and operate completely in the informal sector. In 2003, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade issued a decree mandating that all PSCs be owned and operated by Senegalese citizens or companies. At the time, Senegal’s largest private security company, the American owned Sagam Sécurité, was forced to sell. This decree has kept the private security sector entirely in domestic hands and prevented multinationals like Group 4 Securicor from making inroads in Senegal.

Only registered PSCs are permitted to have armed guards. Despite this requirement, some guards in the informal sector are armed. Senegal has largely succeeded in keeping guns out of the country, but steadily grants around 120 licenses each year (Agboton-Johnson et al. 2004). Private security companies win a sizable majority of these licenses, although as licenses are awarded to individuals and their affiliations are not listed, no exact figures are available. Personal ties are important, as companies that have the strongest ties to the state security system or to the state bureaucracy are more likely to win licenses. That said, this research found no evidence of corruption in the form of bribes at the governmental level.

In the private sector, however, corruption is rampant. In order to be paid the amount stipulated by the contract, the manager of a PSC must frequently bribe the contracting company. Only after a bribe of $50-100, is the contracting company likely to pay the PSC. This form of corruption is worst in public-private companies, particularly La Poste.
In 2000, the computer system that the Ministry of the Interior used to track gun licenses failed, evidently one of the few victims of the computer virus Y2K. Since then, licenses have been recorded in piecemeal fashion, and the system is largely disorganised. Every year, the Ministry of the Interior sends the possessor of a gun license a notification of the tax that is owed for each firearm. Several PSC managers reported that the lists from the government omit many of their guns, in some cases up to half of the firearms they actually own. In effect, the government has lost track of many of the arms it has licensed. The absence of state control or records of arms is a dangerous contributor to the growth of private security companies.

The growth of private security in Senegal has been remarkably uncontroversial and has faced little criticism in the press. The majority of the population views private security as the domain of international business and as a form of employment in a struggling economy. The government should be commended for its 2003 efforts to bring the private security sector into domestic hands and under the purview of the Ministry of the Interior. Despite such efforts, however, the private security sector remains largely unregulated.

Private security is likely to play an even more prominent role as increasing economic inequality makes the political situation more volatile. Additionally, the influx of people and arms from Senegal’s war-torn neighbours threatens an already fragile stability. Dakar’s riots in November 2007 are a reminder of how quickly a situation can deteriorate. Nevertheless, Senegal’s stability will likely continue to attract international businesses and international organisations, and the government’s adoption of neo-liberalism makes it unlikely that economic inequalities will subside. These conditions virtually guarantee the continued growth of the private security sector, which already rivals or exceeds the state security forces in terms of number of personnel. The size and projected growth of private security, and its corresponding rise in influence, mandate a continuing re-evaluation of the role and scope of private security in Senegal and throughout Africa.

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Bibliography
Prison Privatisation in the African Context
Andrew Coyle

The use of prison as a direct punishment of the court is a relatively modern phenomenon. It began in the 17th and 18th century, principally in Western Europe and North America, and over the succeeding centuries its use has spread to virtually every country in the world. In Africa prior to colonial times there was no indigenous concept of imprisonment as a form of punishment. The idea of taking substantial numbers of predominantly young men, who would otherwise be economically and socially active, locking them behind high walls and making them and their dependants a burden on the rest of society made no economic or cultural sense. As elsewhere in the world the first prisons were built as a tool for the colonial powers to subdue the local populace. Today one can still visit some African towns and see prisons which reflect their French colonial past, while in a number of countries in West and East Africa many prisons are built on a common British model. One suspects that the original construction plan might still be found somewhere in the Public Records Office in Kew near London.

The rate of imprisonment in any country is usually quoted per 100,000 of the total population. On that basis, the average rate of imprisonment around the world is about 140. Rates vary dramatically from country to country. The United States, with about 23% of all the world’s prisoners, has a rate of 751, while India has a rate of 32 (ICPS, 2008). This is not the place to enter into an analysis of what leads to such variations; suffice to say that there is little evidence that they can be explained by differing rates of crime but are more likely to be explained by a variety of economic, cultural and social factors.

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Imprisonment rates within the African continent also vary widely. The Republic of the Congo has the lowest rate of imprisonment in the world, with 22 prisoners per 100,000 of its population, closely followed by Burkina Faso with 23. The median rate for West African countries is 37, while that in southern Africa is 267, with South Africa having the highest rate at 348.

Prisons which are properly constructed and humanely managed are very expensive on the public purse and conditions in many developed countries have been severely criticised by independent bodies such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and Human Rights Watch. In a number of countries in Africa conditions for those held there can only be described as inhuman and degrading. On 5 March 2005 the East African Standard newspaper reported on conditions in one prison in Kenya:

[The prison], built in 1962 to hold about 350 prisoners, is congested with more than 1,450. The jail is a hallmark of neglect and abuse. Child offenders mingle with suspected murderers, violent robbers and rapists. Hardcore convicted criminals share halls with remandees accused of misdemeanours. In the women’s section, infants accompanying their mothers sleep in the same cells with mentally unsound murder suspects.

At one corner in the sickbay, a patient, deeply asleep, snores loudly beside a plastic bucket full of human waste. Another prisoner sits beside the bucket, his eyes wide open as if in a trance. Patients say they use the bucket at night and empty it in the morning for use during the day. The room is crawling with vermin.

In Ward Four, John Ndichu and 235 others spend most of the day and night squatting. This is because if they sit, they would have to stretch their legs and there is no space for that.1
In 2006 the Vice-President of Kenya announced plans to free 15,000 prisoners by the end of July, noting that prisons built to hold a total of 16,000 people were then holding 48,000 inmates country-wide. Most of the prison facilities date back to colonial times, when Kenya’s population was less than 10 million (it is now over 30 million), he said adding that the congestion was now posing a health hazard to inmates. This story could be repeated many times in other African countries. Governments recognise the need to improve prison conditions but simply lack the resources to improve them.

Prison Privatisation

It is generally accepted that, even in an age of reducing government direct delivery of services and increasing private control of services which are essential for the common good, there are some responsibilities which the state cannot delegate and which it must carry out itself. An example would be defence of the nation from external enemies. All armed services remain under the direct control of the government in democratic countries and private or mercenary armies are not permitted, although as shown in several articles in this Special Issue, private military companies are increasingly integrated into and support national militaries in various ways. The judiciary is another example where private enterprise is eschewed. Protection of the public has become a slightly greyer area in recent years. Private security firms now abound and in some countries outnumber the police but the core responsibility for public order and for investigation of crime still lies with state officials.

Until thirty or so years ago the task of depriving citizens of their liberty was another function which was regarded as a state monopoly for similar reasons. Individual freedom was so sacred that only the state could take it away after due process and only the state could administer the punishment passed by its own courts. That is a position which is still maintained in the majority of democratic countries, but not in all.

The modern phenomenon of prison privatisation can be traced back to 1979 when the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service began contracting commercial companies to detain illegal immigrants who were awaiting deportation hearings (Wood, 2003). By the mid-1980s the number of people in prison in the US was increasing to such an extent that a number of states turned to these private detention companies to provide quick build prisons and detention centres. An added advantage for the state jurisdictions was that the resultant costs could be recorded against revenue or operating budgets rather than as capital costs.

In the course of the following decade governments entered into contracts for private prisons in a number of other countries, including the UK, Australia and New Zealand. This came to be seen increasingly as a lucrative business with the small number of companies involved each chasing its share of ‘the market’. In 2004 one of the companies described the UK as ‘the second largest private correctional market in the world’ (GEO Group, 2004).

In respect of prisons the term ‘privatisation’ covers a wide spectrum. This starts with marginal areas such as issuing commercial contracts for the prison shops or canteens, where prisoners are able to purchase items for personal use. The next stage in privatisation is that in which specific services, such as drug treatment or other programmes for prisoners, are delivered by commercial companies or not-for-profit organisations. Moving along the spectrum, in some cases contracts are issued for the central services within the prison; these can include catering, health care, education...
and work for prisoners. The most advanced example of this is in France where a number of prisons are run under a system of dual management, with prison service personnel carrying out what are described as the public service duties (supervision, rehabilitation, registration and management) and commercial companies being responsible for all other functions (maintenance, transportation, accommodation, food service, work and vocational training).

A further phase of privatisation is that in which the entire operation of a prison is contracted to a commercial company or a not-for-profit organisation. In this case the state builds and continues to own the prison buildings and enters into a contract with a company for the management of the prison. Thereafter the state takes no part in the daily management. A number of the earliest examples of prison privatisation in England and Australia followed this model. The ultimate stage of privatisation, so far, is that in which a commercial company takes a prison from drawing board to final operation. This includes its design, construction, financing and management. This is the model now generally followed in the UK and, as we shall see, in South Africa. The mechanism for implementing the private construction and management of new prisons, as with other public institutions, has been the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) or Public Private Partnership (PPP).

Technically, none of these models should be described as privatisation. The legal responsibility for the prisoners who are held in them remains with the state, which contracts out their daily management to the differing degrees described above. Full privatisation would exist only if the state handed over complete responsibility for the citizens sentenced to prison to a commercial company. However, as far as the prisoner in the prison which is managed by a commercial company is concerned, this is a semantic distinction. For all practical purposes, such a prisoner is in the hands of a commercial company. The best of these companies may well set out to treat the prisoners under their control in a decent and humane manner. A few of them succeed better than their counterparts in the public sector. Despite this there is no escaping the fact that the final responsibility of these companies is to their shareholders; they must deliver a profit or they will cease to trade. This is the ultimate difference between a private prison and a public one.

**Prison Privatisation in Africa**

In 1993 the prison population in South Africa stood at 111,000. By 2002, it had risen to 182,000. At the end of January 2008 it had fallen back to 166,000, while the system had beds for 114,500. The rise in numbers in the decade after 1993 placed intolerable strain on the system and there was international criticism not only of levels of overcrowding but also of corruption and violence inside the prisons. In an attempt to deal with these problems the government turned to prison privatisation.

The issue of prison privatisation in South Africa was discussed at a seminar in Cape Town in 2003 (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003). The introduction to the report of the conference refers to findings by Professor Julia Sloth Nielsen that,

> the privatisation of state assets was explicitly part of the government’s overall economic programme in the period following 1996, and indeed remains part of government’s chosen strategy. Correctional Services decided to explore the possibility of privatisation as part of a new prisons building programme, one key aim of which was to address overcrowding, inter-alia through the more rapid construction of new facilities.
One of the speakers at the conference, Stephen Nathan, placed this in a wider context when he said,

*The backdrop to prison privatisation is the economic restructuring – including privatisation of state assets and services – being imposed on countries by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.*

At the time of writing South Africa is the only country in Africa which has private prisons. The government initially planned to tender for four private prisons but in the end restricted itself to two tenders for financial reasons. Mangaung Prison, with 3,024 places and now operated by GSL, was opened at Bloemfontein in July 2001 and Kutama-Sinthumule Prison, with 2,928 places and operated by the South African Custodial Services, a subsidiary of the GEO Group, opened in Louis Trichardt in 2002. These are the two largest private prisons in the world. The GEO Group describes itself as a world leader in privatised correctional and detention management, with operations also in the US and the UK.

According to Prison Privatisation Report International (2003), these two prisons have proved to be extremely costly to the Department of Corrections. As early as 2002 the government set up a task force to investigate the prisons’ financing, costs, outputs and risk allocation; to establish a comparison with public sector prisons; and to identify features for renegotiation to address the department of correctional services’ affordability restraints. In November 2002 the task force reported that returns on the company’s investments in Mangaung prison could be as high as 29.9% while returns on Kutama-Sinthumule were as high as 25%. Construction and operating fees at Bloemfontein had increased from R154.41 per prisoner per day at the outset to R215.70, while at Louis Trichardt costs had increased from R139.31 to R160.36. The task force recommended that the contracts for the two prisons should be renegotiated. This proved to be impossible.

The contracts provide for both capital repayments and daily per prisoner costs, adjusted annually for inflation, but based on what have been described as exceedingly unrealistic ‘input specifications’, including a limit of two prisoners per cell and extensive educational and vocational training requirements, to levels which are not available in any publicly managed prison. It has been reported

*that the two prisons will over the next three years consume between 5.1 and 5.4% of the total Correctional Services Budget (R642,235 million in 2008/9), for facilities housing around 3% of the prison population* (Sloth-Nielsen, 2006).

A senior adviser in the South African Treasury is reported to have commented, ‘We ordered a Rolls Royce but we should have ordered a Toyota’ (Open Society Foundation: South Africa, 2003).

In his Budget Vote speech in late 2007 the Corrections Minister announced his intention to invite tenders for the construction of five new prisons on a public-private partnership model ‘once national treasury agrees to cover the project management costs.’ It is by no means clear that the Treasury will give its agreement to this.

The problems faced by a country such as South Africa are compounded if one looks at the situation of its impoverished neighbour, Lesotho. In 2001 the prison population of Lesotho was less than 3,000. The government acknowledged that the conditions in its prisons were appalling and had to be improved yet it lacked the resources to realise its ambition. Enter Group 4 Corrections Services SA (Pty) Ltd. with a solution which was completely alien to the traditions of the country. It offered to build a prison with 3,500 places which would be of a high
physical standard. The price to be paid was that all the prisoners in the country would be located in this single mega prison, very far from their homes and in an environment which would be completely at odds with the culture of the country. Group 4 apparently developed its proposal at the request of the Lesotho Department of Justice, Human Rights and Rehabilitation. Later the Minister who had invited Group 4 to develop its proposal was replaced and the government decided not to pursue the proposal. In May 2008 Group4Securicor, the successor company to Group 4 and the largest private security company in the world, announced that it had taken over GLS, the contractor for Mangaung Prison, thus making it a player in private prisons in South Africa. This amalgamation reinforced the increasing tendency to reduce the extent of competition among the companies involved in this field.

**Conclusion**

In the UK there is increasing concern about the long term financial costs of private prisons. In addition, the respected independent Chief Inspector of Prisons has issued extremely critical reports on the operation of several of these prisons. In 2001 the National Audit Office published a generally positive report on PFI prisons (National Audit Office, 2001). However, a further report in 2003 (National Audit Office, 2003) was much more cautious and concluded that the use of private prisons ‘is neither a guarantee of success nor the cause of inevitable failure’.

The situation in South Africa is much more problematic, not least because of questions about the competence of the entire system. For example, in 2001 President Thabo Mbeki appointed a Commission of Inquiry to investigate and report on corruption, maladministration, violence, and intimidation in the Department of Correctional Services. The Commission handed its final report to President Mbeki on 15 December 2005, but it took nearly a year and last minute pressure from the Correctional Services Portfolio Committee Chairperson and Judge Jali, the Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry, before the Minister of Correctional Services released the full report to the public in November 2006. The report of the Jali Commission makes very uncomfortable reading for the Department of Corrections and the Government of South Africa. Of the Commission’s seven focus areas, none were found to have been immune to corruption and in all nine management areas that were investigated, evidence of corruption, maladministration, and the violation of prisoners’ rights were found. In such an overarching climate one would have to be very cautious about the expansion of commercially managed privatisation.

South Africa is a case study in the way that prison privatisation may well proceed in the coming years. Faced with the reality that profit margins in the developed world are likely to be restricted in future and the fact that returns on investment have to be balanced against greater levels of public scrutiny and potential for embarrassment, the small number of companies involved in the business of prison privatisation are beginning to turn their attention to developing countries. Many of these countries are faced with rising prison populations and with terrible prison conditions. Governments are under increasing pressure to improve the conditions of their prisons, while knowing that they have no resources to do so. These are fertile grounds for private prison companies, who can come into a country, promising to relieve the government of unbearable commitments to capital funding in exchange for a revenue commitment which is attractive in the short term but which will have crippling implications in the longer term. This often suits the wishes of politicians who have short term agendas rather than long term ones. A further attraction for private prison companies is that in
such countries it will often be possible to prepare a contract which meets the needs of the private contractor much better than those of the contracting state in both financial and operational terms. In many developing countries there is a real problem with corruption in the public and private services at an institutional and at an individual level. When prisons are operated on a for-profit basis the danger of this happening is likely to be considerably increased. In addition, the strict monitoring arrangements which exist in some developed countries will be absent, leaving the contracting company free to interpret the conditions of the contract to its own advantage.

There is a more fundamental issue which exists in developed as well as in developing countries. It is that the real issue is not about whether private prisons are cheaper than public ones, nor whether they are managed more effectively and efficiently. The fundamental change which has come about with the introduction of privatisation is the concept of prison as a ‘market-place’ and a business which will inevitably expand. Private prisons have been introduced as a short term response by governments to rising prison populations, to shortage of prison places and to limited public funding to maintain existing prisons and to build new ones. As a result, the financial and social costs of an increasing use of imprisonment have not been subject to public scrutiny. Many of the costs of increased imprisonment are hidden in the short term. In fiscal terms, high capital expenditure can be converted into long term revenue expenditure, which reduces current financial costs term while increasing future costs to the public purse. In social terms, governments have not encouraged public debate about why so many additional prison places are needed, being content to argue that they will provide as many places as are necessary to protect the public. This is an even more dangerous phenomenon in developing countries than it is in developed ones.

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Endnotes

Bibliography


The Nigerian Feminist Movement: Lessons from Women in Nigeria, WIN*

Bene E. Madunagu

In Nigeria, as in other societies, there is, and there has always been a women’s movement or more correctly women’s movements. These existed before, during and after colonialism. Many of these may probably not fit into the conventional definition of a movement. Various forms of interest groups see themselves as movements. I admit that all of these do serve interests that in many ways attempt at addressing inequalities between women and men in society. While this is an acceptable criterion of minimising disagreements in the characterisation of women-based organisations, the reality is that there are still substantial differences in the forms of movements that call themselves ‘women’s movements’. Some ‘movements’ may or may not have clear objectives, mission or vision but exist as ad hoc bodies, useful when the need arises but with little or no coordination, continuity or sustainability. Some may just be limited to specific local struggles.

In Nigeria, the oldest and largest women’s movement can be said to be the National Council of Women’s Societies (NCWS) founded in 1958. Basu’s (1995) definition clearly suits the NCWS.

The Nigerian women’s movement is an unarmed movement. It is non-confrontational. It is a movement for the progressive upliftment of women for motherhood, nationhood and development.

This movement is ‘at home’ with the protection of our culture and tradition as well as with the supremacy of men. It will not rock the boat. It essentially accepts what the tradition has been and what religion sanctions.

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There are sectors of this movement that are more radical than the status-quo and that would raise the struggle to a higher level but are still afraid of what the men would say or do. There are gender activists who would rather not be associated with feminism, publicly or privately. Again there are women ‘activists’ in the larger women’s movement who call themselves feminists when they are in the midst of feminists but will quickly condemn ‘those crazy people’, a reference to those who publicly admit and declare that they are feminists. There are yet those who are feminists, ‘but’; these are women who want to be seen truly as feminists but become uncomfortable with discussions on such questions as the totality of who a feminist is and the extent of feminism in terms of core values, principles and praxis. They are satisfied with declaration and participation in meetings and conferences where the term feminism gets mentioned, but are generally silent when issues of sexual rights are discussed. For them, feminism has limits. They are, for instance, totally homophobic.

Feminism in Nigeria

There is no denying the fact that some forms of feminist struggles existed in Nigeria before what was clearly acclaimed and identified openly as a feminist movement: Women in Nigeria (WIN). However such struggles were largely undocumented. I make bold to state that feminism in Nigeria in its present form – consistent, organised, with clear objectives and ideology – came into being with the inauguration, in 1983, of the organisation Women in Nigeria (WIN) following the 1982 national conference on the same theme. WIN was a direct outcome of the conference, envisioned as a feminist movement and named as such.

During its first ten years WIN facilitated the development of many of the self-
identified feminists in Nigeria today. WIN started off with a clearly stated rights-based approach to issues about women in Nigeria and was very clear on the issues of gender and social justice. However, the open policy of WIN of ‘come one – come all’, where anyone, male or female, was accepted as long as such a person accepted the provisions of our Constitution, carried a danger of WIN including persons who have contempt for feminism but come into WIN with their own agenda. There was no punishment for anyone who played no active roll as long as such a person showed up once in a while at meetings. In spite of the inherent weaknesses in the nature of membership criteria for WIN, one must always pay tribute to WIN as training ground for the emergence of organised feminist struggles in Nigeria. WIN’s open policy of membership led to the entry of many persons who had no clue about feminism and gender justice and its core values and principles. Many enthusiastic members equated feminist struggles to abstract class struggle, with total disdain for gender issues. Internal conflicts generated by ignorance and opportunism as well as male chauvinistic understanding of social struggles as not including gender equality and equity as key components of social justice became a cankerworm that progressively weakened WIN as a movement for social transformation – a core focus of feminist struggles.

The Uniqueness & Contribution of WIN to the Nigerian Feminist Movement

From the onset, WIN engaged in research, policy advocacy and activism aimed at transforming the conditions under which women and other underprivileged classes in Nigeria lived. WIN’s further uniqueness was its consciousness of both class and gender in the struggle for the emancipation of women. WIN acknowledged that, although the majority of women, suffered from the exploitative and oppressive character of the Nigerian society, women suffer additional forms of exploitation and oppression – as women. Thus WIN recognised the double forms of exploitation and oppression of women as members of the subordinate class and as women. WIN set out to struggle against both class and gender oppression through promoting the study of conditions of women, disseminating the outcome for policy formulation, defending the rights of women and taking actions to transform the conditions of women.

WIN’s Strategies

WIN started off with the strategy of research, analysis and documentation of conditions of women in various situations in the society. The outcome of this strategy provided the much needed data for advocacy and mobilisation of women to demand their rights. This strategy also led to the practice of holding annual conferences as a means of public education and the creation of awareness, using research data and gender analysis as convincing tool for demanding for women’s rights. We may also mention the adoption of a clear Constitution that emerged from the involvement and participation of all members, the establishment of WIN as an institution with basic feminist principles and values, the emergence of well-defined organisational structures of leadership and representation at national and in the state branches, and clearly defined roles, responsibilities and obligations.

During these first ten years, WIN never received subvention from government and so was able to maintain its independence. It could therefore take actions without compromising since, as the saying goes, ‘the person that pays the piper dictates the tune’.
WIN’s Publications

As stated earlier, one of the strengths of WIN’s strategies, was documentation of research and analysis from a gender perspective. A research theme was chosen each year by consensus and the outcome was published. The first major publication of WIN was the book, *Women In Nigeria Today* (Zed Books, 1985) that came out of the conference that gave birth to WIN. This inaugural publication was followed by:


These publications became invaluable in the understanding of gender issues in Nigeria. There is no way a collection of persons from different backgrounds, cultures and different experiences could be in serious actions together without conflicts. This would have been unnatural. However, WIN had its in-house policy of conflict resolution, and the principles on which the feminists worked helped in the process of constructive criticism a healthy practice for movement building. WIN succeeded as a training ground for many Nigerian feminists who are still committed in many ways to feminist struggles.

Beyond WIN

A lot has happened since the transformation of WIN from its initial focus and content to the present period when in almost every feminist gathering, questions arise that raise doubts. The Nigerian feminist movement has a forum – Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) – which is larger and more coherent than WIN.

The NFF was launched in January 2008 after an incubation period that started with the launching of the African Feminist Forum (AFF) in Accra, Ghana in 2006. As a chapter of the African Feminist Forum, the Nigerian Feminist Forum is bound by the values and principles of the AFF. The NFF has effectively replaced WIN as the Nigerian Feminist Movement, and it has gone beyond the historical stage of isolated country movements to become part of the continental (Pan African) feminist movement. AFF documents clearly state the content, context, values and principles of the present vibrant Nigerian feminist movement. Let me quickly point out that we in the NFF know that there are many self-identified Nigerian feminists within Nigeria and in the diaspora who are yet to be part of the NFF, which is still very young. Hence NFF is not a closed club nor is it a ‘come one, come all’ club. We have learned from the past. There are clear guidelines and conditions for becoming a part of the NFF. The secretariat of both the AFF and the NFF are ever ready to furnish potential, interested feminists who wish to be members with information on how to do join.

The information is contained in the Charter of the Feminist Principles for African Feminists clearly states how African and Nigerian feminists alike define themselves, the understanding Feminism and Patriarchy, our identity as African and Nigerian feminists, our ethics as individual and institutional African and Nigerian feminists, and our understanding of feminist leadership. The charter of the feminist principles of the AFF is binding on all the country level feminist forums including Nigerian Feminist Forum.
From WIN to NFF

WIN’s lessons and experiences for the NFF as a new formation include the need for the adoption of basic principles of organisation and action. There is also the need to agree on responsibilities as well as structures for coordination and leadership to ensure organised actions and sustainability. This is already being practised in the NFF with a central organising committee serviced by a joint secretariat of two feminist organisations, both located in Lagos.

Two recent events have tested the strength of NFF. One was the rallying of Nigerian feminists and many other progressive sectors of Nigerian society to put an end to attempts by a private university to force virginity and HIV testing on Nigerian girls entering the institution. Another was the mobilisation against a state attempt to ban the use of condoms. Nigerian feminists along with various institutions caused the state to annul the policy, thereby putting an end to the matter. The most recent had to do with a proposed federal bill, introduced by the female chairperson of the Nigerian Senate Committee for Women and Youths, to institutionalise a dress-code for women. The NFF, together with several women organisations, put an end to the proposed bill through several press conferences and the weight of Nigerian women’s mobilisation to fill the hall where the public hearings on the bill took place. There are many other situations that show the resurgence and revitalisation of feminist activism in Nigeria.

We celebrate these victories. It is gratifying that this can happen in present primitive neo-colonial Nigeria (and Africa), where laws are imposed by the imperialist ‘International Community’; our leaders have kept us in the backyard of that global community to serve as the dustbins or refuse dump for what does not work or what is dangerous to the community of the G8 countries. Our leaders are prepared to sign imperialist conditionalities drafted by the ailing IMF and the World Bank. These conditionalities for unequal trade agreements and perpetual indebtedness of the developing or retrogressing world where we are located, create and deepen poverty with women bearing the greatest burden imposed by culture and tradition and reinforced by the new forms of imperialist-driven religious evangelism. To worsen this already bad situation from present-day globalisation policies of re-colonisation of Africa (in particular, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, etc.), the United States and the rest of the West have come with poverty alleviation strategies and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to divert our attention from the cruel poverty imposed by their policies and the excruciating challenges women in particular face from the new importation of imperialist style of democracy. Hence, if in spite of these burdens, feminists, the larger women’s movement, and our allies have been able to challenge effectively these offshoots of imperialist-directed democracy in our country, we have cause to celebrate – with our eyes open, of course, to see when they try other gimmicks.

This is the present state of the Nigerian feminist movement and its relationship with the larger Nigerian Feminist Movement, an offshoot of the Pan-African Feminist Movement (AFF).

I FORESEE A SUSTAINED ACTIVE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA THAT WILL PLAY A STRONG ROLE IN THE AFRICAN FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND IN THE GLOBAL FEMINIST MOVEMENT AS A FORCE TO BE RECOGNISED AND RESPECTED. THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!!
APPENDIX: Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists

The African Feminist Forum took place from 15-19 November 2006 in Accra, Ghana. The meeting brought together over 100 feminist activists from all over the region and the diaspora. The space was crafted as an autonomous space in which African feminists from all walks of life, at different levels of engagement within the feminist movement such as mobilizing at local levels for women’s empowerment to academia, could reflect on a collective basis and chart ways to strengthen and grow the feminist movement on the continent.

A key outcome of the forum was the adoption of the Charter of Feminist Principles, which was agreed by the Regional Working group for the Forum, to be one of its principle aims. It was felt that we need something to help us define and affirm our commitment to feminist principles, which will guide our analysis, and practice. As such the Charter sets out the collective values that we hold as key to our work and to our lives as African feminists. It charts the change we wish to see in our communities, and also how this change is to be achieved. In addition it spells out our individual and collective responsibilities to the movement and to one another within the movement.

With this Charter, we reaffirm our commitment to dismantling patriarchy in all its manifestations in Africa. We remind ourselves of our duty to defend and respect the rights of all women, without qualification. We commit to protecting the legacy of our feminist ancestors who made numerous sacrifices, in order that we can exercise greater autonomy.

PRE AMBLE: NAMING OURSELVES AS FEMINISTS

We define and name ourselves publicly as Feminists because we celebrate our feminist identities and politics. We recognise that the work of fighting for women’s rights is deeply political, and the process of naming is political too. Choosing to name ourselves Feminist places us in a clear ideological position. By naming ourselves as Feminists we politicise the struggle for women’s rights, we question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated, and we develop tools for transformative analysis and action. We have multiple and varied identities as African Feminists. We are African women – we live here in Africa and even when we live elsewhere, our focus is on the lives of African women on the continent. Our feminist identity is not qualified with ‘Ifs’, ‘Buts’, or ‘However’s’. We are Feminists. Full stop.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF FEMINISM & PATRIARCHY

As African feminists our understanding of feminism places patriarchal social relations structures and systems which are embedded in other oppressive and exploitative structures at the centre of our analysis. Patriarchy is a system of male authority which legitimizes the oppression of women through political, social, economic, legal cultural, religious and military institutions. Men’s access to, and control over resources and rewards within the private and public sphere derives its legitimacy from the patriarchal ideology of male dominance. Patriarchy varies in time and space, meaning that it changes over time, and varies according to class, race, ethnic, religious and global-imperial relationships and structures. Furthermore, in the current conjunctures, patriarchy does not simply change according to these factors, but is inter-related with and informs relationships of class, race, ethnic, religious, and global-imperialism. Thus to challenge patriarchy effectively also requires challenging other systems of oppression and exploitation, which frequently mutually support each other.

Our understanding of Patriarchy is crucial because it provides for us as feminists, a framework within which to express the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations which affect African women. Patriarchal ideology enables and legitimizes the structuring of every aspect of our lives by establishing the framework within which society defines and views men and women and constructs male supremacy. Our ideological task as feminists is to understand this system and our political task is to end it. Our focus is fighting against patriarchy as a system rather than fighting individual men or women. Therefore, as feminists, we define our work as investing individual and institutional energies in the struggle against all forms of patriarchal oppression and exploitation.

OUR IDENTITY AS AFRICAN FEMINISTS

As Feminists who come from/work/live in Africa, we claim the right and the space to be Feminist and African. We recognise that we do not have a homogenous identity as feminists – we acknowledge and celebrate our diversities and our shared commitment to a transformative agenda for African societies and African women in particular. This is what gives us our common feminist identity.
Our current struggles as African Feminists are inextricably linked to our past as a continent—diverse pre-colonial contexts, slavery, colonization, liberation struggles, neocolonialism, globalization. Modern African States were built off the backs of African Feminists who fought alongside men for the liberation of the continent. As we craft new African States in this new millennium, we also craft new identities for African women, identities as full citizens, free from patriarchal oppression, with rights of access, ownership and control over resources and our own bodies and utilizing positive aspects of our cultures in liberating and nurturing ways. We also recognise that our pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories and herstories require special measures to be taken in favour of particular African women in different contexts.

We acknowledge the historical and significant gains that have been made by the African Women’s Movement over the past forty years, and we make bold to lay claim to these gains as African feminists – they happened because African Feminists led the way, from the grassroots level and up: they strategised, organised, networked, went on strike and marched in protest, and did the research, analysis, lobbying, institution building and all that it took for States, employers and institutions to acknowledge women’s personhood.

As African feminists, we are also part of a global feminist movement against patriarchal oppression in all its manifestations. Our experiences are linked to that of women in other parts of the world with whom we have shared solidarity and support over the years. As we assert our space as African feminists, we also draw inspiration from our feminist ancestors who blazed the trail and made it possible to affirm the rights of African women. As we invoke the memory of those women whose names are hardly ever recorded in any history books, we insist that it is a profound insult to claim that feminism was imported into Africa from the West. We reclaim and assert the long and rich tradition of African women’s resistance to patriarchy in Africa. We henceforth claim the right to theorise for ourselves, write for ourselves, strategise for ourselves and speak for ourselves as African feminists.

INDIVIDUAL ETHICS

As individual feminists, we are committed to and believe in gender equality based on feminist principles which are:

- The indivisibility, inalienability and universality of women’s human rights;
- The effective participation in building and strengthening progressive African feminist organizing and networking to bring about transformatory change;
- A spirit of feminist solidarity and mutual respect based on frank, honest and open discussion of difference with each other;
- The support, nurture, and care of other African feminists, along with the care for our own well-being;
- The practice of non-violence and the achievement of non-violent societies;
- The right of all women to live free of patriarchal oppression, discrimination and violence;
- The right of all women to have access to sustainable and just livelihoods as well as welfare provision, including quality health care, education, water and sanitation;
- Freedom of choice and autonomy regarding bodily integrity issues, including reproductive rights, abortion, sexual identity and sexual orientation;
- A critical engagement with discourses of religion, culture, tradition and domesticity with a focus on the centrality of women’s rights;
- The recognition and presentation of African women as the subjects not the objects of our work, and as agents in their lives and societies;
- The right to healthy, mutually respectful and fulfilling personal relationships;
- The right to express our spirituality within or outside of organised religions;
- The acknowledgment of the feminist agency of African women which has a rich Herstory that has been largely undocumented and ignored.

INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS

As feminist organisations we commit to the following:

- Advocating for openness, transparency, equality and accountability in feminist-led institutions and organisations;
- Affirming that being a feminist institution is not incompatible with being professional, efficient, disciplined and accountable;
- Insisting on and supporting African women’s labour rights, including egalitarian governance, fair and equal remuneration and maternity policies;
Using power and authority responsibly, and managing institutional hierarchies with respect for all concerned. We believe that feminist spaces are created to empower and uplift women. At no time should we allow our institutional spaces to degenerate into sites of oppression and undermining of other women;

- Exercising responsible leadership and management of organisations whether in a paid or unpaid capacity and striving to uphold critical feminist values and principles at all times;
- Exercising accountable leadership in feminist organisations, taking into consideration the needs of others for self-fulfillment and professional development. This includes creating spaces for power-sharing across generations;
- Creating and sustaining feminist organisations to foster women’s leadership. Women’s organisations and networks should be led and managed by women. It is a contradiction of feminist leadership principles to have men leading, managing and being spokespersons for women’s organisations;
- Feminist organisations as models of good practice in the community of civil society organizations, ensuring that the financial and material resources mobilised in the name of African women are put to the service of African women and not diverted to serve personal interests. Systems and structures with appropriate Codes of Conduct to prevent corruption and fraud, and to manage disputes and complaints fairly, are the means of ensuring our organisations;
- Striving to inform our activism with theoretical analysis and to connect the practice of activism to our theoretical understanding of African feminism;
- Being open to critically assessing our impact as feminist organisations, and being honest and pro-active with regards to our role in the movement;
- Opposing the subversion and/or hijacking of autonomous feminist spaces to serve right wing, conservative agendas;
- Ensuring that feminist non-governmental or mass organisations are created in response to real needs expressed by women that need to be met, and not to serve selfish interests, and unaccountable income-generating agendas.

FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

As leaders in the feminist movement, we recognise that feminist agency has popularised the notion of women as leaders. As feminist leaders we are committed to making a critical difference in leadership, based on the understanding that the quality of women’s leadership is even more important than the numbers of women in leadership. We believe in and commit ourselves to the following:

- Disciplined work ethics guided by integrity and accountability at all times;
- Expanding and strengthening a multi-generational network and pool of feminist leaders across the continent;
- Ensuring that the feminist movement is recognised as a legitimate constituency for women in leadership positions;
- Building and expanding our knowledge and information base on an ongoing basis, as the foundation for shaping our analysis and strategies and for championing a culture of learning beginning with ourselves within the feminist movement;
- Nurturing, mentoring and providing opportunities for young feminists in a non-matronising manner;
- Crediting African women’s labour, intellectual and otherwise in our work;
- Creating time to respond in a competent, credible and reliable manner to other feminists in need of solidarity and support whether political, practical or emotional;
- Being open to giving and receiving peer reviews and constructive feedback from other feminists.

References


Endnote

- This briefing was originally published in 1986: A. Mohammed & Bene E. Madunagu (1986), ‘WIN: A Militant Approach to the Mobilisation of Women’, ROAPE 13:37, 103-105. Many thanks to Bene for this very timely up-date (editors).
Angolans Vote for Peace

On 5 September 2008 Angola held its first election since its protracted conflict was put to an end in April 2002. MPLA’s victory in the 1992 legislative elections was contested by UNITA and the subsequent crisis resulted in the resumption of the civil war. This historical precedent triggered a degree apprehension vis-à-vis the electoral process amongst most Angolans. The organisation of the 2008 legislative elections was managed by the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Election Process. Both bodies were largely made up of elements of the ruling party albeit the CNE had some representatives from opposition parties. The government developed a sophisticated and costly electoral system including electoral materials produced by the multinational company INDRA based in Spain.

The organisation of the elections began in 2006. The voter registration process was a paramount undertaking due to the absence of a census list of the Angolan population since 1975. The survey was carried out by several registration brigades and was observed by party agents; as a result over 8 million Angolans were registered. Nonetheless, the process was not absent of controversy since the opposition parties denounced that the traditional authorities, the so-called Sobas, in connivance with the barrios (neighbourhood) coordinators collected voters ID cards in order to elaborate a parallel register list of voters. According to the main opposition party UNITA, this was a strategy to coerce villagers into voting for MPLA. In addition, UNITA accused the CNE of recruiting polling staff members mainly amongst members of MPLA. Nevertheless, these alleged irregularities did not outweigh opposition parties’ eagerness to participate in the electoral process. In addition, the government put in place a program to induce civilian disarmament for the purpose of fostering people’s confidence in a peaceful electoral outcome.

Since May 2008 MPLA and UNITA ran a pre-election campaign leading up to the electoral campaign which started officially on 7 August 2008. According to electoral law, the 14 parties that were registered were to receive $1.1 million each for the electoral campaign three months before E-day. However, these state funds were only distributed to the political parties at the beginning of August. Opposition parties had meagre private means of financing the campaign and lacked propaganda materials and even means of transport to reach their constituencies. Hence, opposition parties mainly conducted a door to door campaign. Meanwhile, MPLA was accused by the opposition parties of using state resources for its campaign (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement1). MPLA used a wide range of means of transport (small airplanes, school buses, 4x4 vehicles, motorbikes, bikes, etc.) and displayed generous campaign resources including the distribution of a wide range of electoral materials. In addition, MPLA conducted a very well orchestrated electoral propaganda campaign in the national mass media, namely the National Angolan Radio (RPA), the National Angolan TV (TPA) and the governmental Jornal de Angola. Media opposition such as the weekly journal O Novo Jornal enjoyed limited distribution and the church run Radio Igreja could only be broadcasted in Luanda. The opposition parties struggled to get their message across to the population in the provinces due to limited means and poor organisational planning in some cases.

The MPLA campaign focused on the government’s role in sustaining 6 years of peace, social progress and economic development. José Eduardo Dos Santos, MPLA’s president and Angola’s Head of State for the last 30 years was described

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in mass meetings and rallies as a successful peacemaker. Governmental achievements made recurrently the headlines of national news programs i.e. inauguration of hospitals, schools, running water plants, infrastructures or new branches of the state-owned network of supermarkets *noso super.* The Angolan media generously publicised China’s leading role in re-building the country’s infrastructures in exchange for oil supplies.

In recent years, the Angolan economy has had an annual real growth rate over 15%, its inflation stays in double digits and revenues result mainly from the booming oil industry and the extraction of minerals and diamonds. In 2008 Angola became Africa’s largest oil producer overtaking Nigeria. The Angolan Finance minister José Pedro de Morais received the prize of Best African Finance Minister in 2007 from the *Financial Times* magazine *The Banker* and he was also recently nominated among the Personalities of the Year by the *Foreign Direct Investment* Magazine (FDIM). The country attracts international investment and duly pays back its foreign debt to international creditors. Angolan companies linked to the Government of Angola are also striving to take control of the banking sector traditionally dominated by Portuguese firms.

The booming economy has been cleverly exploited by MPLA campaigners as being the engine for social progress to address deficits in health, education, clean water, electricity and infrastructures. Despite MPLA’s optimistic vision, Angola is still amongst the world’s least developed nations and occupies the 162nd position in the 2007-2008 UNDP development index rankings. Individuals closely connected to the MPLA leadership manage the main sources of the country’s capitalist development such as oil, construction, telecommunications and hotel industries whilst most Angolans live in precarious conditions, in shanty towns or in small villages in the rural countryside, below minimum hygiene standards, often without easy access to clean water resulting in outbreaks of contagious diseases such as cholera and chronic diarrhoea among children who suffer also from nutritional disorders. Malaria remains the most common cause of infant mortality. Despite a widespread social perception of corruption amongst certain elements of the ruling party, MPLA’s landslide victory in the elections was determined by the Angolan people’s desire to maintain peace and their expectations on the development prospects resulting from the country’s emerging role in the energy sector.

In the era of globalisation, MPLA is the only game in town. Since pre-campaigning began, significant members of UNITA: some of them concerned about maintaining their positions as administrators of the current Government of National Unity: defected from UNITA and subsequently expressed their support to MPLA. Their move to the ruling party was widely publicised by state media on E-day week. Despite questions raised on the confusion between state structures and the MPLA party, elections have been deemed by all international observation missions as transparent, and all opposition parties have accepted the results, whilst allegations of vote rigging have almost been non-existent. Seemingly, international observers highlighted the process was hampered to some extent by organisational pitfalls such as delays in the distribution of materials which then obliged many polling stations to re-open in Luanda on E-day + 1, delays in the accreditation of opposition party observers and inconsistencies in the interpretation of counting procedures (see EU Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Angola 2008 Preliminary Statement 4).

MPLA obtained a landslide victory receiving 81% of the votes. UNITA and
Briefings: Angolans Vote for Peace

PRS received respectively 10% and 3% of the votes. UNITA’s resounding defeat has been aggravated by its sharply declining influence in its traditional strongholds. On the other hand, PRS slightly improved its 1992 results by focusing its campaign on the promotion of federalism, i.e. provincial management of revenues as the recipe to address corruption and shorten the gap between a rich urban elite based in Luanda and poverty-stricken peasants living in the provinces; significantly, PRS obtained over 40% of the votes casted in diamond-rich province of Lunda Sul.

Needless to emphasise that MPLA’s main challenge ahead is to maintain these excellent electoral results; the electorate gave credit to the leadership who managed to sustain 6 years of peace but in future contests the government’s capacity to deliver socio-economic development will be scrutinised more closely. These elections have been conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner and Angola has taken a step forward towards political stability; as in 1992, most Angolans voted for MPLA but the country’s path towards development could benefit from governmental efforts to enable constructive criticism in the public arena. Opposition parties and independent civil society organisations are irreplaceable assets in the priceless business of sustaining Angola’s hard-won peace.

Endnotes
2. Oil in Angola is a state subsidised product. Super oil price is less than .50 cents per litre.
3. The Portuguese Bank BPI sold 49.9% of Banco de Fomento Angola, the southern African country’s largest private sector bank, to Angola’s mobile phone operator, Unitel. For further information see Peter Wise, Financial Times.com (15 September 2008).

Angola Election: 2008: Final Results

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<tr>
<td>MPLA</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNITA</td>
<td>10.39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRS</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
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The Full Cabinet List

President: José Eduardo dos Santos
Prime Minister: António Paulo Kassoma
   Minister of National Defence: Kundi Paihama
   Minister of Interior: Roberto Leal Ramos Monteiro
   Minister of Foreign Affairs: Assunção Afonso dos Anjos
   Minister of Economy: Manuel Nunes Júnior
   Minister of Territory Administartion: Virgílio Ferreira de Fontes Pereira
   Minister of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security: António Domingos Pitra
   Costa Neto
   Minister of Justice: Guilhermina Contreiras da Costa Prata
   Minister of Finance: Eduardo Leopoldo Severin de Morais
   Minister of Planning: Ana Alfonso Dias Lourenço
   Minister of Commerce: Maria Idalina de Oliveira Valente
   Minister of Hotel and Tourism: Pedro Mutindi
   Minister of Agriculture: Afonso Pedro Canga
   Minister of Fisheries: Salamão José Luete Chirimbimbi
   Minister of Industry: Joaquim Duarte da Costa David
   Minister of Oil: José Maria Botelho de Vasconcelos
   Minister of Geology and Mining: Makenda Ambroise

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Chris Allen
8 December 1942 – 29 September 2008

Chris, one of the founding editors of this journal, died in Coulestrine, France on the 29th of September. We will be publishing tributes and a selection of his writing in the March 2009 issue of ROAPE. Our love to Frances and their daughters, Kate and Jude.

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Mainstream development theory argues that countries develop through their own actions: freeing trade and investment, establishing legal institutions conducive to private investment, liberalising markets, educating in a particular way, eliminating wasteful state spending and improving governance. The history of developed countries is cited as an appropriate template. Poor countries wishing to catch up are advised to immerse themselves in the fair and benign international economy.

Ray Bush’s Poverty and Liberalism is a blistering, heterodox critique of each item of this current orthodoxy. Poverty arises, he maintains, not from the failure of countries and groups to incorporate themselves in the world economy but from the fact that they are incorporated in it, but in an unequal and misshapen way. Poverty ‘is not about being left behind but about being actively excluded from an unjust and unequal system of wealth creation’. This system, especially in the countries where poverty is most persistent, predominantly takes the form of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ – David Harvey’s useful renaming of Marx’s primitive or primary accumulation, so strongly emphasised by Rosa Luxemburg. The progressive commoditisation of a growing number of human activities frequently, as Bush explains, results in the accumulation of poverty. History, far from being a template for the future, explains how the globalisation of capitalist accumulation produced and produces some convergence but also much polarisation.

After an initial chapter setting out this theoretical perspective and discussing the interconnection between African impoverishment and the post-1980 neoliberal tsunami, Bush uses the ideas as the backbone of a well-structured set of chapters, each on one crucial issue in the study of development. The first is about international aid – in particular Tony Blair’s and the G8’s plans to ‘rescue’ Africa (in which another frequent theme – the egregious hypocrisy of donors – rightly receives several mentions). This is followed by chapters on migration, land, mining and resources (including the ‘resource curse’), and food and famine. Each of these attacks mainstream approaches and counters with an analysis based on the guiding idea of the book – that the problem is not simple and quantitative (how much integration in the system?) but complex and qualitative (what kind of integration and what kind of system?). His conclusion about the land question is typical of others: ‘the problem is not weak tenure or that producers are insufficiently integrated or are part of imperfect markets: the problem is the market itself and the commoditization of everyday life’.

All this is helpfully illustrated with historical and contemporary empirical material about debt cancellation, migrants’ remittances, land reform in Egypt and Zimbabwe, mining in Africa – themes which all echo Rosa Luxemburg writing a century ago – as well as a narrative about the relationship between...
the development of the oil industry, land struggles and sectarian conflicts in Sudan. Telling instances are also taken from the experience of Middle East and North African countries which the author has particularly studied.

In the final chapter Bush sets out many ideas around which resistance to persistent poverty might be organised. Here are mentions or echoes of Marx, Luxemburg, the narodniks, anarchism, feminism, the defence of indigenous peoples and the importance of ‘infrapolitics’ – the everyday resistance of ordinary individuals, households and neighbourhoods. Ray Bush’s conviction that this spirit of resistance is not extinct means that a gloomy story does not lead to a pessimistic prognosis. Some readers might view this chapter as insufficiently programmatic but I found it refreshingly eclectic. It also contains a needed broadside against the neoliberal ‘governance’ formula (transparency, reducing corruption by lowering the importance of the state and more ‘civil society’, conceived as a proliferation of NGOs).

Late 2007 should be a good moment for the publication of this book. Neoliberalism is being discredited by poor results, especially in Africa, and morally weakened by the grotesque hypocrisy with which it is applied (the same Western governments which increase protection for agriculture or cover up bribery in selling arms to Saudi Arabia preach free trade and anti-corruption to African countries). Its high priests are losing their nerve, fearing that the increasing inequality it generates will destroy political support. Financial liberalisation is causing chaos in the markets and threatening more economic damage; the October 2007 IMF annual meetings were summarised by a New York Times headline as ‘The tables turned: Poor countries wag fingers at rich countries’; and the OECD recently admitted that the facts suggest that ‘globalisation is creating opportunities for a small elite
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of workers and investors to pull away from everyone else’. While neoliberals advise yet more of the same, the left has to go beyond its own clichés and provide a coherent answer to the scandal of persistent mass poverty in a rich world. Ray Bush’s clear, thoughtful and provocative contribution to that task is a valuable resource for those concerned with poverty and development, especially in Africa.


The concept of the prison as a place of detention was introduced to sub-Saharan Africa by colonial powers in the 19th century, largely as a means of subduing the indigenous populations. This legacy remains obvious today in the fortress style of many of the prisons in the region, such as that in the Rwandan town of Cyangugu, built by the Belgians in the 1930s, which is on the cover of Carina Terstakian’s disturbing book. In Rwanda the rate of imprisonment is about 979 per 100,000 of the population. This is the highest in the world, ahead even of the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This means that about one person in every hundred of the population is in prison. This book explains why this is so and describes in stark detail what the consequences are for the prisoners.

Carina Tertsakian is very well placed to write a book such as this, having been directly involved in Rwanda for a decade with international NGOs. At the core of the book is an amazing series of
interviews which she undertook with men and women languishing in the country’s prisons. For anyone who knows prisons in Africa, these interviews ring true in the way that they capture the humanity which can exist in the midst of extreme adversity and the acceptance of inevitable reality. The author helpfully sketches the national context which is all too well known, but this is not a book about the tragedy of Rwanda. It is primarily a record of the experience of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Tertsakian is clearly a sympathetic listener who allows the prisoners to speak in their own words. In most cases, she passes no judgement on what they are saying about the reasons which have brought them to prison. Instead, she quotes directly from the tortuous experiences which they have had, in many cases while they wait to be charged over a period of many years.

‘The suffering which continued silently in the prisons year after year was of a particularly inconvenient kind: these men and women dying of over-crowding, disease and ill-treatment were not the usual innocent victims. The vast majority were accused of genocide and there was little sympathy for their plight. The fact that most of them had not even been tried or charged – and that many therefore may have been innocent – did not seem to matter. Thus, over the years, the prison situation became an accepted feature of post-genocide Rwanda’ (p.16).

The prison system simply could not cope with the number of prisoners, which peaked at around 130,000 in 1998. Over-crowding in the prisons of Western Europe usually means two or at most three prisoners crammed into a cell designed to hold one. In Rwanda it meant that prisoners had forty centimetres of personal space in which to sleep, eat, sit and live. The ‘chateau’ of the title does not refer to the castellated prison buildings. It is the ironic name given by the fortunate prisoners who have two planks of wood as their own personal space. The less fortunate live and sleep on the ground, in corridors, in toilets or shower spaces, on top of septic tanks or in the open air.

In one of the most moving chapters the author describes the scene when families come to visit:

The first group of prisoners, around 50 of them, emerges from the gate and sits down on the nearest row of long benches … A guard whistles and the first group of visitors lunges forward to take their seats on the second row of benches … There is a frantic exchange of provisions and full and empty containers, and a frantic exchange of words … Suddenly, one of the guards blows his whistle again and the visitors have to leave … from the first whistle to the second whistle, the visit has lasted less than two minutes (p.250).

In unemotional language, often through the voices of the prisoners, Tertsakian describes the added difficulties for women prisoners, for minors, for the elderly, for the sick and for those sentenced to death. She also notes the complete lack of support for prisoners who are eventually released, as well as the lack of concern from the international community:

The crisis in the prisons – which would have provoked outrage had it occurred in almost any other country – elicited barely any response from foreign governments (p.353).

There is little evidence that this nightmare is coming to an end. When Tertsakian conducted her research, the prison population stood at around 85,000. She ends the book by reporting that in May 2007 it stood around 92,000. This powerful book places a spotlight on the continuing tragedy of prisons in Rwanda, which remain a blot on humanity. It deserves to be widely read and to act as a spur for international action.
Théodore Trefon, who directs the ‘Contemporary History’ section of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Brussels, has written a fascinating, rich, lively and overall superb book on the resilience of the Congolese administrative apparatus in a time of state failure. The book is based on in-depth case studies of the interactions between individuals in different social universes and administrative branches of the state in the town of Lubumbashi, Congo’s second largest city with about 1.5m people, in the province of Katanga. It details the daily routines and state-induced vexations of a charcoal transporter, a baker, a construction material salesman, a taxi driver, a retired civil servant, a paralegal restaurant owner, a widow housewife and mother of 11, a preacher, a street foreign exchange broker, and a cyber-café manager.

In addition to the unique empirical material of the book, one of Trefon’s main contributions is the theoretical introduction, which provides analytical context and conceptual structure to the case studies. To the question of ‘why the administration persists’ (p.13) despite its deliquescence in providing the Congolese with the services it was intended for, Trefon offers a triply layered answer. The Congolese administration persists because it is instrumentalised by political elites for their own advantage (particularly as a source of revenue); because it is privatised by public officials as part of their own strategies of personal survival; and because individual citizens still need the administration, even when they largely substitute themselves to it in providing services. This latter point is particularly interesting. For example, parents pool their resources to pay the salaries of public teachers, largely abandoned by the state, and thereby facilitate the reproduction of the public education system. They do so, rather than starting new alternative private schools, because they value the state diploma which they see as giving their children access to formal employment.

Although the introduction alone provides a thorough and rigorous contribution to the topic and is worthy of publication on its own, it is the empirical material in the subsequent case studies, or individual vignettes, which is most stunning, informative and original. It also often makes for captivating reading. Most striking are the innumerable layers of administration and control enforced upon the Congolese and the equally numerous taxes and levies which administrative agencies impose. Starting with ministers, the administration expands downwards through secretaries-general, directors, division chiefs, bureau chiefs, chiefs of provincial divisions, provincial bureau chiefs, section chiefs, cell chiefs, chiefs of urban services, chiefs of sub-sections and sub-cells, mayors, burgomasters, chiefs of neighborhood and street chiefs (pp. 143-147), illustrating in the process the universality and decentralization of ‘Big Man’ politics. As for taxes, the city and communes of Lubumbashi alone inflict no less than 26 taxes on its residents (p. 149). And state agents invent many more.

The resulting totalitarianism (my word, not Trefon’s) of the weak state makes peoples’ lives miserable. The story of the retired railroad worker hanging on to his official documents for dear life (pp. 85-93) is poignant, as is the vulnerability of the charcoal trader in the face of public harassment (pp. 47-54) and that of the widow struggling to secure water and electricity for her household of 11 children (pp.101-112).
The book’s methodology also deserves mention. Trefon has collaborated with Bathazar Ngoy of the University of Lubumbashi and with the latter’s students in political science who were trained in questionnaire administration and managed the surveys in the Lubumbashi neighborhoods, which produced the case studies. Trefon’s book is _politique par le bas_ at its best. The Congolese state repeatedly comes to life for the reader in all its daily Kafkaesque arbitrariness at the grassroots. The resulting picture is one where there seems to be no greater impediment to life than the state itself. Yet, people have learned to live with it. In fact, the resilience of citizens in the face of a relentlessly exploitative administration is probably as remarkable as the resilience of the state itself. Moreover, the book clearly illustrates how the very actions of citizens, driven by necessity, often help reproduce the administration.

If Trefon’s book is to have a weakness (at least for the Anglophone reader), it will be that is written in French (although there is an excellent English summary of the main argument at the beginning). Its contribution to the study of the African state in general and Congo in particular is so significant that an English version cannot come too soon.


This book addresses the interface which exists between the often quite disparate disciplines of philosophy and literature, and does so within the context of the African conditions of poverty, corruption, and state ineptitude. It talks to the contrasting scenarios and explanatory frameworks of two of the continent’s outstanding novelists – Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o – whose books likely constitute Africa’s most familiar and stimulating texts of the post-Independence period. However, I finished reading Okolo with a mixed reaction.

As she states in the introduction, her study provides ‘an intellectual and analytic framework within which the African experience can be conceptualized, interpreted and reorganized’ (p.2); here she investigates the relationship between literature and society. This is undertaken by considering the political components of Achebe’s _Anthills of the Savanna_ (1987) and Ngugi’s _Petals of Blood_ (1977). The former sees Africa’s problems as a result of ‘internal’ corruption, state failure, ineptitude, and the privatization of the public resources, while the latter points to leadership, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism as the basic sources. The foundation of Okolo’s analysis is political philosophy (providing a worldview and critical reflection) upon which the writings of the two authors are considered (first in general by investigating their several other novels, then in detail for _Anthills_ and _Petals_). As the analysis develops, the writings of some additional novelists such as Soyinka, Sembene, and Armah are interrogated. She finalises her study by comparing the authors in terms of their perspectives on the African condition and on possible social reconstruction. Therein resides

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the work’s strength; it is rendered powerful and insightful by her selection of authors. The chosen authors speak to the causes in thoughtful and contrasting manners. Their works ‘provok[e] people into assessing and criticizing’ (p.28). Here, she categorises the comments in terms of themes important in the understanding of the African condition in several social science disciplines: alienation, power, gender, ideology, leadership, and citizenship.

However, the text suffers from a ‘deja vu’ reading. These texts by Ngugi and Achebe will be quite familiar to most readers of this journal; it is quite well-known that they depicted both Africa’s ills and their causes. Further, the philosophical framework presented by Okolo is elementary (and largely ‘western’, other than Gandh[i – where are Africa’s thinkers?]). And, the reader asks: Where are the novel insights resulting from political philosophy? And so too, her Marxism adds little that has not already been stated or analysed by others. In fact, the originality of the issues raised was a basic concern – many have commented on these texts previously, and so the author’s critique is especially thoughtful – but it is mostly a revisit, a synthetic essay which collates what others have indicated previously.

An issue not found in Okolo’s otherwise thoughtful, well-organised, and profound LitCrit relates to the silences of these novels – to the fundamental issues not discussed in these books. They disregard certain aspects which are fundamental to the understanding of the African condition and its possible solution: I expected the author to indicate these. They include ethnicity, religion, urbanisation, regionalism, redistribution, population growth, civil wars, diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, the transition from an economy of affection to neo-liberalism – and (especially in a Marxist critique) the articulation of the modes of production. These are matters which are of critical importance in understanding the African condition. We are told what the novels say, but not what they omit.

The difficulty that this analysis illustrates is unfortunately one that affects our brother and sister scholars in Africa. University libraries on the continent are sadly deficient. Research funds are scarce or unavailable. Besides, with huge classes and the demands of family and kin, few find time for original research. As well, there is an important temporal dimension in that today’s scholars were raised under these same conditions which their mentors faced. It is unfortunately indexed in journals on Africa published in Canada, the UK, the US, and elsewhere in the First World: there are few African authors from the continent because of matters of timing, quality, writing, and novelty. There are notable exceptions to this generality, but this condition is a sad reality.

The voices of the novels provide an initial understanding of Africa’s social, political, and economic contexts. The issue addressed by Okolo’s investigation are important; the ‘voices’ of literature speak to the African condition. Much can be learned from what they tell us, and also from what they do not say. However, it is unfortunate that the present text is largely a re-visit of writers of 20-30 years ago, and that both the realm of African philosophy is ignored, as are the messages of contemporary writers.

This book is about colonial and post-colonial statecraft and the rural resource governance issues at the centre of a still unfolding socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. Divided into eight well researched, detailed and analytically sound chapters, the book deals with the complexities of statecraft played out in the contentious land question. The first four chapters talk to pre-1980 settler colonial dynamics with the next four looking at the post-colonial state after 1980 and into the post-February 2000 crisis.

Writing about colonial Zimbabwe and the histories of dispossession is always a challenge as this is now a well trodden path. Any new book tackling this area has the challenge of bringing something new to the story. The first four chapters of this book manage to do this by talking to the broader discourses of colonial statecraft viewed from the local social histories in Insiza and Chimanimani, the case study areas. Through detailed and well sourced narratives Chapter 1 takes us through the unsettled politics of pre-colonial Zimbabwe showing in both case study areas how shifting allegiances, contested loyalties and the fluid politics of rural governance find local expression. Above all else this section highlights an often overlooked fact which is that in spite of the settler colonial state being united in its conquest of land and desire to dominate, there was internal dissonance within the settler state and colonial administrators on the ground often faced a reality removed from the ideals of the settler colonial project. In each of the case study areas we are also introduced to the nascent local social movements and their local efforts to resist the settler colonial project. For example by giving local expression to the ‘Native Self Conscious Society’ in Chimanimani, not only do we get a sense of the role of these local movements in mobilising against the local reach of the settler state but also their varied methods to suit circumstances.

Chapters two, three and four take us through the main ground level expressions of settler colonial policy and practice on land and local governance. Through detailed local social histories, local expressions of development interventions like the NLHA and Community Development are used to show case the complexity of conquest and resistance. By focusing on the relationship between chiefs and land Chapter five draws into focus the extent to which the local social and political outcomes in these encounters depended on the characters and relationship of the two main actors at the local level- the district commissioner and the local chief. The book characterises the outcomes as one of or a combination of collaboration, co-option and falling out. All three outcomes are given currency in the two case study areas but more crucially characterise some of the learned behaviours that helped shape and define post-colonial relationship between the state and traditional authority. In a way the first five chapters showcase why the complete history of the settler colonial statecraft, especially its impact on local people and their responses, can only be fully understood from the bottom up and attempts to draw generalisations or national patterns often fail to capture the variegated responses that this book highlights.

Two key issues feature prominently as defining post-colonial statecraft are articulated in Chapters five and six. First is the state’s strategic ambivalence toward traditional institutions. On one hand these are seen as ‘compromised’ and
unsuitable for the new democratic dispensation due to their perceived collusion with the settler colonial state. On the other hand, they play a hugely symbolic role of identity and autochthony that both the settler state and the post-colonial state find useful in rural local governance. It is clear from contemporary discourses featured in Chapters seven and eight that the rehabilitation of the role of chiefs in rural local governance is complete. Traditional chiefs became in essence bureaucratised while some politicised their role. From the book one gets a sense here of continuity rather than change in the abuse of the traditional chiefs. What the book does not say however is that post-colonial statecraft was to an extent influenced by the institutional inertia of the settler state it succeeded.

Second, and related to the above is what the book correctly observes as the persistence of a technocratic streak to rural policy making. A typical example of this is the attempts to re-organise the communal areas through the CLDP and the land resettlement programme both of which bore striking resemblance to some of the programmes that the settler state attempted to implement. Because of this link and other local factors CLDP was moribund right from inception while the resettlement scheme was fraught with implementation bottlenecks. For example, top down technocratic approaches in a context of the muddied politics of the early post-colonial period in Matabeleland affected resettlement in Insiza. Similarly in Chimanimani difficulties of implementing state programmes is put down to a ‘rejection of state claims to technocratic authority over land in favour of local versions of nationalism, histories of eviction, chiefly claims and need’ (p. 153), and sums up the aversion that locals had to developmental populism that paid little heed to local realities.

Through the first seven chapters we clearly see the unresolved nature rural local governance through the land question and can almost understand why by the time of the farm invasions in February 2000 there was a sense of waning statecraft. This is followed through in Chapter eight which shows the systematic build up of issues leading to the Jambanja drawing on broader national economic and political discourses and practices. There is no attempt to give them local expression in the case study areas, and for this reason this chapter reads differently from the first seven. This book’s strength lies in showing variable responses to statecraft from locality to locality yet there is almost a sense in which this chapter suggests there was one set of conditions that led to the invasions across the country. We do not get to know about the specific experiences of Chimanimani and Insiza. One can guess that invasions where given local traction by existing local relations and these varied from place to place. Questions that come to mind as one reads this section include: Was there an underlying local logic to the invasions apart from the national contextual issues? Why where some farms invaded and others not? To be fair to the book logistical and political conditions on the ground are not conducive for such detailed work and this may well be a challenge for the future.

Overall this is an excellent addition to the discourses on rural local governance and land in Zimbabwe, and more specifically to our local knowledge on the variability of responses to statecraft in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. It is a good resource for students of history as much as it is for development studies and, because it is very clearly written it appeals broadly to those interested in Zimbabwe.

This is the published version of a 2003 Leiden doctorate focusing on the problems faced by Ghanaian riverine communities living downstream from the Volta (also known as Akosombo) Dam since its construction in the early 1960s and its official opening by President Nkrumah in 1966. There is much here of interest, in particular, detailed empirical information on livelihoods in the communities and their migrant extensions around the lake, and also material from locally sourced interviews with retired Volta River Authority (VRA) personnel. However, in terms of a published work it could have benefited from judicious pruning.

After a detailed discussion of concepts and methodological approaches, the next almost 150 pages deal with the history and politics of the dam’s funding, construction and plans for resettlement of displaced communities and environmental impacts. While there is a very great deal of detail given here, the analysis and discussion is limited: perhaps greater reference to, use and critique of Ronnie Graham’s 1982 book would have enabled the author both to foreground crucial broader political factors relevant to the dam’s planning and funding, at the same time, allowing cuts through the use of cross-referencing. What we are presented with is a welter of minute detail, relevant in terms of thesis background, but not reader-friendly.

However, the stated focus of the work are the fates of members of the Tongu Ewe communities downstream from the dam and also of communities, mostly originally derived from Tongu, who migrated upstream, either seasonally or for longer periods, in the years before the dam was built, and whose descendants are now members of lakeside communities. While the author sets out and critiques the VRA’s plans (and their implementation) for resettlement and compensation for community sites and lands inundated by the lake, she points out that the communities downstream that are the subjects of her study effectively received no compensation. What has happened in the years since the dam’s construction is a falling of overall river levels and the cessation of the annual floods just after the rainy season which have meant a series of changes for the worse in overall income (for example, the demise of the clam picking/cultivation industry), and in health hazards as pollutants remain in the soil and have built up over the years. The author shows very effectively and in a gender sensitive way how these and other factors have affected lives and livelihoods of the downstream communities.

When she turns to look at the Volta Lakeside communities that have developed since the inundation, however, the dynamics of relationships between Tongu members of these communities and those downstream are less clear. The same kinds of meticulous and gender aware data are presented but the strengths and significances of links with ‘home’ areas are fuzzier. While, in pre-dam days, fishing upstream was a lucrative stage in many young men’s lives, either annually, or on a more permanent basis, now the seasonality prompting the move upstream is non-existent: the basis for forging and maintaining links between the lakeside and downstream communities has been suborned. There are so much empirical data presented in the four penultimate chapters that it is impossible to do justice to them. What seems to be happening is that the downstream communities are now indistinguishable from most other impoverished rural riverine communities, while those...
upstream still depend on fishing supplemented by subsistence farming, and in some cases seem to be being left behind by more recent arrivals from coastal fishing groups. Any implications from this data are not effectively drawn out in the four chapters and the concluding chapter is, in the classic ‘social-science-dissertation’ sense of the term, simply a summary of key points.

Overall it is not really possible to present a summary review of the book: it engages with issues on too many fronts. While I think that a more politically nuanced discussion of all aspects of the dam would be of greater benefit, it really wouldn’t fit here. This is not the main thrust of the book, rather a kind of huge tangent that takes us into another direction, a direction that Graham has already accessed and which could well be incorporated here. Where it does well is in the empirical data collection and presentation, but apart from the admittedly crucial fact that the building of the dam caused massive and life-changing (and uncompensated) changes for Tongu people, the dam could recede into the background. This would allow the consequences and implications from the data to emerge and to be framed, perhaps in terms of the livelihoods framework set out in the first chapter, and contribute more effectively to the sociological/anthropological analysis and understanding of contemporary Ghana and beyond.

Jomo has successfully edited two balanced and well-rounded volumes (one with Reinert) of considerable interest to scholars of development and African politics alike. Both volumes chart the evolution of development economics. The Pioneers of Development Economics focuses on continuities in schools of economic thought from the Renaissance onward whereas The Origins of Development Economics explains how particular individuals, some economists with a recognised and central role in the field (e.g., Friedrich List and Raúl Prebisch) and others more marginal (William Petty), have produced the diverse body of scholarship – an intellectual heritage based on insights from a range of disciplines – on which development economists, and scholars of development more generally, draw today. Both volumes essentially aim to reorient the scope of economics proper by placing the question of development – how less developed societies may achieve the same transition that produced developed, industrialised societies in the past – at the heart of the discipline.

This ‘Other Canon’ stands in contrast to the abstract, theoretical approach of classical economics based on controversial \textit{a priori} assumptions regarding competition, information and equilibrium. Rejecting the ‘total fixation on their own previous work’ that characterises contemporary, orthodox (neo-classical) eco-

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nomic thought (The Pioneers, p. vii), the editors emphasise a longer and broader view on economic thinking and scholarship. A main purpose of The Origins is to ‘demonstrate the continuity in thinking on economic development’ from the pre-Smithian era to post-World War Two development economics (p. vii).

The Origins begins with an outline of broad historical approaches to development. Chapters on ‘Mercantilism’ (E. & S. Reinert) and ‘the Italian Tradition in Political Economy’ (S. Reinert) trace the development of economics as praxis to the Renaissance and to concerns about how to produce national development (Tudor England), avoid economic failure (Spain) and reverse semi-peripheralisation in declining Italian city states. A chapter on ‘German Economics’, including the historical school (E. Reinert) suggests a largely coherent tradition of thought from the seventeenth century until the World War Two. A chapter on ‘Capitalist Transformation’ (Khan) critiques the narrow classical economic emphasis on institutions such as stable property rights of whatever kind (i.e. it does not matter what property is protected and for whom, as long as property is protected) in the transition of a small number of (East Asian) developing countries to developed country status, noting instead the importance of a broad set of social and institutional factors in producing state capacity to transform.

Methodologically sophisticated chapters on ‘Growth Theory’ (Ros) and ‘International Trade’ (Dutt) explain the role of theoretical debates on growth and trade for modern development economics. Ros argues that early development economics provides a better explanation for development than does the endogenous growth literature, and that early approaches are ‘more empirically promising’ than either old or new growth Theory (p. 82). Dutt reviews contributions by Rosenstein-Rodan, Nurkse, Lewis and Myrdal to trade theory and the implications thereof for developing countries. A chapter on {Latin American Structuralism and Dependency Theory} (Saad-Filho) outlines the key contributions (as well as important limitations) to the development literature by post-war structuralists and dependistas, notably the former’s rejection of linear assumptions about development in orthodox theories of development and the latter’s insistence on the impossibility of development under capitalism. Finally, ‘Development in the History of Economics’ (Szentes) outlines key contours of development economics and how it becomes a distinct field of study in the post-war era.

Relying on a standard criticism of classical economics as inevitably hampered by its abstractions and existence in a ‘ahistorical vacuum’, the authors contrast this dominant approach with the historically conscious and pragmatic approach of economic thought from the Italian tradition and the German school to structuralism, dependency theory and modern development economics. The main distinction between orthodox (neo/classical) and heterodox (development-oriented) schools of economic thought is defined in The Origins (p. vii) as the difference between social theory built on abstraction and deductive reasoning as in classical economics and that built from historical reality and inductive reasoning from the bottom up, as in the approaches from which (heterodox) modern development economics derive. Classical economics is a system of thought based on metaphors from physics, notably the enlightenment ‘mechanization of the world picture’ on which Smith’s concept of the ‘invisible hand’ was based and the 1880s physics’ emphasis on equilibrium. Development economics rely on metaphors from biology, namely references to the human body that are present in economic writings from Greek and Roman times through the Renaissance and late nineteenth-century
German economics and on ideas transplanted from Darwinian and Lamarckian evolution in the economic writings of Veblen and in Schumpeter's 'evolutionary economics' (p. ix).

*The Pioneers* charts a history of economic thought as it relates to development by focusing in each chapter on contributions to the field by a particular individual, economist or otherwise. A companion to *The Origins*, this volume provides additional historical context to the thematically organised, theoretically and conceptually rich, approach of the former. Why 'Development Economics'? (P. Patnaik) introduces the book by the purpose and central concerns of the field. Chapters on William Petty (Goodacre) and David Ricardo (U. Patnaik) emphasise the origins of economic thought in the historical experience of imperialism. Chapters on Friedrich List (Shafaeddin), Karl Marx (P. Patnaik), Vladimir Lenin (U. Patnaik), Alfred Marshall (Prendergast), Michal Kalecki (Ghosh), John Maynard Keynes (Toye), Keynes and Nicholas Kaldor (Kumar Bagchi), Karl Polanyi (Polanyi Levitt) and Alexander Gerschenkron (Chandrasekhar) highlight contributions to the field by scholars not normally identified as pioneers of development economics. Finally, chapters on Raúl Prebisch and Arthur Lewis (Polanyi Levitt) and Hans Singer (Raffer) outline 'principal heterodox economic implications' of recognised pioneers of development economics (p. viii).

While the intellectual complexity and manifold nuance of the schools of thoughts overviewed in *The Origins* and the individual economists assessed in *The Pioneers* at times suggest that the classical/orthodox – development/heterodox distinction can be overly crude, it nevertheless remains a useful distinction for the reader who wishes to understand fundamental intellectual conflicts in the history of economics and how these debates have shaped the field of development economics as it exists today. Economic scholarship derived from classical economic thought remains based on abstraction and controversial *a priori* assumptions, to its detriment when attempting answers to empirical questions regarding development in a world of states and regions in which historical processes have produced radically divergent socio-economic dynamics and developments. The heterodox school of economic thought, with its emphasis on historical record and empirical reality, remains at times excessively dependent on case-specific context, at the expense of being able to generalise findings beyond the cases and contexts in which they are initially found.

This trade-off between 'broad' vs. 'deep' understanding is an unavoidable feature of all approaches to development, and indeed to all scientific study of social phenomena. Therefore it is not very useful to suggest that one approach is superior to the other, although the implication in both of these volumes is clearly that the historical, heterodox approach is more useful to development economist wishing to understand the dilemmas faced by countries in the global south today. The most constructive way forward is not to disparage either approach, as being empirically 'irrelevant' (classical economics) or theoretically and methodologically unsophisticated (heterodox economics), but rather to make a strong case for the ability of each school of thought to provide a unique understanding of particular aspects of economics. A proper understanding of the strengths and limitations of each approach provides the aspiring development economics with the best equipped conceptual and theoretical 'toolbox' for investigating the pressing economic and political puzzles of our day.

The food we buy and eat can tell powerful stories. It may seem better to simply enjoy its many culinary varieties than to think much about where it comes from, its ingredients or who produces it and how. However both our taste buds and our brain cells need a strong stimulus in order to recognize the complexities of food’s political economy. Tony Weis, professor at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, presents a highly informative narrative on these complexities in layman’s terms. Published just months prior to the eruption of this year’s global food crisis, his pocket-size book provides abundant fact-based arguments to confidently engage in political dialogue on the driving forces of a food system seemingly in perpetual crisis.

From preface to concluding chapter five, Weis disputes claims of inevitability of today’s dominant food economy. His purpose is to unsettle illusions that it is impossible to fundamentally overhaul existing conditions of agricultural production, consumption and trade. Today’s modes of high-input farming, based on a system of industrialized grain-livestock production result in a tremendously deep environmental footprint. Yet Weis demonstrates that regardless of its costs, the current food system is incapable of attaining food security on a global scale. His well-narrated assessment unveils not only the output-level dilemmas and contradictions of a system in deep crisis; it also focuses on the institutional arrangements and power-relations, predominantly of the World Trade Organization (WTO), responsible for a status quo that translates into poor nutrition, poverty and hunger for millions around the globe. WTO efforts to reinforce abstract competitive advantages of nation states by regulating trade regimes for agricultural products are seen as completely divorced from food security concerns of the global poor.

Claims made by proponents of the status quo that markets can succeed at ensuring reliable and affordable supply of nutritious food if only allowed to operate freely and with minimal state intervention, are forcefully dismissed by Weis as being ideological and catering to profit interests of transnational companies and parasitic political elites.

For Weis, the obscenity of simultaneous poles of obesity and hunger in a market-driven food economy cannot be ignored, nor is it ethically acceptable: in terms of quantity more than enough food for all is produced globally. However the purchasing power to access that food is unevenly distributed within and between countries to the extreme. As an example, the farm subsidy regimes in OECD countries cost six times as much as all OECD development aid in any given year. Indeed, it is more than shameful that ‘the average EU subsidy per cow was roughly the same (US$2) as the poverty level on which billions barely exist’. Transnational agro-conglomerates, unconcerned about notions of social and cultural significance of food and associated traditions, continuously promote a global convergence of food consumption and diet patterns (such as meat-rich diets) without much concern for long-term health consequences for consumers.

Small farmers and food-security minded decision-makers in developing countries frequently find themselves short-changed with regard to viable production or policy options. As the process of global integration of national and regional food economies has intensified so has its dependence on the ‘chemical and fossil energy treadmill’. Unable to keep up, especially rural populations whose livelihoods heavily rely upon low-input,
small-scale agriculture have been squeezed out of markets and fallen below narrow poverty lines. Ultimately there seems to be little doubt, at least in the author’s mind, that the food system as we know it, is heading for a fall. Weis’ analysis allows the reader to see this year’s food crisis as an acceleration of a combination of worrisome trends underlying the global food economy. We have witnessed sharp price hikes in supermarkets in affluent societies as well as in village markets in low-income developing countries. Unsurprisingly, the poor have been affected most, many millions of whom are slipping back into food insecurity from which they only recently had seemingly freed themselves. Food riots have erupted in various places and high-level political activism, from the 2008 Food Summit in Rome, the G8 meeting in Japan to the recent Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana have all sought to present meaningful responses to the crisis at hand.

Most certainly none of these events have attempted to explore the sub-title of Weis’ book, namely, ‘The battle for the future of farming’. If they had referred to this guide to understanding and reimagining the global food economy, they may have found that solutions to the endemic crisis of agricultural production in the global economy lie with those who are waging the battle for sustainable alternatives: the farmers, consumers and activists of civil society in North and South. Secondary responses to the recurring failures of the global food system, even commendable relief and project-level responses to the immediate hardships faced by food-insecure populations, perhaps allow for some temporary relief from an ongoing, livelihoods debilitating crisis. Yet root causes of the crisis are hardly touched in the process. There is little to be gained by trying to dissect such causes into their multiple, interwoven constituent factors, even though factors such as bio-fuel production, increased global demand for meat products (especially in newly affluent parts of Asia), climate change or rising fuel costs all play a role. Debate on tomorrow’s food system that is organized as a fundamental departure from the uncertainties inherent in the food economy of today, is best to be based on a firm critical analysis and factual footing. With his important book on this vital topic, Tony Weis has provided nothing less than a solid departure point for such debate.

Editor’s Note: ROAPE would like to take up the challenge in this review, that is ‘the battle for farming in Africa’. If you are interested in working with us, please get in touch with me, Jan Burgess – editor@roape.org

Many thanks and goodbye to Rita Abrahamsen for taking this much-neglected Book Reviews section and making it the ‘must read’ of the journal – according to our subscribers who are very impressed! You’ll also note that we are now including both film and theatre reviews – is there anything else you’d like to see here? If so, get in touch with Branwen Gruffydd-Jones who takes over from Rita in 2009. Her e-mail address is: b.gruffydd-jones@gold.ac.uk

Erratum
‘Child Poverty in Africa’ by Meredith Turshen in ROAPE No. 117, September 2008. Apologies to the author and Dharam Ghai for a mis-quoted sentence (page 499). It should read as follows: ‘Urban Jonsson, former senior advisor to UNICEF on Human Rights Based Approach to Programming, pointed out that Africa has changed since 1960; there is more peace, more efforts for democracy, an end to apartheid. AIDS has crushed many dreams.’ A corrected online version will appear in December 2008.

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Mainstream development theory argues that countries develop through their own actions: freeing trade and investment, establishing legal institutions conducive to private investment, liberalising markets, educating in a particular way, eliminating wasteful state spending and improving governance. The history of developed countries is cited as an appropriate template. Poor countries wishing to catch up are advised to immerse themselves in the fair and benign international economy.

Ray Bush’s *Poverty and Liberalism* is a blistering, heterodox critique of each item of this current orthodoxy. Poverty arises, he maintains, not from the failure of countries and groups to incorporate themselves in the world economy but from the fact that they are incorporated in it, but in an unequal and misshapen way. Poverty ‘is not about being left behind but about being actively excluded from an unjust and unequal system of wealth creation’. This system, especially in the countries where poverty is most persistent, predominantly takes the form of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ – David Harvey’s useful renaming of Marx’s primitive or primary accumulation, so strongly emphasised by Rosa Luxemburg. The progressive commoditisation of a growing number of human activities frequently, as Bush explains, results in the accumulation of poverty. History, far from being a template for the future, explains how the globalisation of capitalist accumulation produced and produces some convergence but also much polarisation.

After an initial chapter setting out this theoretical perspective and discussing the interconnection between African impoverishment and the post-1980 neoliberal tsunami, Bush uses the ideas as the backbone of a well-structured set of chapters, each on one crucial issue in the study of development. The first is about international aid – in particular Tony Blair’s and the G8’s plans to ‘rescue’ Africa (in which another frequent theme – the egregious hypocrisy of donors – rightly receives several mentions). This is followed by chapters on migration, land, mining and resources (including the ‘resource curse’), and food and famine. Each of these attacks mainstream approaches and counters with an analysis based on the guiding idea of the book – that the problem is not simple and quantitative (how much integration in the system?) but complex and qualitative (what kind of integration and what kind of system?). His conclusion about the land question is typical of others: ‘the problem is not weak tenure or that producers are insufficiently integrated or are part of imperfect markets: the problem is the market itself and the commoditization of everyday life’.

All this is helpfully illustrated with historical and contemporary empirical material about debt cancellation, migrants’ remittances, land reform in Egypt and Zimbabwe, mining in Africa – themes which all echo Rosa Luxemburg writing a century ago – as well as a narrative about the relationship between

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the development of the oil industry, land struggles and sectarian conflicts in Sudan. Telling instances are also taken from the experience of Middle East and North African countries which the author has particularly studied.

In the final chapter Bush sets out many ideas around which resistance to persistent poverty might be organised. Here are mentions or echoes of Marx, Luxemburg, the narodniks, anarchism, feminism, the defence of indigenous peoples and the importance of ‘infrapolitics’ – the everyday resistance of ordinary individuals, households and neighbourhoods. Ray Bush’s conviction that this spirit of resistance is not extinct means that a gloomy story does not lead to a pessimistic prognosis. Some readers might view this chapter as insufficiently programmatic but I found it refreshingly eclectic. It also contains a needed broadside against the neoliberal ‘governance’ formula (transparency, reducing corruption by lowering the importance of the state and more ‘civil society’, conceived as a proliferation of NGOs).

Late 2007 should be a good moment for the publication of this book. Neoliberalism is being discredited by poor results, especially in Africa, and morally weakened by the grotesque hypocrisy with which it is applied (the same Western governments which increase protection for agriculture or cover up bribery in selling arms to Saudi Arabia preach free trade and anti-corruption to African countries). Its high priests are losing their nerve, fearing that the increasing inequality it generates will destroy political support. Financial liberalisation is causing chaos in the markets and threatening more economic damage; the October 2007 IMF annual meetings were summarised by a New York Times headline as ‘The tables turned: Poor countries wag fingers at rich countries’; and the OECD recently admitted that the facts suggest that ‘globalisation is creating opportunities for a small elite of workers and investors to pull away from everyone else’. While neoliberals advise yet more of the same, the left has to go beyond its own clichés and provide a coherent answer to the scandal of persistent mass poverty in a rich world. Ray Bush’s clear, thoughtful and provocative contribution to that task is a valuable resource for those concerned with poverty and development, especially in Africa.


The concept of the prison as a place of detention was introduced to sub-Saharan Africa by colonial powers in the 19th century, largely as a means of subduing the indigenous populations. This legacy remains obvious today in the fortress style of many of the prisons in the region, such as that in the Rwandan town of Cyanugu, built by the Belgians in the 1930s, which is on the cover of Carina Terstakian’s disturbing book. In Rwanda the rate of imprisonment is about 979 per 100,000 of the population. This is the highest in the world, ahead even of the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This means that about one person in every hundred of the population is in prison. This book explains why this is so and describes in stark detail what the consequences are for the prisoners.

Carina Tertsakian is very well placed to write a book such as this, having been directly involved in Rwanda for a decade with international NGOs. At the core of the book is an amazing series of
interviews which she undertook with men and women languishing in the country’s prisons. For anyone who knows prisons in Africa, these interviews ring true in the way that they capture the humanity which can exist in the midst of extreme adversity and the acceptance of inevitable reality. The author helpfully sketches the national context which is all too well known, but this is not a book about the tragedy of Rwanda. It is primarily a record of the experience of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Tertsakian is clearly a sympathetic listener who allows the prisoners to speak in their own words. In most cases, she passes no judgement on what they are saying about the reasons which have brought them to prison. Instead, she quotes directly from the tortuous experiences which they have had, in many cases while they wait to be charged over a period of many years.

The suffering which continued silently in the prisons year after year was of a particularly inconvenient kind: these men and women dying of overcrowding, disease and ill-treatment were not the usual innocent victims. The vast majority were accused of genocide and there was little sympathy for their plight. The fact that most of them had not even been tried or charged – and that many therefore may have been innocent – did not seem to matter. Thus, over the years, the prison situation became an accepted feature of post-genocide Rwanda’ (p.16).

In one of the most moving chapters the author describes the scene when families come to visit:

The first group of prisoners, around 50 of them, emerges from the gate and sits down on the nearest row of long benches … A guard whistles and the first group of visitors lunges forward to take their seats on the second row of benches … There is a frantic exchange of provisions and full and empty containers, and a frantic exchange of words … Suddenly, one of the guards blows his whistle again and the visitors have to leave … from the first whistle to the second whistle, the visit has lasted less than two minutes (p.250).

In unemotional language, often through the voices of the prisoners, Tertsakian describes the added difficulties for women prisoners, for minors, for the elderly, for the sick and for those sentenced to death. She also notes the complete lack of support for prisoners who are eventually released, as well as the lack of concern from the international community:

The crisis in the prisons – which would have provoked outrage had it occurred in almost any other country – elicited barely any response from foreign governments (p.353).

There is little evidence that this nightmare is coming to an end. When Tertsakian conducted her research, the prison population stood at around 85,000. She ends the book by reporting that in May 2007 it stood around 92,000. This powerful book places a spotlight on the continuing tragedy of prisons in Rwanda, which remain a blot on humanity. It deserves to be widely read and to act as a spur for international action.

Théodore Trefon, who directs the ‘Contemporary History’ section of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Brussels, has written a fascinating, rich, lively and overall superb book on the resilience of the Congolese administrative apparatus in a time of state failure. The book is based on in-depth case studies of the interactions between individuals in different social universes and administrative branches of the state in the town of Lubumbashi, Congo’s second largest city with about 1.5m people, in the province of Katanga. It details the daily routines and state-induced vexations of a charcoal transporter, a baker, a construction material salesman, a taxi driver, a retired civil servant, a paralegal restaurant owner, a widow housewife and mother of 11, a preacher, a street foreign exchange broker, and a cyber-café manager.

In addition to the unique empirical material of the book, one of Trefon’s main contributions is the theoretical introduction, which provides analytical context and conceptual structure to the case studies. To the question of ‘why the administration persists’ (p.13) despite its deliquescence in providing the Congolese with the services it was intended for, Trefon offers a triply layered answer. The Congolese administration persists because it is instrumentalised by political elites for their own advantage (particularly as a source of revenue); because it is privatised by public officials as part of their own strategies of personal survival; and because individual citizens still need the administration, even when they largely substitute themselves to it in providing services. This latter point is particularly interesting. For example, parents pool their resources to pay the salaries of public teachers, largely abandoned by the state, and thereby facilitate the reproduction of the public education system. They do so, rather than starting new alternative private schools, because they value the state diploma which they see as giving their children access to formal employment.

Although the introduction alone provides a thorough and rigorous contribution to the topic and is worthy of publication on its own, it is the empirical material in the subsequent case studies, or individual vignettes, which is most stunning, informative and original. It also often makes for captivating reading. Most striking are the innumerable layers of administration and control enforced upon the Congolese and the equally numerous taxes and levies which administrative agencies impose. Starting with ministers, the administration expands downwards through secretaries-general, directors, division chiefs, bureau chiefs, chiefs of provincial divisions, provincial bureau chiefs, section chiefs, cell chiefs, chiefs of urban services, chiefs of sub-sections and sub-cells, mayors, burgomasters, chiefs of neighborhood and street chiefs (pp. 143-147), illustrating in the process the universality and decentralization of ‘Big Man’ politics. As for taxes, the city and communes of Lubumbashi alone inflicts no less than 26 taxes on its residents (p. 149). And state agents invent many more.

The resulting totalitarianism (my word, not Trefon’s) of the weak state makes peoples’ lives miserable. The story of the retired railroad worker hanging on to his official documents for dear life (pp. 85-93) is poignant, as is the vulnerability of the charcoal trader in the face of public harassment (pp. 47-54) and that of the widow struggling to secure water and electricity for her household of 11 children (pp.101-112).

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The book’s methodology also deserves mention. Trefon has collaborated with Bathazar Ngoy of the University of Lubumbashi and with the latter’s students in political science who were trained in questionnaire administration and managed the surveys in the Lubumbashi neighborhoods, which produced the case studies. Trefon’s book is politique par le bas at its best. The Congolese state repeatedly comes to life for the reader in all its daily Kafkaesque arbitrariness at the grassroots. The resulting picture is one where there seems to be no greater impediment to life than the state itself. Yet, people have learned to live with it. In fact, the resilience of citizens in the face of a relentlessly exploitative administration is probably as remarkable as the resilience of the state itself. Moreover, the book clearly illustrates how the very actions of citizens, driven by necessity, often help reproduce the administration.

If Trefon’s book is to have a weakness (at least for the Anglophone reader), it will be that is written in French (although there is an excellent English summary of the main argument at the beginning). Its contribution to the study of the African state in general and Congo in particular is so significant that an English version cannot come too soon.


This book addresses the interface which exists between the often quite disparate disciplines of philosophy and literature, and does so within the context of the African conditions of poverty, corruption, and state ineptitude. It talks to the contrasting scenarios and explanatory frameworks of two of the continent’s outstanding novelists – Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o – whose books likely constitute Africa’s most familiar and stimulating texts of the post-Independence period. However, I finished reading Okolo with a mixed reaction.

As she states in the introduction, her study provides ‘an intellectual and analytic framework within which the African experience can be conceptualized, interpreted and reorganized’ (p.2); here she investigates the relationship between literature and society. This is undertaken by considering the political components of Achebe’s Anthills of the Savanna (1987) and Ngugi’s Petals of Blood (1977). The former sees Africa’s problems as a result of ‘internal’ corruption, state failure, ineptitude, and the privatisation of the public resources, while the latter points to leadership, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism as the basic sources. The foundation of Okolo’s analysis is political philosophy (providing a worldview and critical reflection) upon which the writings of the two authors are considered (first in general by investigating their several other novels, then in detail for Anthills and Petals). As the analysis develops, the writings of some additional novelists such as Soyinka, Sembene, and Armah are interrogated. She finalises her study by comparing the authors in terms of their perspectives on the African condition and on possible social reconstruction. Therein resides

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the work's strength; it is rendered powerful and insightful by her selection of authors. The chosen authors speak to the causes in thoughtful and contrasting manners. Their works ‘provoke people into assessing and criticizing’ (p.28). Here, she categorises the comments in terms of themes important in the understanding of the African condition in several social science disciplines: alienation, power, gender, ideology, leadership, and citizenship.

However, the text suffers from a ‘deja vu’ reading. These texts by Ngugi and Achebe will be quite familiar to most readers of this journal; it is quite well-known that they depicted both Africa’s ills and their causes. Further, the philosophical framework presented by Okolo is elementary (and largely ‘western’, other than Gandhi – where are Africa’s thinkers?). And, the reader asks: Where are the novel insights resulting from political philosophy? And so too, her Marxism adds little that has not already been stated or analysed by others. In fact, the originality of the issues raised was a basic concern – many have commented on these texts previously, and so the author’s critique is especially thoughtful – but it is mostly a revisit, a synthetic essay which collates what others have indicated previously.

An issue not found in Okolo’s otherwise thoughtful, well-organised, and profound LitCrit relates to the silences of these novels – to the fundamental issues not discussed in these books. They disregard certain aspects which are fundamental to the understanding of the African condition and its possible solution: I expected the author to indicate these. They include ethnicity, religion, urbanisation, regionalism, redistribution, population growth, civil wars, diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, the transition from an economy of affection to neo-liberalism – and (especially in a Marxist critique) the articulation of the modes of production. These are matters which are of critical importance in understanding the African condition. We are told what the novels say, but not what they omit.

The difficulty that this analysis illustrates is unfortunately one that affects our brother and sister scholars in Africa. University libraries on the continent are sadly deficient. Research funds are scarce or unavailable. Besides, with huge classes and the demands of family and kin, few find time for original research. As well, there is an important temporal dimension in that today’s scholars were raised under these same conditions which their mentors faced. It is unfortunately indexed in journals on Africa published in Canada, the UK, the US, and elsewhere in the First World: there are few African authors from the continent because of matters of timing, quality, writing, and novelty. There are notable exceptions to this generality, but this condition is a sad reality.

The voices of the novels provide an initial understanding of Africa’s social, political, and economic contexts. The issue addressed by Okolo’s investigation are important; the ‘voices’ of literature speak to the African condition. Much can be learned from what they tell us, and also from what they do not say. However, it is unfortunate that the present text is largely a re-visit of writers of 20-30 years ago, and that both the realm of African philosophy is ignored, as are the messages of contemporary writers.

This book is about colonial and post-colonial statecraft and the rural resource governance issues at the centre of a still unfolding socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. Divided into eight well researched, detailed and analytically sound chapters, the book deals with the complexities of statecraft played out in the contentious land question. The first four chapters talk to pre-1980 settler colonial dynamics with the next four looking at the post-colonial state after 1980 and into the post-February 2000 crisis.

Writing about colonial Zimbabwe and the histories of dispossession is always a challenge as this is now a well trodden path. Any new book tackling this area has the challenge of bringing something new to the story. The first four chapters of this book manage to do this by talking to the broader discourses of colonial statecraft viewed from the local social histories in Insiza and Chimanimani, the case study areas. Through detailed and well sourced narratives Chapter 1 takes us through the unsettled politics of pre-colonial Zimbabwe showing in both case study areas how shifting allegiances, contested loyalties and the fluid politics of rural governance find local expression. Above all else this section highlights an often overlooked fact which is that in spite of the settler colonial state being united in its conquest of land and desire to dominate, there was internal dissonance within the settler state and colonial administrators on the ground often faced a reality removed from the ideals of the settler colonial project. In each of the case study areas we are also introduced to the nascent local social movements and their local efforts to resist the settler colonial project. For example by giving local expression to the ‘Native Self Conscious Society’ in Chimanimani, not only do we get a sense of the role of these local movements in mobilising against the local reach of the settler state but also their varied methods to suit circumstances.

Chapters two, three and four take us through the main ground level expressions of settler colonial policy and practice on land and local governance. Through detailed local social histories, local expressions of development interventions like the NLHA and Community Development are used to show case the complexity of conquest and resistance. By focusing on the relationship between chiefs and land Chapter five draws into focus the extent to which the local social and political outcomes in these encounters depended on the characters and relationship of the two main actors at the local level- the district commissioner and the local chief. The book characterises the outcomes as one of or a combination of collaboration, co-option and falling out. All three outcomes are given currency in the two case study areas but more crucially characterise some of the learned behaviours that helped shape and define post-colonial relationship between the state and traditional authority. In a way the first five chapters showcase why the complete history of the settler colonial statecraft, especially its impact on local people and their responses, can only be fully understood from the bottom up and attempts to draw generalisations or national patterns often fail to capture the variegated responses that this book highlights.

Two key issues feature prominently as defining post-colonial statecraft are articulated in Chapters five and six. First is the state’s strategic ambivalence toward traditional institutions. On one hand these are seen as ‘compromised’ and...
unsuitable for the new democratic dispensation due to their perceived collusion with the settler colonial state. On the other hand they play a hugely symbolic role of identity and autochthony that both the settler state and the post-colonial state find useful in rural local governance. It is clear from contemporary discourses featured in Chapters seven and eight that the rehabilitation of the role of chiefs in rural local governance is complete. Traditional chiefs became in essence bureaucratised while some politicised their role. From the book one gets a sense here of continuity rather than change in the abuse of the traditional chiefs. What the book does not say however is that post-colonial statecraft was to an extent influenced by the institutional inertia of the settler state it succeeded.

Second, and related to the above is what the book correctly observes as the persistence of a technocratic streak to rural policy making. A typical example of this is the attempts to re-organise the communal areas through the CLDP and the land resettlement programme both of which bore striking resemblance to some of the programmes that the settler state attempted to implement. Because of this link and other local factors CLDP was moribund right from inception while the resettlement scheme was fraught with implementation bottlenecks. For example top down technocratic approaches in a context of the muddled politics of the early post-colonial period in Matabeleland affected resettlement in Insiza. Similarly in Chimanimani difficulties of implementing state programmes is put down to a ‘rejection of state claims to technocratic authority over land in favour of local versions of nationalism, histories of eviction, chiefly claims and need’ (p. 153), and sums up the aversion that locals had to developmental populism that paid little heed to local realities.

Through the first seven chapters we clearly see the unresolved nature rural local governance through the land question and can almost understand why by the time of the farm invasions in February 2000 there was a sense of waning statecraft. This is followed through in Chapter eight which shows the systematic build up of issues leading to the Jambanja drawing on broader national economic and political discourses and practices. There is no attempt to give them local expression in the case study areas, and for this reason this chapter reads differently from the first seven. This book’s strength lies in showing variable responses to statecraft from locality to locality yet there is almost a sense in which this chapter suggests there was one set of conditions that led to the invasions across the country. We do not get to know about the specific experiences of Chimanimani and Insiza. One can guess that invasions where given local traction by existing local relations and these varied from place to place. Questions that come to mind as one reads this section include: Was there an underlying local logic to the invasions apart from the national contextual issues? Why where some farms invaded and others not? To be fair to the book logistical and political conditions on the ground are not conducive for such detailed work and this may well be a challenge for the future.

Overall this is an excellent addition to the discourses on rural local governance and land in Zimbabwe, and more specifically to our local knowledge on the variability of responses to statecraft in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. It is a good resource for students of history as much as it is for development studies and, because it is very clearly written it appeals broadly to those interested in Zimbabwe.

This is the published version of a 2003 Leiden doctorate focusing on the problems faced by Ghanaian riverine communities living downstream from the Volta (also known as Akosombo) Dam since its construction in the early 1960s and its official opening by President Nkrumah in 1966. There is much here of interest, in particular, detailed empirical information on livelihoods in the communities and their migrant extensions around the lake, and also material from locally sourced interviews with retired Volta River Authority (VRA) personnel. However, in terms of a published work it could have benefited from judicious pruning.

After a detailed discussion of concepts and methodological approaches, the next almost 150 pages deal with the history and politics of the dam’s funding, construction and plans for resettlement of displaced communities and environmental impacts. While there is a very great deal of detail given here, the analysis and discussion is limited: perhaps greater reference to, use and critique of Ronnie Graham’s 1982 book would have enabled the author both to foreground crucial broader political factors relevant to the dam’s planning and funding, at the same time, allowing cuts through the use of cross-referencing. What we are presented with is a welter of minute detail, relevant in terms of thesis background, but not reader-friendly.

However, the stated focus of the work are the fates of members of the Tongu Ewe communities downstream from the dam and also of communities, mostly originally derived from Tongu, who migrated upstream, either seasonally or for longer periods, in the years before the dam was built, and whose descendants are now members of lakeside communities. While the author sets out and critiques the VRA’s plans (and their implementation) for resettlement and compensation for community sites and lands inundated by the lake, she points out that the communities downstream that are the subjects of her study effectively received no compensation. What has happened in the years since the dam’s construction is a falling of overall river levels and the cessation of the annual floods just after the rainy season which have meant a series of changes for the worse in overall income (for example, the demise of the clam picking/cultivation industry), and in health hazards as pollutants remain in the soil and have built up over the years. The author shows very effectively and in a gender sensitive way how these and other factors have affected lives and livelihoods of the downstream communities.

When she turns to look at the Volta Lakeside communities that have developed since the inundation, however, the dynamics of relationships between Tongu members of these communities and those downstream are less clear. The same kinds of meticulous and gender aware data are presented but the strengths and significances of links with ‘home’ areas are fuzzier. While, in pre-dam days, fishing upstream was a lucrative stage in many young men’s lives, either annually, or on a more permanent basis, now the seasonality prompting the move upstream is non-existent: the basis for forging and maintaining links between the lakeside and downstream communities has been suborned. There are so much empirical data presented in the four penultimate chapters that it is impossible to do justice to them. What seems to be happening is that the downstream communities are now indistinguishable from most other impoverished rural riverine communities, while those
upstream still depend on fishing supplemented by subsistence farming, and in some cases seem to be being left behind by more recent arrivals from coastal fishing groups. Any implications from this data are not effectively drawn out in the four chapters and the concluding chapter is, in the classic ‘social-science-dissertation’ sense of the term, simply a summary of key points.

Overall it is not really possible to present a summary review of the book: it engages with issues on too many fronts. While I think that a more politically nuanced discussion of all aspects of the dam would be of greater benefit, it really wouldn’t fit here. This is not the main thrust of the book, rather a kind of huge tangent that takes us into another direction, a direction that Graham has already accessed and which could well be incorporated here. Where it does well is in the empirical data collection and presentation, but apart from the admittedly crucial fact that the building of the dam caused massive and life-changing (and uncompensated) changes for Tongu people, the dam could recede into the background. This would allow the consequences and implications from the data to emerge and to be framed, perhaps in terms of the livelihoods framework set out in the first chapter, and contribute more effectively to the sociological/anthropological analysis and understanding of contemporary Ghana and beyond.


Jomo has successfully edited two balanced and well-rounded volumes (one with Reinert) of considerable interest to scholars of development and African politics alike. Both volumes chart the evolution of development economics. The Pioneers of Development Economics focuses on continuities in schools of economic thought from the Renaissance onward whereas The Origins of Development Economics explains how particular individuals, some economists with a recognised and central role in the field (e.g., Friedrich List and Raúl Prebisch) and others more marginal (William Petty), have produced the diverse body of scholarship – an intellectual heritage based on insights from a range of disciplines – on which development economists, and scholars of development more generally, draw today. Both volumes essentially aim to reorient the scope of economics proper by placing the question of development – how less developed societies may achieve the same transition that produced developed, industrialised societies in the past – at the heart of the discipline.

This ‘Other Canon’ stands in contrast to the abstract, theoretical approach of classical economics based on controversial a priori assumptions regarding competition, information and equilibrium. Rejecting the ‘total fixation on their own previous work’ that characterises contemporary, orthodox (neo-classical) eco-

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onomic thought (The Pioneers, p. vii), the editors emphasise a longer and broader view on economic thinking and scholarship. A main purpose of The Origins is to 'demonstrate the continuity in thinking on economic development' from the pre-Smithian era to post-World War Two development economics (p. vii).

The Origins begins with an outline of broad historical approaches to development. Chapters on 'Mercantilism' (E. & S. Reinert) and 'the Italian Tradition in Political Economy' (S. Reinert) trace the development of economics as praxis to the Renaissance and to concerns about how to produce national development (Tudor England), avoid economic failure (Spain) and reverse semi-peripheralisation in declining Italian city states. A chapter on 'German Economics', including the historical school (E. Reinert) suggests a largely coherent tradition of thought from the seventeenth century until the World War Two. A chapter on 'Capitalist Transformation' (Khan) critiques the narrow classical economic emphasis on institutions such as stable property rights of whatever kind (i.e. it does not matter what property is protected and for whom, as long as property is protected) in the transition of a small number of (East Asian) developing countries to developed country status, noting instead the importance of a broad set of social and institutional factors in producing state capacity to transform.

Methodologically sophisticated chapters on 'Growth Theory' (Ros) and 'International Trade' (Dutt) explain the role of theoretical debates on growth and trade for modern development economics. Ros argues that early development economics provides a better explanation for development than does the endogenous growth literature, and that early approaches are 'more empirically promising' than either old or new growth Theory (p. 82). Dutt reviews contributions by Rosenstein-Rodan, Nurkse, Lewis and Myrdal to trade theory and the implications thereof for developing countries. A chapter on {Latin American Structuralism and Dependency Theory} (Saad-Filho) outlines the key contributions (as well as important limitations) to the development literature by post-war structuralists and dependistas, notably the former's rejection of linear assumptions about development in orthodox theories of development and the latter's insistence on the impossibility of development under capitalism. Finally, 'Development in the History of Economics' (Szentes) outlines key contours of development economics and how it becomes a distinct field of study in the post-war era.

Relying on a standard criticism of classical economics as inevitably hampered by its abstractions and existence in a 'ahistorical vacuum', the authors contrast this dominant approach with the historically conscious and pragmatic approach of economic thought from the Italian tradition and the German school to structuralism, dependency theory and modern development economics. The main distinction between orthodox (neo/classical) and heterodox (development-oriented) schools of economic thought is defined in The Origins (p. vii) as the difference between social theory built on abstraction and deductive reasoning as in classical economics and that built from historical reality and inductive reasoning from the bottom up, as in the approaches from which (heterodox) modern development economics derive. Classical economics is a system of thought based on metaphors from physics, notably the enlightenment 'mechanization of the world picture' on which Smith's concept of the 'invisible hand' was based and the 1880s physics' emphasis on equilibrium. Development economics rely on metaphors from biology, namely references to the human body that are present in economic writings from Greek and Roman times through the Renaissance and late nineteenth-century
German economics and on ideas transplanted from Darwinian and Lamarckian evolution in the economic writings of Veblen and in Schumpeter’s ‘evolutionary economics’ (p. ix).

*The Pioneers* charts a history of economic thought as it relates to development by focusing in each chapter on contributions to the field by a particular individual, economist or otherwise. A companion to *The Origins*, this volume provides additional historical context to the thematically organised, theoretically and conceptually rich, approach of the former. Why ‘Development Economics’? (P. Patnaik) introduces the book by the purpose and central concerns of the field. Chapters on William Petty (Goodacre) and David Ricardo (U. Patnaik) emphasise the origins of economic thought in the historical experience of imperialism. Chapters on Friedrich List (Shafaeddin), Karl Marx (P. Patnaik), Vladimir Lenin (U. Patnaik), Alfred Marshall (Prendergast), Michal Kalecki (Ghosh), John Maynard Keynes (Toye), Keynes and Nicholas Kaldor (Kumar Bagchi), Karl Polanyi (Polanyi Levitt) and Alexander Gerschenkron (Chandrasekhar) highlight contributions to the field by scholars not normally identified as pioneers of development economics. Finally, chapters on Raúl Prebish and Arthur Lewis (Polanyi Levitt) and Hans Singer (Raffer) outline ‘principal heterodox economic implications’ of recognised pioneers of development economics (p. viii).

While the intellectual complexity and manifold nuance of the schools of thoughts overviewed in *The Origins* and the individual economists assessed in *The Pioneers* at times suggest that the classical/orthodox – development/heterodox distinction can be overly crude, it nevertheless remains a useful distinction for the reader who wishes to understand fundamental intellectual conflicts in the history of economics and how these debates have shaped the field of development economics as it exists today. Economic scholarship derived from classical economic thought remains based on abstraction and controversial *a priori* assumptions, to its detriment when attempting answers to empirical questions regarding development in a world of states and regions in which historical processes have produced radically divergent socio-economic dynamics and developments. The heterodox school of economic thought, with its emphasis on historical record and empirical reality, remains at times excessively dependent on case-specific context, at the expense of being able to generalise findings beyond the cases and contexts in which they are initially found.

This trade-off between ‘broad’ vs. ‘deep’ understanding is an unavoidable feature of all approaches to development, and indeed to all scientific study of social phenomena. Therefore it is not very useful to suggest that one approach is superior to the other, although the implication in both of these volumes is clearly that the historical, heterodox approach is more useful to development economist wishing to understand the dilemmas faced by countries in the global south today. The most constructive way forward is not to disparage either approach, as being empirically ‘irrelevant’ (classical economics) or theoretically and methodologically unsophisticated (heterodox economics), but rather to make a strong case for the ability of each school of thought to provide a unique understanding of particular aspects of economics. A proper understanding of the strengths and limitations of each approach provides the aspiring development economics with the best equipped conceptual and theoretical ‘tool box’ for investigating the pressing economic and political puzzles of our day.
The food we buy and eat can tell powerful stories. It may seem better to simply enjoy its many culinary varieties than to think much about where it comes from, its ingredients or who produces it and how. However both our taste buds and our brain cells need a strong stimulus in order to recognize the complexities of food’s political economy. Tony Weis, professor at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, presents a highly informative narrative on these complexities in layman’s terms. Published just months prior to the eruption of this year’s global food crisis, his pocket-size book provides abundant fact-based arguments to confidently engage in political dialogue on the driving forces of a food system seemingly in perpetual crisis.

From preface to concluding chapter five, Weis disputes claims of inevitability of today’s dominant food economy. His purpose is to unsettle illusions that it is impossible to fundamentally overhaul existing conditions of agricultural production, consumption and trade. Today’s modes of high-input farming, based on a system of industrialized grain-livestock production result in a tremendously deep environmental footprint. Yet Weis demonstrates that regardless of its costs, the current food system is incapable of attaining food security on a global scale. His well-narrated assessment unveils not only the output-level dilemmas and contradictions of a system in deep crisis; it also focuses on the institutional arrangements and power-relations, predominantly of the World Trade Organization (WTO), responsible for a status quo that translates into poor nutrition, poverty and hunger for millions around the globe. WTO efforts to reinforce abstract competitive advantages of nation states by regulating trade regimes for agricultural products are seen as completely divorced from food security concerns of the global poor.

Claims made by proponents of the status quo that markets can succeed at ensuring reliable and affordable supply of nutritious food if only allowed to operate freely and with minimal state intervention, are forcefully dismissed by Weis as being ideological and catering to profit interests of transnational companies and parasitic political elites.

For Weis, the obscenity of simultaneous poles of obesity and hunger in a market-driven food economy cannot be ignored, nor is it ethically acceptable: in terms of quantity more than enough food for all is produced globally. However the purchasing power to access that food is unevenly distributed within and between countries to the extreme. As an example, the farm subsidy regimes in OECD countries cost six times as much as all OECD development aid in any given year. Indeed, it is more than shameful that ‘the average EU subsidy per cow was roughly the same (US$2) as the poverty level on which billions barely exist’. Transnational agro-conglomerates, unconcerned about notions of social and cultural significance of food and associated traditions, continuously promote a global convergence of food consumption and diet patterns (such as meat-rich diets) without much concern for long-term health consequences for consumers.

Small farmers and food-security minded decision-makers in developing countries frequently find themselves short-changed with regard to viable production or policy options. As the process of global integration of national and regional food economies has intensified so has its dependence on the ‘chemical and fossil energy treadmill’. Unable to keep up, especially rural populations whose livelihoods heavily rely upon low-input,
small-scale agriculture have been squeezed out of markets and fallen below narrow poverty lines. Ultimately there seems to be little doubt, at least in the author’s mind, that the food system as we know it, is heading for a fall. Weis’ analysis allows the reader to see this year’s food crisis as an acceleration of a combination of worrisome trends underlying the global food economy. We have witnessed sharp price hikes in supermarkets in affluent societies as well as in village markets in low-income developing countries. Unsurprisingly, the poor have been affected most, many millions of whom are slipping back into food insecurity from which they only recently had seemingly freed themselves. Food riots have erupted in various places and high-level political activism, from the 2008 Food Summit in Rome, the G8 meeting in Japan to the recent Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana have all sought to present meaningful responses to the crisis at hand.

Most certainly none of these events have attempted to explore the sub-title of Weis’ book, namely, ‘The battle for the future of farming’. If they had referred to this guide to understanding and reimagining the global food economy, they may have found that solutions to the endemic crisis of agricultural production in the global economy lie with those who are waging the battle for sustainable alternatives: the farmers, consumers and activists of civil society in North and South. Secondary responses to the recurring failures of the global food system, even commendable relief and project-level responses to the immediate hardships faced by food-insecure populations, perhaps allow for some temporary relief from an ongoing, livelihoods debilitating crisis. Yet root causes of the crisis are hardly touched in the process. There is little to be gained by trying to dissect such causes into their multiple, interwoven constituent factors, even though factors such as bio-fuel production, increased global demand for meat products (especially in newly affluent parts of Asia), climate change or rising fuel costs all play a role. Debate on tomorrow’s food system that is organized as a fundamental departure from the uncertainties inherent in the food economy of today, is best to be based on a firm critical analysis and factual footing. With his important book on this vital topic, Tony Weis has provided nothing less than a solid departure point for such debate.

Editor’s Note: ROAPE would like to take up the challenge in this review, that is ‘the battle for farming in Africa’. If you are interested in working with us, please get in touch with me, Jan Burgess – editor@roape.org

Many thanks and goodbye to Rita Abrahamsen for taking this much-neglected Book Reviews section and making it the ‘must read’ of the journal – according to our subscribers who are very impressed! You’ll also note that we are now including both film and theatre reviews – is there anything else you’d like to see here? If so, get in touch with Branwen Gruffydd-Jones who takes over from Rita in 2009. Her e-mail address is: b.gruffydd-jones@gold.ac.uk

Erratum

‘Child Poverty in Africa’ by Meredith Turshen in ROAPE No. 117, September 2008. Apologies to the author and Dharam Ghai for a mis-quoted sentence (page 499). It should read as follows: ‘Urban Jonsson, former senior advisor to UNICEF on Human Rights Based Approach to Programming, pointed out that Africa has changed since 1960; there is more peace, more efforts for democracy, an end to apartheid. AIDS has crushed many dreams.’ A corrected online version will appear in December 2008.

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Mainstream development theory argues that countries develop through their own actions: freeing trade and investment, establishing legal institutions conducive to private investment, liberalising markets, educating in a particular way, eliminating wasteful state spending and improving governance. The history of developed countries is cited as an appropriate template. Poor countries wishing to catch up are advised to immerse themselves in the fair and benign international economy.

Ray Bush’s *Poverty and Liberalism* is a blistering, heterodox critique of each item of this current orthodoxy. Poverty arises, he maintains, not from the failure of countries and groups to incorporate themselves in the world economy but from the fact that they are incorporated in it, but in an unequal and misshapen way. Poverty ‘is not about being left behind but about being actively excluded from an unjust and unequal system of wealth creation’. This system, especially in the countries where poverty is most persistent, predominantly takes the form of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ – David Harvey’s useful renaming of Marx’s primitive or primary accumulation, so strongly emphasised by Rosa Luxemburg. The progressive commoditisation of a growing number of human activities frequently, as Bush explains, results in the accumulation of poverty. History, far from being a template for the future, explains how the globalisation of capitalist accumulation produced and produces some convergence but also much polarisation.

After an initial chapter setting out this theoretical perspective and discussing the interconnection between African impoverishment and the post-1980 neoliberal tsunami, Bush uses the ideas as the backbone of a well-structured set of chapters, each on one crucial issue in the study of development. The first is about international aid – in particular Tony Blair’s and the G8’s plans to ‘rescue’ Africa (in which another frequent theme – the egregious hypocrisy of donors – rightly receives several mentions). This is followed by chapters on migration, land, mining and resources (including the ‘resource curse’), and food and famine. Each of these attacks mainstream approaches and counters with an analysis based on the guiding idea of the book – that the problem is not simple and quantitative (how much integration in the system?) but complex and qualitative (what kind of integration and what kind of system?). His conclusion about the land question is typical of others: ‘the problem is not weak tenure or that producers are insufficiently integrated or are part of imperfect markets: the problem is the market itself and the commoditization of everyday life’.

All this is helpfully illustrated with historical and contemporary empirical material about debt cancellation, migrants’ remittances, land reform in Egypt and Zimbabwe, mining in Africa – themes which all echo Rosa Luxemburg writing a century ago – as well as a narrative about the relationship between...
the development of the oil industry, land struggles and sectarian conflicts in Sudan. Telling instances are also taken from the experience of Middle East and North African countries which the author has particularly studied.

In the final chapter Bush sets out many ideas around which resistance to persistent poverty might be organised. Here are mentions or echoes of Marx, Luxemburg, the narodniks, anarchism, feminism, the defence of indigenous peoples and the importance of ‘infrapolitics’ – the everyday resistance of ordinary individuals, households and neighbourhoods. Ray Bush’s conviction that this spirit of resistance is not extinct means that a gloomy story does not lead to a pessimistic prognosis. Some readers might view this chapter as insufficiently programmatic but I found it refreshingly eclectic. It also contains a needed broadside against the neoliberal ‘governance’ formula (transparency, reducing corruption by lowering the importance of the state and more ‘civil society’, conceived as a proliferation of NGOs).

Late 2007 should be a good moment for the publication of this book. Neoliberalism is being discredited by poor results, especially in Africa, and morally weakened by the grotesque hypocrisy with which it is applied (the same Western governments which increase protection for agriculture or cover up bribery in selling arms to Saudi Arabia preach free trade and anti-corruption to African countries). Its high priests are losing their nerve, fearing that the increasing inequality it generates will destroy political support. Financial liberalisation is causing chaos in the markets and threatening more economic damage; the October 2007 IMF annual meetings were summarised by a New York Times headline as ‘The tables turned: Poor countries wag fingers at rich countries’; and the OECD recently admitted that the facts suggest that ‘globalisation is creating opportunities for a small elite of workers and investors to pull away from everyone else’. While neoleibals advise yet more of the same, the left has to go beyond its own clichés and provide a coherent answer to the scandal of persistent mass poverty in a rich world. Ray Bush’s clear, thoughtful and provocative contribution to that task is a valuable resource for those concerned with poverty and development, especially in Africa.


The concept of the prison as a place of detention was introduced to sub-Saharan Africa by colonial powers in the 19th century, largely as a means of subduing the indigenous populations. This legacy remains obvious today in the fortress style of many of the prisons in the region, such as that in the Rwandan town of Cyangugu, built by the Belgians in the 1930s, which is on the cover of Carina Terstakian’s disturbing book. In Rwanda the rate of imprisonment is about 979 per 100,000 of the population. This is the highest in the world, ahead even of the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This means that about one person in every hundred of the population is in prison. This book explains why this is so and describes in stark detail what the consequences are for the prisoners.

Carina Tertsakian is very well placed to write a book such as this, having been directly involved in Rwanda for a decade with international NGOs. At the core of the book is an amazing series of
interviews which she undertook with men and women languishing in the country’s prisons. For anyone who knows prisons in Africa, these interviews ring true in the way that they capture the humanity which can exist in the midst of extreme adversity and the acceptance of inevitable reality. The author helpfully sketches the national context which is all too well known, but this is not a book about the tragedy of Rwanda. It is primarily a record of the experience of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Tertsakian is clearly a sympathetic listener who allows the prisoners to speak in their own words. In most cases, she passes no judgement on what they are saying about the reasons which have brought them to prison. Instead, she quotes directly from the tortuous experiences which they have had, in many cases while they wait to be charged over a period of many years.

‘The suffering which continued silently in the prisons year after year was of a particularly inconvenient kind: these men and women dying of overcrowding, disease and ill-treatment were not the usual innocent victims. The vast majority were accused of genocide and there was little sympathy for their plight. The fact that most of them had not even been tried or charged – and that many therefore may have been innocent – did not seem to matter. Thus, over the years, the prison situation became an accepted feature of post-genocide Rwanda’ (p.16).

The prison system simply could not cope with the number of prisoners, which peaked at around 130,000 in 1998. Overcrowding in the prisons of Western Europe usually means two or at most three prisoners crammed into a cell designed to hold one. In Rwanda it meant that prisoners had forty centimetres of personal space in which to sleep, eat, sit and live. The ‘château’ of the title does not refer to the castellated prison buildings. It is the ironic name given by the fortunate prisoners who have two planks of wood as their own personal space. The less fortunate live and sleep on the ground, in corridors, in toilets or shower spaces, on top of septic tanks or in the open air.

In one of the most moving chapters the author describes the scene when families come to visit:

The first group of prisoners, around 50 of them, emerges from the gate and sits down on the nearest row of long benches … A guard whistles and the first group of visitors lunges forward to take their seats on the second row of benches … There is a frantic exchange of provisions and full and empty containers, and a frantic exchange of words … Suddenly, one of the guards blows his whistle again and the visitors have to leave … from the first whistle to the second whistle, the visit has lasted less than two minutes (p.250).

In unemotional language, often through the voices of the prisoners, Tertsakian describes the added difficulties for women prisoners, for minors, for the elderly, for the sick and for those sentenced to death. She also notes the complete lack of support for prisoners who are eventually released, as well as the lack of concern from the international community:

The crisis in the prisons – which would have provoked outrage had it occurred in almost any other country – elicited barely any response from foreign governments (p.353).

There is little evidence that this nightmare is coming to an end. When Tertsakian conducted her research, the prison population stood at around 85,000. She ends the book by reporting that in May 2007 it stood around 92,000. This powerful book places a spotlight on the continuing tragedy of prisons in Rwanda, which remain a blot on humanity. It deserves to be widely read and to act as a spur for international action.
Théodore Trefon, who directs the ‘Contemporary History’ section of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Brussels, has written a fascinating, rich, lively and overall superb book on the resilience of the Congolese administrative apparatus in a time of state failure. The book is based on in-depth case studies of the interactions between individuals in different social universes and administrative branches of the state in the town of Lubumbashi, Congo’s second largest city with about 1.5m people, in the province of Katanga. It details the daily routines and state-induced vexations of a charcoal transporter, a baker, a construction material salesman, a taxi driver, a retired civil servant, a paralegal restaurant owner, a widow housewife and mother of 11, a preacher, a street foreign exchange broker, and a cyber-café manager.

In addition to the unique empirical material of the book, one of Trefon’s main contributions is the theoretical introduction, which provides analytical context and conceptual structure to the case studies. To the question of ‘why the administration persists’ (p.13) despite its deliquescence in providing the Congolese with the services it was intended for, Trefon offers a triply layered answer. The Congolese administration persists because it is instrumentalised by political elites for their own advantage (particularly as a source of revenue); because it is privatised by public officials as part of their own strategies of personal survival; and because individual citizens still need the administration, even when they largely substitute themselves to it in providing services. This latter point is particularly interesting. For example, parents pool their resources to pay the salaries of public teachers, largely abandoned by the state, and thereby facilitate the reproduction of the public education system. They do so, rather than starting new alternative private schools, because they value the state diploma which they see as giving their children access to formal employment.

Although the introduction alone provides a thorough and rigorous contribution to the topic and is worthy of publication on its own, it is the empirical material in the subsequent case studies, or individual vignettes, which is most stunning, informative and original. It also often makes for captivating reading. Most striking are the innumerable layers of administration and control enforced upon the Congolese and the equally numerous taxes and levies which administrative agencies impose. Starting with ministers, the administration expands downwards through secretaries-general, directors, division chiefs, bureau chiefs, chiefs of provincial divisions, provincial bureau chiefs, section chiefs, cell chiefs, chiefs of urban services, chiefs of sub-sections and sub-cells, mayors, burgomasters, chiefs of neighborhood and street chiefs (pp. 143-147), illustrating in the process the universality and decentralization of ‘Big Man’ politics. As for taxes, the city and communes of Lubumbashi alone inflict no less than 26 taxes on its residents (p. 149). And state agents invent many more.

The resulting totalitarianism (my word, not Trefon’s) of the weak state makes peoples’ lives miserable. The story of the retired railroad worker hanging on to his official documents for dear life (pp. 85-93) is poignant, as is the vulnerability of the charcoal trader in the face of public harassment (pp. 47-54) and that of the widow struggling to secure water and electricity for her household of 11 children (pp.101-112).
The book’s methodology also deserves mention. Trefon has collaborated with Bathazar Ngoy of the University of Lubumbashi and with the latter’s students in political science who were trained in questionnaire administration and managed the surveys in the Lubumbashi neighborhoods, which produced the case studies. Trefon’s book is *politique par le bas* at its best. The Congolese state repeatedly comes to life for the reader in all its daily Kafkaesque arbitrariness at the grassroots. The resulting picture is one where there seems to be no greater impediment to life than the state itself. Yet, people have learned to live with it. In fact, the resilience of citizens in the face of a relentlessly exploitative administration is probably as remarkable as the resilience of the state itself. Moreover, the book clearly illustrates how the very actions of citizens, driven by necessity, often help reproduce the administration.

If Trefon’s book is to have a weakness (at least for the Anglophone reader), it will be that it is written in French (although there is an excellent English summary of the main argument at the beginning). Its contribution to the study of the African state in general and Congo in particular is so significant that an English version cannot come too soon.


This book addresses the interface which exists between the often quite disparate disciplines of philosophy and literature, and does so within the context of the African conditions of poverty, corruption, and state ineptitude. It talks to the contrasting scenarios and explanatory frameworks of two of the continent’s outstanding novelists – Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o – whose books likely constitute Africa’s most familiar and stimulating texts of the post-Independence period. However, I finished reading Okolo with a mixed reaction.

As she states in the introduction, her study provides ‘an intellectual and analytic framework within which the African experience can be conceptualized, interpreted and reorganized’ (p.2); here she investigates the relationship between literature and society. This is undertaken by considering the political components of Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savanna* (1987) and Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood* (1977). The former sees Africa’s problems as a result of ‘internal’ corruption, state failure, ineptitude, and the privatization of the public resources, while the latter points to leadership, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism as the basic sources. The foundation of Okolo’s analysis is political philosophy (providing a worldview and critical reflection) upon which the writings of the two authors are considered (first in general by investigating their several other novels, then in detail for *Anthills* and *Petals*). As the analysis develops, the writings of some additional novelists such as Soyinka, Sembene, and Armah are interrogated. She finalises her study by comparing the authors in terms of their perspectives on the African condition and on possible social reconstruction. Therein resides DOI: 10.1080/03056240802574235
the work’s strength; it is rendered powerful and insightful by her selection of authors. The chosen authors speak to the causes in thoughtful and contrasting manners. Their works ‘provoke people into assessing and criticizing’ (p.28). Here, she categorises the comments in terms of themes important in the understanding of the African condition in several social science disciplines: alienation, power, gender, ideology, leadership, and citizenship.

However, the text suffers from a ‘deja vu’ reading. These texts by Ngugi and Achebe will be quite familiar to most readers of this journal; it is quite well-known that they depicted both Africa’s ills and their causes. Further, the philosophical framework presented by Okolo is elementary (and largely ‘western’, other than Gandhi – where are Africa’s thinkers?). And, the reader asks: Where are the novel insights resulting from political philosophy? And so too, her Marxism adds little that has not already been stated or analysed by others. In fact, the originality of the issues raised was a basic concern – many have commented on these texts previously, and so the author’s critique is especially thoughtful – but it is mostly a revisit, a synthetic essay which collates what others have indicated previously.

An issue not found in Okolo’s otherwise thoughtful, well-organised, and profound LitCrit relates to the silences of these novels – to the fundamental issues not discussed in these books. They disregard certain aspects which are fundamental to the understanding of the African condition and its possible solution: I expected the author to indicate these. They include ethnicity, religion, urbanisation, regionalism, redistribution, population growth, civil wars, diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, the transition from an economy of affection to neo-liberalism – and (especially in a Marxist critique) the articulation of the modes of production. These are matters which are of critical importance in understanding the African condition. We are told what the novels say, but not what they omit.

The difficulty that this analysis illustrates is unfortunately one that affects our brother and sister scholars in Africa. University libraries on the continent are sadly deficient. Research funds are scarce or unavailable. Besides, with huge classes and the demands of family and kin, few find time for original research. As well, there is an important temporal dimension in that today’s scholars were raised under these same conditions which their mentors faced. It is unfortunately indexed in journals on Africa published in Canada, the UK, the US, and elsewhere in the First World: there are few African authors from the continent because of matters of timing, quality, writing, and novelty. There are notable exceptions to this generality, but this condition is a sad reality.

The voices of the novels provide an initial understanding of Africa’s social, political, and economic contexts. The issue addressed by Okolo’s investigation are important; the ‘voices’ of literature speak to the African condition. Much can be learned from what they tell us, and also from what they do not say. However, it is unfortunate that the present text is largely a re-visit of writers of 20-30 years ago, and that both the realm of African philosophy is ignored, as are the messages of contemporary writers.

This book is about colonial and post-colonial statecraft and the rural resource governance issues at the centre of a still unfolding socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. Divided into eight well researched, detailed and analytically sound chapters, the book deals with the complexities of statecraft played out in the contentious land question. The first four chapters talk to pre-1980 settler colonial dynamics with the next four looking at the post-colonial state after 1980 and into the post-February 2000 crisis.

Writing about colonial Zimbabwe and the histories of dispossession is always a challenge as this is now a well trodden path. Any new book tackling this area has the challenge of bringing something new to the story. The first four chapters of this book manage to do this by talking to the broader discourses of colonial statecraft viewed from the local social histories in Insiza and Chimanimani, the case study areas. Through detailed and well sourced narratives Chapter 1 takes us through the unsettled politics of pre-colonial Zimbabwe showing in both case study areas how shifting allegiances, contested loyalties and the fluid politics of rural governance find local expression. Above all else this section highlights an often overlooked fact which is that in spite of the settler colonial state being united in its conquest of land and desire to dominate, there was internal dissonance within the settler state and colonial administrators on the ground often faced a reality removed from the ideals of the settler colonial project. In each of the case study areas we are also introduced to the nascent local social movements and their local efforts to resist the settler colonial project. For example by giving local expression to the ‘Native Self Conscious Society’ in Chimanimani, not only do we get a sense of the role of these local movements in mobilising against the local reach of the settler state but also their varied methods to suit circumstances.

Chapters two, three and four take us through the main ground level expressions of settler colonial policy and practice on land and local governance. Through detailed local social histories, local expressions of development interventions like the NLHA and Community Development are used to show case the complexity of conquest and resistance. By focusing on the relationship between chiefs and land Chapter five draws into focus the extent to which the local social and political outcomes in these encounters depended on the characters and relationship of the two main actors at the local level- the district commissioner and the local chief. The book characterises the outcomes as one of or a combination of collaboration, co-option and falling out. All three outcomes are given currency in the two case study areas but more crucially characterise some of the learned behaviours that helped shape and define post-colonial relationship between the state and traditional authority. In a way the first five chapters showcase why the complete history of the settler colonial statecraft, especially its impact on local people and their responses, can only be fully understood from the bottom up and attempts to draw generalisations or national patterns often fail to capture the variegated responses that this book highlights.

Two key issues feature prominently as defining post-colonial statecraft are articulated in Chapters five and six. First is the state’s strategic ambivalence toward traditional institutions. On one hand these are seen as ‘compromised’ and...
unsuitable for the new democratic dispensation due to their perceived collusion with the settler colonial state. On the other hand they play a hugely symbolic role of identity and autochthony that both the settler state and the post-colonial state find useful in rural local governance. It is clear from contemporary discourses featured in Chapters seven and eight that the rehabilitation of the role of chiefs in rural local governance is complete. Traditional chiefs became in essence bureaucratised while some politicised their role. From the book one gets a sense here of continuity rather than change in the ab(use) of the traditional chiefs. What the book does not say however is that post-colonial statecraft was to an extent influenced by the institutional inertia of the settler state it succeeded.

Second, and related to the above is what the book correctly observes as the persistence of a technocentric streak to rural policy making. A typical example of this is the attempts to re-organise the communal areas through the CLDP and the land resettlement programme both of which bore striking resemblance to some of the programmes that the settler state attempted to implement. Because of this link and other local factors CLDP was moribund right from inception while the resettlement scheme was fraught with implementation bottlenecks. For example top down technocentric approaches in a context of the muddied politics of the early post-colonial period in Matabeleland affected resettlement in Insiza. Similarly in Chimanimani difficulties of implementing state programmes is put down to a ‘rejection of state claims to technocratic authority over land in favour of local versions of nationalism, histories of eviction, chiefly claims and need’ (p. 153), and sums up the aversion that locals had to developmental populism that paid little heed to local realities.

Through the first seven chapters we clearly see the unresolved nature rural local governance through the land question and can almost understand why by the time of the farm invasions in February 2000 there was a sense of waning statecraft. This is followed through in Chapter eight which shows the systematic build up of issues leading to the Jambanja drawing on broader national economic and political discourses and practices. There is no attempt to give them local expression in the case study areas, and for this reason this chapter reads differently from the first seven. This book’s strength lies in showing variable responses to statecraft from locality to locality yet there is almost a sense in which this chapter suggests there was one set of conditions that led to the invasions across the country. We do not get to know about the specific experiences of Chimanimani and Insiza. One can guess that invasions where given local traction by existing local relations and these varied from place to place. Questions that come to mind as one reads this section include: Was there an underlying local logic to the invasions apart from the national contextual issues? Why where some farms invaded and others not? To be fair to the book logistical and political conditions on the ground are not conducive for such detailed work and this may well be a challenge for the future.

Overall this is an excellent addition to the discourses on rural local governance and land in Zimbabwe, and more specifically to our local knowledge on the variability of responses to statecraft in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. It is a good resource for students of history as much as it is for development studies and, because it is very clearly written it appeals broadly to those interested in Zimbabwe.

This is the published version of a 2003 Leiden doctorate focusing on the problems faced by Ghanaian riverine communities living downstream from the Volta (also known as Akosombo) Dam since its construction in the early 1960s and its official opening by President Nkrumah in 1966. There is much here of interest, in particular, detailed empirical information on livelihoods in the communities and their migrant extensions around the lake, and also material from locally sourced interviews with retired Volta River Authority (VRA) personnel. However, in terms of a published work it could have benefited from judicious pruning.

After a detailed discussion of concepts and methodological approaches, the next almost 150 pages deal with the history and politics of the dam’s funding, construction and plans for resettlement of displaced communities and environmental impacts. While there is a very great deal of detail given here, the analysis and discussion is limited: perhaps greater reference to, use and critique of Ronnie Graham’s 1982 book would have enabled the author both to foreground crucial broader political factors relevant to the dam’s planning and funding, at the same time, allowing cuts through the use of cross-referencing. What we are presented with is a welter of minute detail, relevant in terms of thesis background, but not reader-friendly.

However, the stated focus of the work are the fates of members of the Tongu Ewe communities downstream from the dam and also of communities, mostly originally derived from Tongu, who migrated upstream, either seasonally or for longer periods, in the years before the dam was built, and whose descendants are now members of lakeside communities. While the author sets out and critiques the VRA’s plans (and their implementation) for resettlement and compensation for community sites and lands inundated by the lake, she points out that the communities downstream that are the subjects of her study effectively received no compensation. What has happened in the years since the dam’s construction is a falling of overall river levels and the cessation of the annual floods just after the rainy season which have meant a series of changes for the worse in overall income (for example, the demise of the clam picking/cultivation industry), and in health hazards as pollutants remain in the soil and have built up over the years. The author shows very effectively and in a gender sensitive way how these and other factors have affected lives and livelihoods of the downstream communities.

When she turns to look at the Volta Lakeside communities that have developed since the inundation, however, the dynamics of relationships between Tongu members of these communities and those downstream are less clear. The same kinds of meticulous and gender aware data are presented but the strengths and significances of links with ‘home’ areas are fuzzier. While, in pre-dam days, fishing upstream was a lucrative stage in many young men’s lives, either annually, or on a more permanent basis, now the seasonality prompting the move upstream is non-existent: the basis for forging and maintaining links between the lakeside and downstream communities has been suborned. There are so much empirical data presented in the four penultimate chapters that it is impossible to do justice to them. What seems to be happening is that the downstream communities are now indistinguishable from most other impoverished rural riverine communities, while those
upstream still depend on fishing supplemented by subsistence farming, and in some cases seem to be being left behind by more recent arrivals from coastal fishing groups. Any implications from this data are not effectively drawn out in the four chapters and the concluding chapter is, in the classic ‘social-science-dissertation’ sense of the term, simply a summary of key points.

Overall it is not really possible to present a summary review of the book: it engages with issues on too many fronts. While I think that a more politically nuanced discussion of all aspects of the dam would be of greater benefit, it really wouldn’t fit here. This is not the main thrust of the book, rather a kind of huge tangent that takes us is into another direction, a direction that Graham has already accessed and which could well be incorporated here. Where it does well is in the empirical data collection and presentation, but apart from the admittedly crucial fact that the building of the dam caused massive and life-changing (and uncompensated) changes for Tongu people, the dam could recede into the background. This would allow the consequences and implications from the data to emerge and to be framed, perhaps in terms of the livelihoods framework set out in the first chapter, and contribute more effectively to the sociological/anthropological analysis and understanding of contemporary Ghana and beyond.

Jomo has successfully edited two balanced and well-rounded volumes (one with Reinert) of considerable interest to scholars of development and African politics alike. Both volumes chart the evolution of development economics. The Pioneers of Development Economics focuses on continuities in schools of economic thought from the Renaissance onward whereas The Origins of Development Economics explains how particular individuals, some economists with a recognised and central role in the field (e.g., Friedrich List and Raúl Prebisch) and others more marginal (William Petty), have produced the diverse body of scholarship – an intellectual heritage based on insights from a range of disciplines – on which development economists, and scholars of development more generally, draw today. Both volumes essentially aim to reorient the scope of economics proper by placing the question of development – how less developed societies may achieve the same transition that produced developed, industrialised societies in the past – at the heart of the discipline.

This ‘Other Canon’ stands in contrast to the abstract, theoretical approach of classical economics based on controversial a priori assumptions regarding competition, information and equilibrium. Rejecting the ‘total fixation on their own previous work’ that characterises contemporary, orthodox (neo-classical) eco-

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nomic thought (The Pioneers, p. vii), the editors emphasise a longer and broader view on economic thinking and scholarship. A main purpose of The Origins is to 'demonstrate the continuity in thinking on economic development' from the pre-Smithian era to post-World War Two development economics (p. vii).

The Origins begins with an outline of broad historical approaches to development. Chapters on 'Mercantilism' (E. & S. Reinert) and 'the Italian Tradition in Political Economy' (S. Reinert) trace the development of economics as praxis to the Renaissance and to concerns about how to produce national development (Tudor England), avoid economic failure (Spain) and reverse semi-peripheralisation in declining Italian city states. A chapter on 'German Economics', including the historical school (E. Reinert) suggests a largely coherent tradition of thought from the seventeenth century until the World War Two. A chapter on 'Capitalist Transformation' (Khan) critiques the narrow classical economic emphasis on institutions such as stable property rights of whatever kind (i.e. it does not matter what property is protected and for whom, as long as property is protected) in the transition of a small number of (East Asian) developing countries to developed country status, noting instead the importance of a broad set of social and institutional factors in producing state capacity to transform.

Methodologically sophisticated chapters on 'Growth Theory' (Ros) and 'International Trade' (Dutt) explain the role of theoretical debates on growth and trade for modern development economics. Ros argues that early development economics provides a better explanation for development than does the endogenous growth literature, and that early approaches are 'more empirically promising' than either old or new growth Theory (p. 82). Dutt reviews contributions by Rosenstein-Rodan, Nurkse, Lewis and Myrdal to trade theory and the implications thereof for developing countries. A chapter on {Latin American Structuralism and Dependency Theory} (Saad-Filho) outlines the key contributions (as well as important limitations) to the development literature by post-war structuralists and dependistas, notably the former's rejection of linear assumptions about development in orthodox theories of development and the latter's insistence on the impossibility of development under capitalism. Finally, 'Development in the History of Economics' (Szentes) outlines key contours of development economics and how it becomes a distinct field of study in the post-war era.

Relying on a standard criticism of classical economics as inevitably hampered by its abstractions and existence in a 'ahistorical vacuum', the authors contrast this dominant approach with the historically conscious and pragmatic approach of economic thought from the Italian tradition and the German school to structuralism, dependency theory and modern development economics. The main distinction between orthodox (neo/classical) and heterodox (development-oriented) schools of economic thought is defined in The Origins (p. vii) as the difference between social theory built on abstraction and deductive reasoning as in classical economics and that built from historical reality and inductive reasoning from the bottom up, as in the approaches from which (heterodox) modern development economics derive. Classical economics is a system of thought based on metaphors from physics, notably the enlightenment 'mechanization of the world picture' on which Smith's concept of the 'invisible hand' was based and the 1880s physics' emphasis on equilibrium. Development economics rely on metaphors from biology, namely references to the human body that are present in economic writings from Greek and Roman times through the Renaissance and late nineteenth-century
German economics and on ideas transplanted from Darwinian and Lamarckian evolution in the economic writings of Veblen and in Schumpeter’s ‘evolutionary economics’ (p. ix).

The Pioneers charts a history of economic thought as it relates to development by focusing in each chapter on contributions to the field by a particular individual, economist or otherwise. A companion to The Origins, this volume provides additional historical context to the thematically organised, theoretically and conceptually rich, approach of the former. Why ‘Development Economics’? (P. Patnaik) introduces the book by the purpose and central concerns of the field. Chapters on William Petty (Goodacre) and David Ricardo (U. Patnaik) emphasise the origins of economic thought in the historical experience of imperialism. Chapters on Friedrich List (Shafaeddin), Karl Marx (P. Patnaik), Vladimir Lenin (U. Patnaik), Alfred Marshall (Prendergast), Michal Kalecki (Ghosh), John Maynard Keynes (Toye), Keynes and Nicholas Kaldor (Kumar Bagchi), Karl Polanyi (Polanyi Levitt) and Alexander Gerschenkron (Chandrasekhar) highlight contributions to the field by scholars not normally identified as pioneers of development economics. Finally, chapters on Raúl Prebish and Arthur Lewis (Polanyi Levitt) and Hans Singer (Raffer) outline ‘principal heterodox economic implications’ of recognised pioneers of development economics (p. viii).

While the intellectual complexity and manifold nuance of the schools of thoughts overviewed in The Origins and the individual economists assessed in The Pioneers at times suggest that the classical/orthodox – development/heterodox distinction can be overly crude, it nevertheless remains a useful distinction for the reader who wishes to understand fundamental intellectual conflicts in the history of economics and how these debates have shaped the field of development economics as it exists today. Economic scholarship derived from classical economic thought remains based on abstraction and controversial a priori assumptions, to its detriment when attempting answers to empirical questions regarding development in a world of states and regions in which historical processes have produced radically divergent socio-economic dynamics and developments. The heterodox school of economic thought, with its emphasis on historical record and empirical reality, remains at times excessively dependent on case-specific context, at the expense of being able to generalise findings beyond the cases and contexts in which they are initially found.

This trade-off between ‘broad’ vs. ‘deep’ understanding is an unavoidable feature of all approaches to development, and indeed to all scientific study of social phenomena. Therefore it is not very useful to suggest that one approach is superior to the other, although the implication in both of these volumes is clearly that the historical, heterodox approach is more useful to development economist wishing to understand the dilemmas faced by countries in the global south today. The most constructive way forward is not to disparage either approach, as being empirically ‘irrelevant’ (classical economics) or theoretically and methodologically unsophisticated (heterodox economics), but rather to make a strong case for the ability of each school of thought to provide a unique understanding of particular aspects of economics. A proper understanding of the strengths and limitations of each approach provides the aspiring development economics with the best equipped conceptual and theoretical ‘tool box’ for investigating the pressing economic and political puzzles of our day.

The food we buy and eat can tell powerful stories. It may seem better to simply enjoy its many culinary varieties than to think much about where it comes from, its ingredients or who produces it and how. However both our taste buds and our brain cells need a strong stimulus in order to recognize the complexities of food’s political economy. Tony Weis, professor at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, presents a highly informative narrative on these complexities in layman’s terms. Published just months prior to the eruption of this year’s global food crisis, his pocket-size book provides abundant fact-based arguments to confidently engage in political dialogue on the driving forces of a food system seemingly in perpetual crisis.

From preface to concluding chapter five, Weis disputes claims of inevitability of today’s dominant food economy. His purpose is to unsettle illusions that it is impossible to fundamentally overhaul existing conditions of agricultural production, consumption and trade. Today’s modes of high-input farming, based on a system of industrialized grain-livestock production result in a tremendously deep environmental footprint. Yet Weis demonstrates that regardless of its costs, the current food system is incapable of attaining food security on a global scale. His well-narrated assessment unveils not only the output-level dilemmas and contradictions of a system in deep crisis; it also focuses on the institutional arrangements and power-relationships, predominantly of the World Trade Organization (WTO), responsible for a status quo that translates into poor nutrition, poverty and hunger for millions around the globe. WTO efforts to reinforce abstract competitive advantages of nation states by regulating trade regimes for agricultural products are seen as completely divorced from food security concerns of the global poor.

Claims made by proponents of the status quo that markets can succeed at ensuring reliable and affordable supply of nutritious food if only allowed to operate freely and with minimal state intervention, are forcefully dismissed by Weis as being ideological and catering to profit interests of transnational companies and parasitic political elites.

For Weis, the obscenity of simultaneous poles of obesity and hunger in a market-driven food economy cannot be ignored, nor is it ethically acceptable: in terms of quantity more than enough food for all is produced globally. However the purchasing power to access that food is unevenly distributed within and between countries to the extreme. As an example, the farm subsidy regimes in OECD countries cost six times as much as all OECD development aid in any given year. Indeed, it is more than shameful that ‘the average EU subsidy per cow was roughly the same (US$2) as the poverty level on which billions barely exist’. Transnational agroconglomerates, unconcerned about notions of social and cultural significance of food and associated traditions, continuously promote a global convergence of food consumption and diet patters (such as meat-rich diets) without much concern for long-term health consequences for consumers.

Small farmers and food-security minded decision-makers in developing countries frequently find themselves short-changed with regard to viable production or policy options. As the process of global integration of national and regional food economies has intensified so has its dependence on the ‘chemical and fossil energy treadmill’. Unable to keep up, especially rural populations whose livelihoods heavily rely upon low-input,
small-scale agriculture have been squeezed out of markets and fallen below narrow poverty lines. Ultimately there seems to be little doubt, at least in the author’s mind, that the food system as we know it, is heading for a fall. Weis’ analysis allows the reader to see this year’s food crisis as an acceleration of a combination of worrisome trends underlying the global food economy. We have witnessed sharp price hikes in supermarkets in affluent societies as well as in village markets in low-income developing countries. Unsurprisingly, the poor have been affected most, many millions of whom are slipping back into food insecurity from which they only recently had seemingly freed themselves. Food riots have erupted in various places and high-level political activism, from the 2008 Food Summit in Rome, the G8 meeting in Japan to the recent Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana have all sought to present meaningful responses to the crisis at hand.

Most certainly none of these events have attempted to explore the sub-title of Weis’ book, namely, ‘The battle for the future of farming’. If they had referred to this guide to understanding and re-imagining the global food economy, they may have found that solutions to the endemic crisis of agricultural production in the global economy lie with those who are waging the battle for sustainable alternatives: the farmers, consumers and activists of civil society in North and South. Secondary responses to the recurring failures of the global food system, even commendable relief and project-level responses to the immediate hardships faced by food-insecure populations, perhaps allow for some temporary reprieve from an ongoing, livelihoods debilitating crisis. Yet root causes of the crisis are hardly touched in the process. There is little to be gained by trying to dissect such causes into their multiple, interwoven constituent factors, even though factors such as bio-fuel produc-

tion, increased global demand for meat products (especially in newly affluent parts of Asia), climate change or rising fuel costs all play a role. Debate on tomorrow’s food system that is organized as a fundamental departure from the uncertainties inherent in the food economy of today, is best to be based on a firm critical analysis and factual footing. With his important book on this vital topic, Tony Weis has provided nothing less than a solid departure point for such debate.

Editor’s Note: ROAPE would like to take up the challenge in this review, that is ‘the battle for farming in Africa’. If you are interested in working with us, please get in touch with me, Jan Burgess – editor@roape.org

Erratum

‘Child Poverty in Africa’ by Meredith Turshen in ROAPE No. 117, September 2008. Apologies to the author and Dharam Ghai for a mis-quoted sentence (page 499). It should read as follows: ‘Urban Jonsson, former senior advisor to UNICEF on Human Rights Based Approach to Programming, pointed out that Africa has changed since 1960; there is more peace, more efforts for democracy, an end to apartheid. AIDS has crushed many dreams.’ A corrected online version will appear in December 2008.

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Mainstream development theory argues that countries develop through their own actions: freeing trade and investment, establishing legal institutions conducive to private investment, liberalising markets, educating in a particular way, eliminating wasteful state spending and improving governance. The history of developed countries is cited as an appropriate template. Poor countries wishing to catch up are advised to immerse themselves in the fair and benign international economy.

Ray Bush’s Poverty and Liberalism is a blistering, heterodox critique of each item of this current orthodoxy. Poverty arises, he maintains, not from the failure of countries and groups to incorporate themselves in the world economy but from the fact that they are incorporated in it, but in an unequal and misshapen way. Poverty ‘is not about being left behind but about being actively excluded from an unjust and unequal system of wealth creation’. This system, especially in the countries where poverty is most persistent, predominantly takes the form of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ – David Harvey’s useful renaming of Marx’s primitive or primary accumulation, so strongly emphasised by Rosa Luxemburg. The progressive commoditisation of a growing number of human activities frequently, as Bush explains, results in the accumulation of poverty. History, far from being a template for the future, explains how the globalisation of capitalist accumulation produced and produces some convergence but also much polarisation.

After an initial chapter setting out this theoretical perspective and discussing the interconnection between African impoverishment and the post-1980 neoliberal tsunami, Bush uses the ideas as the backbone of a well-structured set of chapters, each on one crucial issue in the study of development. The first is about international aid – in particular Tony Blair’s and the G8’s plans to ‘rescue’ Africa (in which another frequent theme – the egregious hypocrisy of donors – rightly receives several mentions). This is followed by chapters on migration, land, mining and resources (including the ‘resource curse’), and food and famine. Each of these attacks mainstream approaches and counters with an analysis based on the guiding idea of the book – that the problem is not simple and quantitative (how much integration in the system?) but complex and qualitative (what kind of integration and what kind of system?). His conclusion about the land question is typical of others: ‘the problem is not weak tenure or that producers are insufficiently integrated or are part of imperfect markets: the problem is the market itself and the commoditization of everyday life’.

All this is helpfully illustrated with historical and contemporary empirical material about debt cancellation, migrants’ remittances, land reform in Egypt and Zimbabwe, mining in Africa – themes which all echo Rosa Luxemburg writing a century ago – as well as a narrative about the relationship between
the development of the oil industry, land struggles and sectarian conflicts in Sudan. Telling instances are also taken from the experience of Middle East and North African countries which the author has particularly studied.

In the final chapter Bush sets out many ideas around which resistance to persistent poverty might be organised. Here are mentions or echoes of Marx, Luxemburg, the narodniks, anarchism, feminism, the defence of indigenous peoples and the importance of ‘infrapolitics’ – the everyday resistance of ordinary individuals, households and neighbourhoods. Ray Bush’s conviction that this spirit of resistance is not extinct means that a gloomy story does not lead to a pessimistic prognosis. Some readers might view this chapter as insufficiently programmatic but I found it refreshingly eclectic. It also contains a needed broadside against the neoliberal ‘governance’ formula (transparency, reducing corruption by lowering the importance of the state and more ‘civil society’, conceived as a proliferation of NGOs).

Late 2007 should be a good moment for the publication of this book. Neoliberalism is being discredited by poor results, especially in Africa, and morally weakened by the grotesque hypocrisy with which it is applied (the same Western governments which increase protection for agriculture or cover up bribery in selling arms to Saudi Arabia preach free trade and anti-corruption to African countries). Its high priests are losing their nerve, fearing that the increasing inequality it generates will destroy political support. Financial liberalisation is causing chaos in the markets and threatening more economic damage; the October 2007 IMF annual meetings were summarised by a New York Times headline as ‘The tables turned: Poor countries wag fingers at rich countries’; and the OECD recently admitted that the facts suggest that ‘globalisation is creating opportunities for a small elite of workers and investors to pull away from everyone else’. While neoliberals advise yet more of the same, the left has to go beyond its own clichés and provide a coherent answer to the scandal of persistent mass poverty in a rich world. Ray Bush’s clear, thoughtful and provocative contribution to that task is a valuable resource for those concerned with poverty and development, especially in Africa.


The concept of the prison as a place of detention was introduced to sub-Saharan Africa by colonial powers in the 19th century, largely as a means of subduing the indigenous populations. This legacy remains obvious today in the fortress style of many of the prisons in the region, such as that in the Rwandan town of Cyangugu, built by the Belgians in the 1930s, which is on the cover of Carina Terstakian’s disturbing book. In Rwanda the rate of imprisonment is about 979 per 100,000 of the population. This is the highest in the world, ahead even of the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This means that about one person in every hundred of the population is in prison. This book explains why this is so and describes in stark detail what the consequences are for the prisoners.

Carina Tertsakian is very well placed to write a book such as this, having been directly involved in Rwanda for a decade with international NGOs. At the core of the book is an amazing series of
interviews which she undertook with men and women languishing in the country’s prisons. For anyone who knows prisons in Africa, these interviews ring true in the way that they capture the humanity which can exist in the midst of extreme adversity and the acceptance of inevitable reality. The author helpfully sketches the national context which is all too well known, but this is not a book about the tragedy of Rwanda. It is primarily a record of the experience of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Tertsakian is clearly a sympathetic listener who allows the prisoners to speak in their own words. In most cases, she passes no judgement on what they are saying about the reasons which have brought them to prison. Instead, she quotes directly from the tortuous experiences which they have had, in many cases while they wait to be charged over a period of many years.

‘The suffering which continued silently in the prisons year after year was of a particularly inconvenient kind: these men and women dying of over-crowding, disease and ill-treatment were not the usual innocent victims. The vast majority were accused of genocide and there was little sympathy for their plight. The fact that most of them had not even been tried or charged – and that many therefore may have been innocent – did not seem to matter. Thus, over the years, the prison situation became an accepted feature of post-genocide Rwanda’ (p.16).

The prison system simply could not cope with the number of prisoners, which peaked at around 130,000 in 1998. Over-crowding in the prisons of Western Europe usually means two or at most three prisoners crammed into a cell designed to hold one. In Rwanda it meant that prisoners had forty centimetres of personal space in which to sleep, eat, sit and live. The ‘château’ of the title does not refer to the castellated prison buildings. It is the ironic name given by the fortunate prisoners who have two planks of wood as their own personal space. The less fortunate live and sleep on the ground, in corridors, in toilets or shower spaces, on top of septic tanks or in the open air.

In one of the most moving chapters the author describes the scene when families come to visit:

The first group of prisoners, around 50 of them, emerges from the gate and sits down on the nearest row of long benches … A guard whistles and the first group of visitors lunges forward to take their seats on the second row of benches … There is a frantic exchange of provisions and full and empty containers, and a frantic exchange of words … Suddenly, one of the guards blows his whistle again and the visitors have to leave … from the first whistle to the second whistle, the visit has lasted less than two minutes (p.250).

In unemotional language, often through the voices of the prisoners, Tertsakian describes the added difficulties for women prisoners, for minors, for the elderly, for the sick and for those sentenced to death. She also notes the complete lack of support for prisoners who are eventually released, as well as the lack of concern from the international community:

The crisis in the prisons – which would have provoked outrage had it occurred in almost any other country – elicited barely any response from foreign governments (p.353).

There is little evidence that this nightmare is coming to an end. When Tertsakian conducted her research, the prison population stood at around 85,000. She ends the book by reporting that in May 2007 it stood around 92,000. This powerful book places a spotlight on the continuing tragedy of prisons in Rwanda, which remain a blot on humanity. It deserves to be widely read and to act as a spur for international action.

Théodore Trefon, who directs the ‘Contemporary History’ section of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Brussels, has written a fascinating, rich, lively and overall superb book on the resilience of the Congolese administrative apparatus in a time of state failure. The book is based on in-depth case studies of the interactions between individuals in different social universes and administrative branches of the state in the town of Lubumbashi, Congo’s second largest city with about 1.5m people, in the province of Katanga. It details the daily routines and state-induced vexations of a charcoal transporter, a baker, a construction material salesman, a taxi driver, a retired civil servant, a paralegal restaurant owner, a widow housewife and mother of 11, a preacher, a street foreign exchange broker, and a cyber-café manager.

In addition to the unique empirical material of the book, one of Trefon’s main contributions is the theoretical introduction, which provides analytical context and conceptual structure to the case studies. To the question of ‘why the administration persists’ (p.13) despite its deliquescence in providing the Congolese with the services it was intended for, Trefon offers a triply layered answer. The Congolese administration persists because it is instrumentalised by political elites for their own advantage (particularly as a source of revenue); because it is privatised by public officials as part of their own strategies of personal survival; and because individual citizens still need the administration, even when they largely substitute themselves to it in providing services. This latter point is particularly interesting. For example, parents pool their resources to pay the salaries of public teachers, largely abandoned by the state, and thereby facilitate the reproduction of the public education system. They do so, rather than starting new alternative private schools, because they value the state diploma which they see as giving their children access to formal employment.

Although the introduction alone provides a thorough and rigorous contribution to the topic and is worthy of publication on its own, it is the empirical material in the subsequent case studies, or individual vignettes, which is most stunning, informative and original. It also often makes for captivating reading. Most striking are the innumerable layers of administration and control enforced upon the Congolese and the equally numerous taxes and levies which administrative agencies impose. Starting with ministers, the administration expands downwards through secretaries-general, directors, division chiefs, bureau chiefs, chiefs of provincial divisions, provincial bureau chiefs, section chiefs, cell chiefs, chiefs of urban services, chiefs of sub-sections and sub-cells, mayors, burgomasters, chiefs of neighborhood and street chiefs (pp. 143-147), illustrating in the process the universality and decentralization of ‘Big Man’ politics. As for taxes, the city and communes of Lubumbashi alone inflict no less than 26 taxes on its residents (p. 149). And state agents invent many more.

The resulting totalitarianism (my word, not Trefon’s) of the weak state makes peoples’ lives miserable. The story of the retired railroad worker hanging on to his official documents for dear life (pp. 85-93) is poignant, as is the vulnerability of the charcoal trader in the face of public harassment (pp. 47-54) and that of the widow struggling to secure water and electricity for her household of 11 children (pp.101-112).
The book’s methodology also deserves mention. Trefon has collaborated with Bathazar Ngoy of the University of Lubumbashi and with the latter’s students in political science who were trained in questionnaire administration and managed the surveys in the Lubumbashi neighborhoods, which produced the case studies. Trefon’s book is politique par le bas at its best. The Congolese state repeatedly comes to life for the reader in all its daily Kafkaesque arbitrariness at the grassroots. The resulting picture is one where there seems to be no greater impediment to life than the state itself. Yet, people have learned to live with it. In fact, the resilience of citizens in the face of a relentlessly exploitative administration is probably as remarkable as the resilience of the state itself. Moreover, the book clearly illustrates how the very actions of citizens, driven by necessity, often help reproduce the administration.

If Trefon’s book is to have a weakness (at least for the Anglophone reader), it will be that is written in French (although there is an excellent English summary of the main argument at the beginning). Its contribution to the study of the African state in general and Congo in particular is so significant that an English version cannot come too soon.


This book addresses the interface which exists between the often quite disparate disciplines of philosophy and literature, and does so within the context of the African conditions of poverty, corruption, and state ineptitude. It talks to the contrasting scenarios and explanatory frameworks of two of the continent’s outstanding novelists – Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o – whose books likely constitute Africa’s most familiar and stimulating texts of the post-Independence period. However, I finished reading Okolo with a mixed reaction.

As she states in the introduction, her study provides ‘an intellectual and analytic framework within which the African experience can be conceptualized, interpreted and reorganized’ (p.2); here she investigates the relationship between literature and society. This is undertaken by considering the political components of Achebe’s Anthills of the Savanna (1987) and Ngugi’s Petals of Blood (1977). The former sees Africa’s problems as a result of ‘internal’ corruption, state failure, ineptitude, and the privatisation of the public resources, while the latter points to leadership, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism as the basic sources. The foundation of Okolo’s analysis is political philosophy (providing a worldview and critical reflection) upon which the writings of the two authors are considered (first in general by investigating their several other novels, then in detail for Anthills and Petals). As the analysis develops, the writings of some additional novelists such as Soyinka, Sembene, and Armah are interrogated. She finalises her study by comparing the authors in terms of their perspectives on the African condition and on possible social reconstruction. Therein resides
the work’s strength; it is rendered powerful and insightful by her selection of authors. The chosen authors speak to the causes in thoughtful and contrasting manners. Their works ‘provoke people into assessing and criticizing’ (p.28). Here, she categorises the comments in terms of themes important in the understanding of the African condition in several social science disciplines: alienation, power, gender, ideology, leadership, and citizenship.

However, the text suffers from a ‘deja vu’ reading. These texts by Ngugi and Achebe will be quite familiar to most readers of this journal; it is quite well-known that they depicted both Africa’s ills and their causes. Further, the philosophical framework presented by Okolo is elementary (and largely ‘western’, other than Gandhi – where are Africa’s thinkers?). And, the reader asks: Where are the novel insights resulting from political philosophy? And so too, her Marxism adds little that has not already been stated or analysed by others. In fact, the originality of the issues raised was a basic concern – many have commented on these texts previously, and so the author’s critique is especially thoughtful – but it is mostly a revisit, a synthetic essay which collates what others have indicated previously.

An issue not found in Okolo’s otherwise thoughtful, well-organised, and profound LitCrit relates to the silences of these novels – to the fundamental issues not discussed in these books. They disregard certain aspects which are fundamental to the understanding of the African condition and its possible solution: I expected the author to indicate these. They include ethnicity, religion, urbanisation, regionalism, redistribution, population growth, civil wars, diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, the transition from an economy of affection to neo-liberalism – and (especially in a Marxist critique) the articulation of the modes of production. These are matters which are of critical importance in understanding the African condition. We are told what the novels say, but not what they omit.

The difficulty that this analysis illustrates is unfortunately one that affects our brother and sister scholars in Africa. University libraries on the continent are sadly deficient. Research funds are scarce or unavailable. Besides, with huge classes and the demands of family and kin, few find time for original research. As well, there is an important temporal dimension in that today’s scholars were raised under these same conditions which their mentors faced. It is unfortunately indexed in journals on Africa published in Canada, the UK, the US, and elsewhere in the First World: there are few African authors from the continent because of matters of timing, quality, writing, and novelty. There are notable exceptions to this generality, but this condition is a sad reality.

The voices of the novels provide an initial understanding of Africa’s social, political, and economic contexts. The issue addressed by Okolo’s investigation are important; the ‘voices’ of literature speak to the African condition. Much can be learned from what they tell us, and also from what they do not say. However, it is unfortunate that the present text is largely a re-visit of writers of 20-30 years ago, and that both the realm of African philosophy is ignored, as are the messages of contemporary writers.
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This book is about colonial and post-colonial statecraft and the rural resource governance issues at the centre of a still unfolding socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. Divided into eight well researched, detailed and analytically sound chapters, the book deals with the complexities of statecraft played out in the contentious land question. The first four chapters talk to pre-1980 settler colonial dynamics with the next four looking at the post-colonial state after 1980 and into the post-February 2000 crisis.

Writing about colonial Zimbabwe and the histories of dispossession is always a challenge as this is now a well trodden path. Any new book tackling this area has the challenge of bringing something new to the story. The first four chapters of this book manage to do this by talking to the broader discourses of colonial statecraft viewed from the local social histories in Insiza and Chimanimani, the case study areas. Through detailed and well sourced narratives Chapter 1 takes us through the unsettled politics of pre-colonial Zimbabwe showing in both case study areas how shifting allegiances, contested loyalties and the fluid politics of rural governance find local expression. Above all else this section highlights an often overlooked fact which is that in spite of the settler colonial state being united in its conquest of land and desire to dominate, there was internal dissonance within the settler state and colonial administrators on the ground often faced a reality removed from the ideals of the settler colonial project. In each of the case study areas we are also introduced to the nascent local social movements and their local efforts to resist the settler colonial project. For example by giving local expression to the ‘Native Self Conscious Society’ in Chimanimani, not only do we get a sense of the role of these local movements in mobilising against the local reach of the settler state but also their varied methods to suit circumstances.

Chapters two, three and four take us through the main ground level expressions of settler colonial policy and practice on land and local governance. Through detailed local social histories, local expressions of development interventions like the NLHA and Community Development are used to show case the complexity of conquest and resistance. By focusing on the relationship between chiefs and land Chapter five draws into focus the extent to which the local social and political outcomes in these encounters depended on the characters and relationship of the two main actors at the local level- the district commissioner and the local chief. The book characterises the outcomes as one of or a combination of collaboration, co-option and falling out. All three outcomes are given currency in the two case study areas but more crucially characterise some of the learned behaviours that helped shape and define post-colonial relationship between the state and traditional authority. In a way the first five chapters showcase why the complete history of the settler colonial statecraft, especially its impact on local people and their responses, can only be fully understood from the bottom up and attempts to draw generalisations or national patterns often fail to capture the variegated responses that this book highlights.

Two key issues feature prominently as defining post-colonial statecraft are articulated in Chapters five and six. First is the state’s strategic ambivalence toward traditional institutions. On one hand these are seen as ‘compromised’ and
unsuitable for the new democratic dispensation due to their perceived collusion with the settler colonial state. On the other hand they play a hugely symbolic role of identity and autochthony that both the settler state and the post-colonial state find useful in rural local governance. It is clear from contemporary discourses featured in Chapters seven and eight that the rehabilitation of the role of chiefs in rural local governance is complete. Traditional chiefs became in essence bureaucratised while some politicised their role. From the book one gets a sense here of continuity rather than change in the (ab)use of the traditional chiefs. What the book does not say however is that post-colonial statecraft was to an extent influenced by the institutional inertia of the settler state it succeeded.

Second, and related to the above is what the book correctly observes as the persistence of a technocentric streak to rural policy making. A typical example of this is the attempts to re-organise the communal areas through the CLDP and the land resettlement programme both of which bore striking resemblance to some of the programmes that the settler state attempted to implement. Because of this link and other local factors CLDP was moribund right from inception while the resettlement scheme was fraught with implementation bottlenecks. For example top down technocentric approaches in a context of the muddied politics of the early post-colonial period in Matabeleland affected resettlement in Insiza. Similarly in Chimanimani difficulties of implementing state programmes is put down to a ‘rejection of state claims to technocratic authority over land in favour of local versions of nationalism, histories of eviction, chiefly claims and need’ (p. 153), and sums up the aversion that locals had to developmental populism that paid little heed to local realities.

Through the first seven chapters we clearly see the unresolved nature rural local governance through the land question and can almost understand why by the time of the farm invasions in February 2000 there was a sense of waning statecraft. This is followed through in Chapter eight which shows the systematic build up of issues leading to the Jambanja drawing on broader national economic and political discourses and practices. There is no attempt to give them local expression in the case study areas, and for this reason this chapter reads differently from the first seven. This book’s strength lies in showing variable responses to statecraft from locality to locality yet there is almost a sense in which this chapter suggests there was one set of conditions that led to the invasions across the country. We do not get to know about the specific experiences of Chimanimani and Insiza. One can guess that invasions where given local traction by existing local relations and these varied from place to place. Questions that come to mind as one reads this section include: Was there an underlying local logic to the invasions apart from the national contextual issues? Why where some farms invaded and others not? To be fair to the book logistical and political conditions on the ground are not conducive for such detailed work and this may well be a challenge for the future.

Overall this is an excellent addition to the discourses on rural local governance and land in Zimbabwe, and more specifically to our local knowledge on the variability of responses to statecraft in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. It is a good resource for students of history as much as it is for development studies and, because it is very clearly written it appeals broadly to those interested in Zimbabwe.
This is the published version of a 2003 Leiden doctorate focusing on the problems faced by Ghanaian riverine communities living downstream from the Volta (also known as Akosombo) Dam since its construction in the early 1960s and its official opening by President Nkrumah in 1966. There is much here of interest, in particular, detailed empirical information on livelihoods in the communities and their migrant extensions around the lake, and also material from locally sourced interviews with retired Volta River Authority (VRA) personnel. However, in terms of a published work it could have benefited from judicious pruning.

After a detailed discussion of concepts and methodological approaches, the next almost 150 pages deal with the history and politics of the dam’s funding, construction and plans for resettlement of displaced communities and environmental impacts. While there is a very great deal of detail given here, the analysis and discussion is limited: perhaps greater reference to, use and critique of Ronnie Graham’s 1982 book would have enabled the author both to foreground crucial broader political factors relevant to the dam’s planning and funding, at the same time, allowing cuts through the use of cross-referencing. What we are presented with is a welter of minute detail, relevant in terms of thesis background, but not reader-friendly.

However, the stated focus of the work are the fates of members of the Tongu Ewe communities downstream from the dam and also of communities, mostly originally derived from Tongu, who migrated upstream, either seasonally or for longer periods, in the years before the dam was built, and whose descendants are now members of lakeside communities. While the author sets out and critiques the VRA’s plans (and their implementation) for resettlement and compensation for community sites and lands inundated by the lake, she points out that the communities downstream that are the subjects of her study effectively received no compensation. What has happened in the years since the dam’s construction is a falling of overall river levels and the cessation of the annual floods just after the rainy season which have meant a series of changes for the worse in overall income (for example, the demise of the clam picking/cultivation industry), and in health hazards as pollutants remain in the soil and have built up over the years. The author shows very effectively and in a gender sensitive way how these and other factors have affected lives and livelihoods of the downstream communities.

When she turns to look at the Volta Lakeside communities that have developed since the inundation, however, the dynamics of relationships between Tongu members of these communities and those downstream are less clear. The same kinds of meticulous and gender aware data are presented but the strengths and significances of links with ‘home’ areas are fuzzier. While, in pre-dam days, fishing upstream was a lucrative stage in many young men’s lives, either annually, or on a more permanent basis, now the seasonality prompting the move upstream is non-existent: the basis for forging and maintaining links between the lakeside and downstream communities has been suborned. There are so much empirical data presented in the four penultimate chapters that it is impossible to do justice to them. What seems to be happening is that the downstream communities are now indistinguishable from most other impoverished rural riverine communities, while those
upstream still depend on fishing supplemented by subsistence farming, and in some cases seem to be being left behind by more recent arrivals from coastal fishing groups. Any implications from this data are not effectively drawn out in the four chapters and the concluding chapter is, in the classic ‘social-science-dissertation’ sense of the term, simply a summary of key points.

Overall it is not really possible to present a summary review of the book: it engages with issues on too many fronts. While I think that a more politically nuanced discussion of all aspects of the dam would be of greater benefit, it really wouldn’t fit here. This is not the main thrust of the book, rather a kind of huge tangent that takes us into another direction, a direction that Graham has already accessed and which could well be incorporated here. Where it does well is in the empirical data collection and presentation, but apart from the admittedly crucial fact that the building of the dam caused massive and life-changing (and uncompensated) changes for Tongu people, the dam could recede into the background. This would allow the consequences and implications from the data to emerge and to be framed, perhaps in terms of the livelihoods framework set out in the first chapter, and contribute more effectively to the sociological/anthropological analysis and understanding of contemporary Ghana and beyond.

Jomo has successfully edited two balanced and well-rounded volumes (one with Reinert) of considerable interest to scholars of development and African politics alike. Both volumes chart the evolution of development economics. The Pioneers of Development Economics focuses on continuities in schools of economic thought from the Renaissance onward whereas The Origins of Development Economics explains how particular individuals, some economists with a recognised and central role in the field (e.g., Friedrich List and Raúl Prebisch) and others more marginal (William Petty), have produced the diverse body of scholarship – an intellectual heritage based on insights from a range of disciplines – on which development economists, and scholars of development more generally, draw today. Both volumes essentially aim to reorient the scope of economics proper by placing the question of development – how less developed societies may achieve the same transition that produced developed, industrialised societies in the past – at the heart of the discipline.

This ‘Other Canon’ stands in contrast to the abstract, theoretical approach of classical economics based on controversial a priori assumptions regarding competition, information and equilibrium. Rejecting the ‘total fixation on their own previous work’ that characterises contemporary, orthodox (neo-classical) eco-

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nomic thought (The Pioneers, p. vii), the editors emphasise a longer and broader view on economic thinking and scholarship. A main purpose of The Origins is to ‘demonstrate the continuity in thinking on economic development’ from the pre-Smithian era to post-World War Two development economics (p. vii).

The Origins begins with an outline of broad historical approaches to development. Chapters on ‘Mercantilism’ (E. & S. Reinert) and ‘the Italian Tradition in Political Economy’ (S. Reinert) trace the development of economics as praxis to the Renaissance and to concerns about how to produce national development (Tudor England), avoid economic failure (Spain) and reverse semi-peripheralisation in declining Italian city states. A chapter on ‘German Economics’, including the historical school (E. Reinert) suggests a largely coherent tradition of thought from the seventeenth century until the World War Two. A chapter on ‘Capitalist Transformation’ (Khan) critiques the narrow classical economic emphasis on institutions such as stable property rights of whatever kind (i.e. it does not matter what property is protected and for whom, as long as property is protected) in the transition of a small number of (East Asian) developing countries to developed country status, noting instead the importance of a broad set of social and institutional factors in producing state capacity to transform.

Methodologically sophisticated chapters on ‘Growth Theory’ (Ros) and ‘International Trade’ (Dutt) explain the role of theoretical debates on growth and trade for modern development economics. Ros argues that early development economics provides a better explanation for development than does the endogenous growth literature, and that early approaches are ‘more empirically promising’ than either old or new growth Theory (p. 82). Dutt reviews contributions by Rosenstein-Rodan, Nurkse, Lewis and Myrdal to trade theory and the implications thereof for developing countries. A chapter on [Latin American Structuralism and Dependency Theory] (Saad-Filho) outlines the key contributions (as well as important limitations) to the development literature by post-war structuralists and dependistas, notably the former’s rejection of linear assumptions about development in orthodox theories of development and the latter’s insistence on the impossibility of development under capitalism. Finally, ‘Development in the History of Economics’ (Szentes) outlines key contours of development economics and how it becomes a distinct field of study in the post-war era.

Relying on a standard criticism of classical economics as inevitably hampered by its abstractions and existence in a ‘ahistorical vacuum’, the authors contrast this dominant approach with the historically conscious and pragmatic approach of economic thought from the Italian tradition and the German school to structuralism, dependency theory and modern development economics. The main distinction between orthodox (neo/ classical) and heterodox (development-oriented) schools of economic thought is defined in The Origins (p. vii) as the difference between social theory built on abstraction and deductive reasoning as in classical economics and that built from historical reality and inductive reasoning from the bottom up, as in the approaches from which (heterodox) modern development economics derive. Classical economics is a system of thought based on metaphors from physics, notably the enlightenment ‘mechanization of the world picture’ on which Smith’s concept of the ‘invisible hand’ was based and the 1880s physics’ emphasis on equilibrium. Development economics rely on metaphors from biology, namely references to the human body that are present in economic writings from Greek and Roman times through the Renaissance and late nineteenth-century...
German economics and on ideas transplanted from Darwinian and Lamarckian evolution in the economic writings of Veblen and in Schumpeter’s ‘evolutionary economics’ (p. ix).

The Pioneers charts a history of economic thought as it relates to development by focusing in each chapter on contributions to the field by a particular individual, economist or otherwise. A companion to The Origins, this volume provides additional historical context to the thematically organised, theoretically and conceptually rich, approach of the former. Why ‘Development Economics’? (P. Patnaik) introduces the book by the purpose and central concerns of the field. Chapters on William Petty (Goodacre) and David Ricardo (U. Patnaik) emphasise the origins of economic thought in the historical experience of imperialism. Chapters on Friedrich List (Shafaeddin), Karl Marx (P. Patnaik), Vladimir Lenin (U. Patnaik), Alfred Marshall (Prendergast), Michal Kalecki (Ghosh), John Maynard Keynes (Toye), Keynes and Nicholas Kaldor (Kumar Bagchi), Karl Polanyi (Polanyi Levitt) and Alexander Gerschenkron (Chandrasekhar) highlight contributions to the field by scholars not normally identified as pioneers of development economics. Finally, chapters on Raúl Prebisch and Arthur Lewis (Polanyi Levitt) and Hans Singer (Raffer) outline ‘principal heterodox economic implications’ of recognised pioneers of development economics (p. viii).

While the intellectual complexity and manifold nuance of the schools of thoughts overviewed in The Origins and the individual economists assessed in The Pioneers at times suggest that the classical/orthodox – development/heterodox distinction can be overly crude, it nevertheless remains a useful distinction for the reader who wishes to understand fundamental intellectual conflicts in the history of economics and how these debates have shaped the field of development economics as it exists today. Economic scholarship derived from classical economic thought remains based on abstraction and controversial a priori assumptions, to its detriment when attempting answers to empirical questions regarding development in a world of states and regions in which historical processes have produced radically divergent socio-economic dynamics and developments. The heterodox school of economic thought, with its emphasis on historical record and empirical reality, remains at times excessively dependent on case-specific context, at the expense of being able to generalise findings beyond the cases and contexts in which they are initially found.

This trade-off between ‘broad’ vs. ‘deep’ understanding is an unavoidable feature of all approaches to development, and indeed to all scientific study of social phenomena. Therefore it is not very useful to suggest that one approach is superior to the other, although the implication in both of these volumes is clearly that the historical, heterodox approach is more useful to development economist wishing to understand the dilemmas faced by countries in the global south today. The most constructive way forward is not to disparage either approach, as being empirically ‘irrelevant’ (classical economics) or theoretically and methodologically unsophisticated (heterodox economics), but rather to make a strong case for the ability of each school of thought to provide a unique understanding of particular aspects of economics. A proper understanding of the strengths and limitations of each approach provides the aspiring development economics with the best equipped conceptual and theoretical ‘tool box’ for investigating the pressing economic and political puzzles of our day.

The food we buy and eat can tell powerful stories. It may seem better to simply enjoy its many culinary varieties than to think much about where it comes from, its ingredients or who produces it and how. However both our taste buds and our brain cells need a strong stimulus in order to recognize the complexities of food’s political economy. Tony Weis, professor at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, presents a highly informative narrative on these complexities in layman’s terms. Published just months prior to the eruption of this year’s global food crisis, his pocket-size book provides abundant fact-based arguments to confidently engage in political dialogue on the driving forces of a food system seemingly in perpetual crisis.

From preface to concluding chapter five, Weis disputes claims of inevitability of today’s dominant food economy. His purpose is to unsettle illusions that it is impossible to fundamentally overhaul existing conditions of agricultural production, consumption and trade. Today’s modes of high-input farming, based on a system of industrialized grain-livestock production result in a tremendously deep environmental footprint. Yet Weis demonstrates that regardless of its costs, the current food system is incapable of attaining food security on a global scale. His well-narrated assessment unveils not only the output-level dilemmas and contradictions of a system in deep crisis; it also focuses on the institutional arrangements and power-relations, predominantly of the World Trade Organization (WTO), responsible for a status quo that translates into poor nutrition, poverty and hunger for millions around the globe. WTO efforts to reinforce abstract competitive advantages of nation states by regulating trade regimes for agricultural products are seen as completely divorced from food security concerns of the global poor.

Claims made by proponents of the status quo that markets can succeed at ensuring reliable and affordable supply of nutritious food if only allowed to operate freely and with minimal state intervention, are forcefully dismissed by Weis as being ideological and catering to profit interests of transnational companies and parasitic political elites.

For Weis, the obscenity of simultaneous poles of obesity and hunger in a market-driven food economy cannot be ignored, nor is it ethically acceptable: in terms of quantity more than enough food for all is produced globally. However the purchasing power to access that food is unevenly distributed within and between countries to the extreme. As an example, the farm subsidy regimes in OECD countries cost six times as much as all OECD development aid in any given year. Indeed, it is more than shameful that ‘the average EU subsidy per cow was roughly the same (US$2) as the poverty level on which billions barely exist’. Transnational agro-conglomerates, unconcerned about notions of social and cultural significance of food and associated traditions, continuously promote a global convergence of food consumption and diet patterns (such as meat-rich diets) without much concern for long-term health consequences for consumers.

Small farmers and food-security minded decision-makers in developing countries frequently find themselves short-changed with regard to viable production or policy options. As the process of global integration of national and regional food economies has intensified so has its dependence on the ‘chemical and fossil energy treadmill’. Unable to keep up, especially rural populations whose livelihoods heavily rely upon low-input,
small-scale agriculture have been squeezed out of markets and fallen below narrow poverty lines. Ultimately there seems to be little doubt, at least in the author’s mind, that the food system as we know it, is heading for a fall. Weis’ analysis allows the reader to see this year’s food crisis as an acceleration of a combination of worrisome trends underlying the global food economy. We have witnessed sharp price hikes in supermarkets in affluent societies as well as in village markets in low-income developing countries. Unsurprisingly, the poor have been affected most, many millions of whom are slipping back into food insecurity from which they only recently had seemingly freed themselves. Food riots have erupted in various places and high-level political activism, from the 2008 Food Summit in Rome, the G8 meeting in Japan to the recent Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana have all sought to present meaningful responses to the crisis at hand.

Most certainly none of these events have attempted to explore the sub-title of Weis’ book, namely, ‘The battle for the future of farming’. If they had referred to this guide to understanding and re-imaging the global food economy, they may have found that solutions to the endemic crisis of agricultural production in the global economy lie with those who are waging the battle for sustainable alternatives: the farmers, consumers and activists of civil society in North and South. Secondary responses to the recurring failures of the global food system, even commendable relief and project-level responses to the immediate hardships faced by food-insecure populations, perhaps allow for some temporary respite from an ongoing, livelihoods debilitating crisis. Yet root causes of the crisis are hardly touched in the process. There is little to be gained by trying to dissect such causes into their multiple, interwoven constituent factors, even though factors such as bio-fuel production, increased global demand for meat products (especially in newly affluent parts of Asia), climate change or rising fuel costs all play a role. Debate on tomorrow’s food system that is organized as a fundamental departure from the uncertainties inherent in the food economy of today, is best to be based on a firm critical analysis and factual footing. With his important book on this vital topic, Tony Weis has provided nothing less than a solid departure point for such debate.

Editor’s Note: ROAPE would like to take up the challenge in this review, that is ‘the battle for farming in Africa’. If you are interested in working with us, please get in touch with me, Jan Burgess – editor@roape.org

Many thanks and goodbye to Rita Abrahamsen for taking this much-neglected Book Reviews section and making it the ‘must read’ of the journal – according to our subscribers who are very impressed! You’ll also note that we are now including both film and theatre reviews – is there anything else you’d like to see here? If so, get in touch with Branwen Gruffydd-Jones who takes over from Rita in 2009. Her e-mail address is: b.gruffydd-jones@gold.ac.uk

Erratum
‘Child Poverty in Africa’ by Meredith Turshen in ROAPE No. 117, September 2008. Apologies to the author and Dharam Ghai for a mis-quoted sentence (page 499). It should read as follows: Urban Jonsson, former senior advisor to UNICEF on Human Rights Based Approach to Programming, pointed out that Africa has changed since 1960; there is more peace, more efforts for democracy, an end to apartheid. AIDS has crushed many dreams.’ A corrected online version will appear in December 2008.

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Mainstream development theory argues that countries develop through their own actions: freeing trade and investment, establishing legal institutions conducive to private investment, liberalising markets, educating in a particular way, eliminating wasteful state spending and improving governance. The history of developed countries is cited as an appropriate template. Poor countries wishing to catch up are advised to immerse themselves in the fair and benign international economy.

Ray Bush’s *Poverty and Liberalism* is a blistering, heterodox critique of each item of this current orthodoxy. Poverty arises, he maintains, not from the failure of countries and groups to incorporate themselves in the world economy but from the fact that they are incorporated in it, but in an unequal and misshapen way. Poverty ‘is not about being left behind but about being actively excluded from an unjust and unequal system of wealth creation’. This system, especially in the countries where poverty is most persistent, predominantly takes the form of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ – David Harvey’s useful renaming of Marx’s primitive or primary accumulation, so strongly emphasised by Rosa Luxemburg. The progressive commoditisation of a growing number of human activities frequently, as Bush explains, results in the accumulation of poverty. History, far from being a template for the future, explains how the globalisation of capitalist accumulation produced and produces some convergence but also much polarisation.

After an initial chapter setting out this theoretical perspective and discussing the interconnection between African impoverishment and the post-1980 neoliberal tsunami, Bush uses the ideas as the backbone of a well-structured set of chapters, each on one crucial issue in the study of development. The first is about international aid – in particular Tony Blair’s and the G8’s plans to ‘rescue’ Africa (in which another frequent theme – the egregious hypocrisy of donors – rightly receives several mentions). This is followed by chapters on migration, land, mining and resources (including the ‘resource curse’), and food and famine. Each of these attacks mainstream approaches and counters with an analysis based on the guiding idea of the book – that the problem is not simple and quantitative (how much integration in the system?) but complex and qualitative (what kind of integration and what kind of system?). His conclusion about the land question is typical of others: ‘the problem is not weak tenure or that producers are insufficiently integrated or are part of imperfect markets: the problem is the market itself and the commoditization of everyday life’.

All this is helpfully illustrated with historical and contemporary empirical material about debt cancellation, migrants’ remittances, land reform in Egypt and Zimbabwe, mining in Africa – themes which all echo Rosa Luxemburg writing a century ago – as well as a narrative about the relationship between
the development of the oil industry, land struggles and sectarian conflicts in Sudan. Telling instances are also taken from the experience of Middle East and North African countries which the author has particularly studied.

In the final chapter Bush sets out many ideas around which resistance to persistent poverty might be organised. Here are mentions or echoes of Marx, Luxemburg, the narodniks, anarchism, feminism, the defence of indigenous peoples and the importance of ‘infrapolitics’ – the everyday resistance of ordinary individuals, households and neighbourhoods. Ray Bush’s conviction that this spirit of resistance is not extinct means that a gloomy story does not lead to a pessimistic prognosis. Some readers might view this chapter as insufficiently programmatic but I found it refreshingly eclectic. It also contains a needed broadside against the neoliberal ‘governance’ formula (transparency, reducing corruption by lowering the importance of the state and more ‘civil society’, conceived as a proliferation of NGOs).

Late 2007 should be a good moment for the publication of this book. Neoliberalism is being discredited by poor results, especially in Africa, and morally weakened by the grotesque hypocrisy with which it is applied (the same Western governments which increase protection for agriculture or cover up bribery in selling arms to Saudi Arabia preach free trade and anti-corruption to African countries). Its high priests are losing their nerve, fearing that the increasing inequality it generates will destroy political support. Financial liberalisation is causing chaos in the markets and threatening more economic damage; the October 2007 IMF annual meetings were summarised by a New York Times headline as ‘The tables turned: Poor countries wag fingers at rich countries’; and the OECD recently admitted that the facts suggest that ‘globalisation is creating opportunities for a small elite of workers and investors to pull away from everyone else’. While neoliberals advise yet more of the same, the left has to go beyond its own clichés and provide a coherent answer to the scandal of persistent mass poverty in a rich world. Ray Bush’s clear, thoughtful and provocative contribution to that task is a valuable resource for those concerned with poverty and development, especially in Africa.


The concept of the prison as a place of detention was introduced to sub-Saharan Africa by colonial powers in the 19th century, largely as a means of subduing the indigenous populations. This legacy remains obvious today in the fortress style of many of the prisons in the region, such as that in the Rwandan town of Cyangugu, built by the Belgians in the 1930s, which is on the cover of Carina Tertsakian’s disturbing book. In Rwanda the rate of imprisonment is about 979 per 100,000 of the population. This is the highest in the world, ahead even of the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This means that about one person in every hundred of the population is in prison. This book explains why this is so and describes in stark detail what the consequences are for the prisoners.

Carina Tertsakian is very well placed to write a book such as this, having been directly involved in Rwanda for a decade with international NGOs. At the core of the book is an amazing series of
interviews which she undertook with men and women languishing in the country’s prisons. For anyone who knows prisons in Africa, these interviews ring true in the way that they capture the humanity which can exist in the midst of extreme adversity and the acceptance of inevitable reality. The author helpfully sketches the national context which is all too well known, but this is not a book about the tragedy of Rwanda. It is primarily a record of the experience of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Tertsakian is clearly a sympathetic listener who allows the prisoners to speak in their own words. In most cases, she passes no judgement on what they are saying about the reasons which have brought them to prison. Instead, she quotes directly from the tortuous experiences which they have had, in many cases while they wait to be charged over a period of many years.

'The suffering which continued silently in the prisons year after year was of a particularly inconvenient kind: these men and women dying of overcrowding, disease and ill-treatment were not the usual innocent victims. The vast majority were accused of genocide and there was little sympathy for their plight. The fact that most of them had not even been tried or charged – and that many therefore may have been innocent – did not seem to matter. Thus, over the years, the prison situation became an accepted feature of post-genocide Rwanda' (p.16).

The prison system simply could not cope with the number of prisoners, which peaked at around 130,000 in 1998. Overcrowding in the prisons of Western Europe usually means two or at most three prisoners crammed into a cell designed to hold one. In Rwanda it meant that prisoners had forty centimetres of personal space in which to sleep, eat, sit and live. The 'chateau' of the title does not refer to the castellated prison buildings. It is the ironic name given by the fortunate prisoners who have two planks of wood as their own personal space. The less fortunate live and sleep on the ground, in corridors, in toilets or shower spaces, on top of septic tanks or in the open air.

In one of the most moving chapters the author describes the scene when families come to visit:

The first group of prisoners, around 50 of them, emerges from the gate and sits down on the nearest row of long benches ... A guard whistles and the first group of visitors lunges forward to take their seats on the second row of benches ... There is a frantic exchange of provisions and full and empty containers, and a frantic exchange of words ... Suddenly, one of the guards blows his whistle again and the visitors have to leave ... from the first whistle to the second whistle, the visit has lasted less than two minutes (p.250).

In unemotional language, often through the voices of the prisoners, Tertsakian describes the added difficulties for women prisoners, for minors, for the elderly, for the sick and for those sentenced to death. She also notes the complete lack of support for prisoners who are eventually released, as well as the lack of concern from the international community:

The crisis in the prisons – which would have provoked outrage had it occurred in almost any other country – elicited barely any response from foreign governments (p.353).

There is little evidence that this nightmare is coming to an end. When Tertsakian conducted her research, the prison population stood at around 85,000. She ends the book by reporting that in May 2007 it stood around 92,000. This powerful book places a spotlight on the continuing tragedy of prisons in Rwanda, which remain a blot on humanity. It deserves to be widely read and to act as a spur for international action.

Théodore Trefon, who directs the ‘Contemporary History’ section of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Brussels, has written a fascinating, rich, lively and overall superb book on the resilience of the Congolese administrative apparatus in a time of state failure. The book is based on in-depth case studies of the interactions between individuals in different social universes and administrative branches of the state in the town of Lubumbashi, Congo’s second largest city with about 1.5m people, in the province of Katanga. It details the daily routines and state-induced vexations of a charcoal transporter, a baker, a construction material salesman, a taxi driver, a retired civil servant, a paralegal restaurant owner, a widow housewife and mother of 11, a preacher, a street foreign exchange broker, and a cyber-café manager.

In addition to the unique empirical material of the book, one of Trefon’s main contributions is the theoretical introduction, which provides analytical context and conceptual structure to the case studies. To the question of ‘why the administration persists’ (p.13) despite its deliquescence in providing the Congolese with the services it was intended for, Trefon offers a triply layered answer. The Congolese administration persists because it is instrumentalised by political elites for their own advantage (particularly as a source of revenue); because it is privatised by public officials as part of their own strategies of personal survival; and because individual citizens still need the administration, even when they largely substitute themselves to it in providing services. This latter point is particularly interesting. For example, parents pool their resources to pay the salaries of public teachers, largely abandoned by the state, and thereby facilitate the reproduction of the public education system. They do so, rather than starting new alternative private schools, because they value the state diploma which they see as giving their children access to formal employment.

Although the introduction alone provides a thorough and rigorous contribution to the topic and is worthy of publication on its own, it is the empirical material in the subsequent case studies, or individual vignettes, which is most stunning, informative and original. It also often makes for captivating reading. Most striking are the innumerable layers of administration and control enforced upon the Congolese and the equally numerous taxes and levies which administrative agencies impose. Starting with ministers, the administration expands downwards through secretaries-general, directors, division chiefs, bureau chiefs, chiefs of provincial divisions, provincial bureau chiefs, section chiefs, cell chiefs, chiefs of urban services, chiefs of sub-sections and sub-cells, mayors, burgomasters, chiefs of neighborhood and street chiefs (pp. 143-147), illustrating in the process the universality and decentralization of ‘Big Man’ politics. As for taxes, the city and communes of Lubumbashi alone inflicts no less than 26 taxes on its residents (p. 149). And state agents invent many more.

The resulting totalitarianism (my word, not Trefon’s) of the weak state makes peoples’ lives miserable. The story of the retired railroad worker hanging on to his official documents for dear life (pp. 85-93) is poignant, as is the vulnerability of the charcoal trader in the face of public harassment (pp. 47-54) and that of the widow struggling to secure water and electricity for her household of 11 children (pp.101-112).

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The book’s methodology also deserves mention. Trefon has collaborated with Bathazar Ngoy of the University of Lubumbashi and with the latter’s students in political science who were trained in questionnaire administration and managed the surveys in the Lubumbashi neighborhoods, which produced the case studies. Trefon’s book is *politique par le bas* at its best. The Congolese state repeatedly comes to life for the reader in all its daily Kafkaesque arbitrariness at the grassroots. The resulting picture is one where there seems to be no greater impediment to life than the state itself. Yet, people have learned to live with it. In fact, the resilience of citizens in the face of a relentlessly exploitative administration is probably as remarkable as the resilience of the state itself. Moreover, the book clearly illustrates how the very actions of citizens, driven by necessity, often help reproduce the administration.

If Trefon’s book is to have a weakness (at least for the Anglophone reader), it will be that is written in French (although there is an excellent English summary of the main argument at the beginning). Its contribution to the study of the African state in general and Congo in particular is so significant that an English version cannot come too soon.


This book addresses the interface which exists between the often quite disparate disciplines of philosophy and literature, and does so within the context of the African conditions of poverty, corruption, and state ineptitude. It talks to the contrasting scenarios and explanatory frameworks of two of the continent’s outstanding novelists – Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o – whose books likely constitute Africa’s most familiar and stimulating texts of the post-Independence period. However, I finished reading Okolo with a mixed reaction.

As she states in the introduction, her study provides ‘an intellectual and analytic framework within which the African experience can be conceptualized, interpreted and reorganized’ (p.2); here she investigates the relationship between literature and society. This is undertaken by considering the political components of Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savanna* (1987) and Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood* (1977). The former sees Africa’s problems as a result of ‘internal’ corruption, state failure, ineptitude, and the privatisation of the public resources, while the latter points to leadership, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism as the basic sources. The foundation of Okolo’s analysis is political philosophy (providing a worldview and critical reflection) upon which the writings of the two authors are considered (first in general by investigating their several other novels, then in detail for *Anthills* and *Petals*). As the analysis develops, the writings of some additional novelists such as Soyinka, Sembene, and Armah are interrogated. She finalises her study by comparing the authors in terms of their perspectives on the African condition and on possible social reconstruction. Therein resides

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the work’s strength; it is rendered powerful and insightful by her selection of authors. The chosen authors speak to the causes in thoughtful and contrasting manners. Their works ‘provoke people into assessing and criticizing’ (p.28). Here, she categorises the comments in terms of themes important in the understanding of the African condition in several social science disciplines: alienation, power, gender, ideology, leadership, and citizenship.

However, the text suffers from a ‘deja vu’ reading. These texts by Ngugi and Achebe will be quite familiar to most readers of this journal; it is quite well-known that they depicted both Africa’s ills and their causes. Further, the philosophical framework presented by Okolo is elementary (and largely ‘western’, other than Gandhi – where are Africa’s thinkers?). And, the reader asks: Where are the novel insights resulting from political philosophy? And so too, her Marxism adds little that has not already been stated or analysed by others. In fact, the originality of the issues raised was a basic concern – many have commented on these texts previously, and so the author’s critique is especially thoughtful – but it is mostly a revisit, a synthetic essay which collates what others have indicated previously.

An issue not found in Okolo’s otherwise thoughtful, well-organised, and profound LitCrit relates to the silences of these novels – to the fundamental issues not discussed in these books. They disregard certain aspects which are fundamental to the understanding of the African condition and its possible solution: I expected the author to indicate these. They include ethnicity, religion, urbanisation, regionalism, redistribution, population growth, civil wars, diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, the transition from an economy of affection to neo-liberalism – and (especially in a Marxist critique) the articulation of the modes of production. These are matters which are of critical importance in understanding the African condition. We are told what the novels say, but not what they omit.

The difficulty that this analysis illustrates is unfortunately one that affects our brother and sister scholars in Africa. University libraries on the continent are sadly deficient. Research funds are scarce or unavailable. Besides, with huge classes and the demands of family and kin, few find time for original research. As well, there is an important temporal dimension in that today’s scholars were raised under these same conditions which their mentors faced. It is unfortunately indexed in journals on Africa published in Canada, the UK, the US, and elsewhere in the First World: there are few African authors from the continent because of matters of timing, quality, writing, and novelty. There are notable exceptions to this generality, but this condition is a sad reality.

The voices of the novels provide an initial understanding of Africa’s social, political, and economic contexts. The issue addressed by Okolo’s investigation are important; the ‘voices’ of literature speak to the African condition. Much can be learned from what they tell us, and also from what they do not say. However, it is unfortunate that the present text is largely a re-visit of writers of 20-30 years ago, and that both the realm of African philosophy is ignored, as are the messages of contemporary writers.
This book is about colonial and post-colonial statecraft and the rural resource governance issues at the centre of a still unfolding socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. Divided into eight well researched, detailed and analytically sound chapters, the book deals with the complexities of statecraft played out in the contentious land question. The first four chapters talk to pre-1980 settler colonial dynamics with the next four looking at the post-colonial state after 1980 and into the post-February 2000 crisis.

Writing about colonial Zimbabwe and the histories of dispossession is always a challenge as this is now a well trodden path. Any new book tackling this area has the challenge of bringing something new to the story. The first four chapters of this book manage to do this by talking to the broader discourses of colonial statecraft viewed from the local social histories in Insiza and Chimanimani, the case study areas. Through detailed and well sourced narratives Chapter 1 takes us through the unsettled politics of pre-colonial Zimbabwe showing in both case study areas how shifting allegiances, contested loyalties and the fluid politics of rural governance find local expression. Above all else this section highlights an often overlooked fact which is that in spite of the settler colonial state being united in its conquest of land and desire to dominate, there was internal dissonance within the settler state and colonial administrators on the ground often faced a reality removed from the ideals of the settler colonial project. In each of the case study areas we are also introduced to the nascent local social movements and their local efforts to resist the settler colonial project. For example by giving local expression to the ‘Native Self Conscious Society’ in Chimanimani, not only do we get a sense of the role of these local movements in mobilising against the local reach of the settler state but also their varied methods to suit circumstances.

Chapters two, three and four take us through the main ground level expressions of settler colonial policy and practice on land and local governance. Through detailed local social histories, local expressions of development interventions like the NLHA and Community Development are used to show case the complexity of conquest and resistance. By focusing on the relationship between chiefs and land Chapter five draws into focus the extent to which the local social and political outcomes in these encounters depended on the characters and relationship of the two main actors at the local level- the district commissioner and the local chief. The book characterises the outcomes as one of or a combination of collaboration, co-option and falling out. All three outcomes are given currency in the two case study areas but more crucially characterise some of the learned behaviours that helped shape and define post-colonial relationship between the state and traditional authority. In a way the first five chapters showcase why the complete history of the settler colonial statecraft, especially its impact on local people and their responses, can only be fully understood from the bottom up and attempts to draw generalisations or national patterns often fail to capture the variegated responses that this book highlights.

Two key issues feature prominently as defining post-colonial statecraft are articulated in Chapters five and six. First is the state’s strategic ambivalence toward traditional institutions. On one hand these are seen as ‘compromised’ and
unsuitable for the new democratic dispensation due to their perceived collusion with the settler colonial state. On the other hand they play a hugely symbolic role of identity and autochthony that both the settler state and the post-colonial state find useful in rural local governance. It is clear from contemporary discourses featured in Chapters seven and eight that the rehabilitation of the role of chiefs in rural local governance is complete. Traditional chiefs became in essence bureaucratised while some politicised their role. From the book one gets a sense here of continuity rather than change in the abuse of the traditional chiefs. What the book does not say however is that post-colonial statecraft was to an extent influenced by the institutional inertia of the settler state it succeeded.

Second, and related to the above is what the book correctly observes as the persistence of a technocratic streak to rural policy making. A typical example of this is the attempts to re-organise the communal areas through the CLDP and the land resettlement programme both of which bore striking resemblance to some of the programmes that the settler state attempted to implement. Because of this link and other local factors CLDP was moribund right from inception while the resettlement scheme was fraught with implementation bottlenecks. For example top down technocratic approaches in a context of the muddied politics of the early post-colonial period in Matabeleland affected resettlement in Insiza. Similarly in Chimanimani difficulties of implementing state programmes is put down to a rejection of state claims to technocratic authority over land in favour of local versions of nationalism, histories of eviction, chiefly claims and need (p. 153), and sums up the aversion that locals had to developmental populism that paid little heed to local realities.

Through the first seven chapters we clearly see the unresolved nature rural local governance through the land question and can almost understand why by the time of the farm invasions in February 2000 there was a sense of waning statecraft. This is followed through in Chapter eight which shows the systematic build up of issues leading to the Jambanja drawing on broader national economic and political discourses and practices. There is no attempt to give them local expression in the case study areas, and for this reason this chapter reads differently from the first seven. This book’s strength lies in showing variable responses to statecraft from locality to locality yet there is almost a sense in which this chapter suggests there was one set of conditions that led to the invasions across the country. We do not get to know about the specific experiences of Chimanimani and Insiza. One can guess that invasions where given local traction by existing local relations and these varied from place to place. Questions that come to mind as one reads this section include: Was there an underlying local logic to the invasions apart from the national contextual issues? Why where some farms invaded and others not? To be fair to the book logistical and political conditions on the ground are not conducive for such detailed work and this may well be a challenge for the future.

Overall this is an excellent addition to the discourses on rural local governance and land in Zimbabwe, and more specifically to our local knowledge on the variability of responses to statecraft in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. It is a good resource for students of history as much as it is for development studies and, because it is very clearly written it appeals broadly to those interested in Zimbabwe.

This is the published version of a 2003 Leiden doctorate focusing on the problems faced by Ghanaian riverine communities living downstream from the Volta (also known as Akosombo) Dam since its construction in the early 1960s and its official opening by President Nkrumah in 1966. There is much here of interest, in particular, detailed empirical information on livelihoods in the communities and their migrant extensions around the lake, and also material from locally sourced interviews with retired Volta River Authority (VRA) personnel. However, in terms of a published work it could have benefited from judicious pruning.

After a detailed discussion of concepts and methodological approaches, the next almost 150 pages deal with the history and politics of the dam’s funding, construction and plans for resettlement of displaced communities and environmental impacts. While there is a very great deal of detail given here, the analysis and discussion is limited: perhaps greater reference to, use and critique of Ronnie Graham’s 1982 book would have enabled the author both to foreground crucial broader political factors relevant to the dam’s planning and funding, at the same time, allowing cuts through the use of cross-referencing. What we are presented with is a welter of minute detail, relevant in terms of thesis background, but not reader-friendly.

However, the stated focus of the work are the fates of members of the Tongu Ewe communities downstream from the dam and also of communities, mostly originally derived from Tongu, who migrated upstream, either seasonally or for longer periods, in the years before the dam was built, and whose descendants are now members of lakeside communities. While the author sets out and critiques the VRA’s plans (and their implementation) for resettlement and compensation for community sites and lands inundated by the lake, she points out that the communities downstream that are the subjects of her study effectively received no compensation. What has happened in the years since the dam’s construction is a falling of overall river levels and the cessation of the annual floods just after the rainy season which have meant a series of changes for the worse in overall income (for example, the demise of the clam picking/cultivation industry), and in health hazards as pollutants remain in the soil and have built up over the years. The author shows very effectively and in a gender sensitive way how these and other factors have affected lives and livelihoods of the downstream communities.

When she turns to look at the Volta Lakeside communities that have developed since the inundation, however, the dynamics of relationships between Tongu members of these communities and those downstream are less clear. The same kinds of meticulous and gender aware data are presented but the strengths and significances of links with ‘home’ areas are fuzzier. While, in pre-dam days, fishing upstream was a lucrative stage in many young men’s lives, either annually, or on a more permanent basis, now the seasonality prompting the move upstream is non-existent: the basis for forging and maintaining links between the lakeside and downstream communities has been suborned. There are so much empirical data presented in the four penultimate chapters that it is impossible to do justice to them. What seems to be happening is that the downstream communities are now indistinguishable from most other impoverished rural riverine communities, while those...
upstream still depend on fishing supplemented by subsistence farming, and in some cases seem to be being left behind by more recent arrivals from coastal fishing groups. Any implications from this data are not effectively drawn out in the four chapters and the concluding chapter is, in the classic ‘social-science-dissertation’ sense of the term, simply a summary of key points.

Overall it is not really possible to present a summary review of the book: it engages with issues on too many fronts. While I think that a more politically nuanced discussion of all aspects of the dam would be of greater benefit, it really wouldn’t fit here. This is not the main thrust of the book, rather a kind of huge tangent that takes us is into another direction, a direction that Graham has already accessed and which could well be incorporated here. Where it does well is in the empirical data collection and presentation, but apart from the admittedly crucial fact that the building of the dam caused massive and life-changing (and uncompensated) changes for Tongu people, the dam could recede into the background. This would allow the consequences and implications from the data to emerge and to be framed, perhaps in terms of the livelihoods framework set out in the first chapter, and contribute more effectively to the sociological/anthropological analysis and understanding of contemporary Ghana and beyond.


Jomo has successfully edited two balanced and well-rounded volumes (one with Reinert) of considerable interest to scholars of development and African politics alike. Both volumes chart the evolution of development economics. The Pioneers of Development Economics focuses on continuities in schools of economic thought from the Renaissance onward whereas The Origins of Development Economics explains how particular individuals, some economists with a recognised and central role in the field (e.g., Friedrich List and Raúl Prebisch) and others more marginal (William Petty), have produced the diverse body of scholarship – an intellectual heritage based on insights from a range of disciplines – on which development economists, and scholars of development more generally, draw today. Both volumes essentially aim to reorient the scope of economics proper by placing the question of development – how less developed societies may achieve the same transition that produced developed, industrialised societies in the past – at the heart of the discipline.

This ‘Other Canon’ stands in contrast to the abstract, theoretical approach of classical economics based on controversial a priori assumptions regarding competition, information and equilibrium. Rejecting the ‘total fixation on their own previous work’ that characterises contemporary, orthodox (neo-classical) econo-
nomic thought (*The Pioneers*, p. vii), the editors emphasise a longer and broader view on economic thinking and scholarship. A main purpose of *The Origins* is to ‘demonstrate the continuity in thinking on economic development’ from the pre-Smithian era to post-World War Two development economics (p. vii).

*The Origins* begins with an outline of broad historical approaches to development. Chapters on ‘Mercantilism’ (E. & S. Reinert) and ‘the Italian Tradition in Political Economy’ (S. Reinert) trace the development of economics as *praxis* to the Renaissance and to concerns about how to produce national development (Tudor England), avoid economic failure (Spain) and reverse semi-peripheralisation in declining Italian city states. A chapter on ‘German Economics’, including the historical school (E. Reinert) suggests a largely coherent tradition of thought from the seventeenth century until the World War Two. A chapter on ‘Capitalist Transformation’ (Khan) critiques the narrow classical economic emphasis on institutions such as stable property rights of *whatever kind* (i.e. it does not matter what property is protected and for whom, as long as property is protected) in the transition of a small number of (East Asian) developing countries to developed country status, noting instead the importance of a broad set of social and institutional factors in producing state capacity to transform.

Methodologically sophisticated chapters on ‘Growth Theory’ (Ros) and ‘International Trade’ (Dutt) explain the role of theoretical debates on growth and trade for modern development economics. Ros argues that early development economics provides a better explanation for development than does the endogenous growth literature, and that early approaches are ‘more empirically promising’ than either old or new growth Theory (p. 82). Dutt reviews contributions by Rosenstein-Rodan, Nurkse, Lewis and Myrdal to trade theory and the implications thereof for developing countries. A chapter on {Latin American Structuralism and Dependency Theory} (Saad-Filho) outlines the key contributions (as well as important limitations) to the development literature by post-war structuralists and *dependistas*, notably the former’s rejection of linear assumptions about development in orthodox theories of development and the latter’s insistence on the impossibility of development under capitalism. Finally, ‘Development in the History of Economics’ (Szentes) outlines key contours of development economics and how it becomes a distinct field of study in the post-war era.

Relying on a standard criticism of classical economics as inevitably hampered by its abstractions and existence in a ‘ahistorical vacuum’, the authors contrast this dominant approach with the historically conscious and pragmatic approach of economic thought from the Italian tradition and the German school to structuralism, dependency theory and modern development economics. The main distinction between orthodox (neo/ classical) and heterodox (development-oriented) schools of economic thought is defined in *The Origins* (p. vii) as the difference between social theory built on abstraction and deductive reasoning as in classical economics and that built from historical reality and inductive reasoning from the bottom up, as in the approaches from which (heterodox) modern development economics derive. Classical economics is a system of thought based on metaphors from physics, notably the enlightenment ‘mechanization of the world picture’ on which Smith’s concept of the ‘invisible hand’ was based and the 1880s physics’ emphasis on equilibrium. Development economics rely on metaphors from biology, namely references to the human body that are present in economic writings from Greek and Roman times through the Renaissance and late nineteenth-century
German economics and on ideas transplanted from Darwinian and Lamarckian evolution in the economic writings of Veblen and in Schumpeter’s ‘evolutionary economics’ (p. ix).

*The Pioneers* charts a history of economic thought as it relates to development by focusing in each chapter on contributions to the field by a particular individual, economist or otherwise. A companion to *The Origins*, this volume provides additional historical context to the thematically organised, theoretically and conceptually rich, approach of the former. Why ‘Development Economics’? (P. Patnaik) introduces the book by the purpose and central concerns of the field. Chapters on William Petty (Goodacre) and David Ricardo (U. Patnaik) emphasise the origins of economic thought in the historical experience of imperialism. Chapters on Friedrich List (Shafaeddin), Karl Marx (P. Patnaik), Vladimir Lenin (U. Patnaik), Alfred Marshall (Prendergast), Michal Kalecki (Ghosh), John Maynard Keynes (Toye), Keynes and Nicholas Kaldor (Kumar Bagchi), Karl Polanyi (Polanyi Levitt) and Alexander Gerschenkron (Chandrasekhar) highlight contributions to the field by scholars not normally identified as pioneers of development economics. Finally, chapters on Raúl Prebish and Arthur Lewis (Polanyi Levitt) and Hans Singer (Raffer) outline ‘principal heterodox economic implications’ of recognised pioneers of development economics (p. viii).

While the intellectual complexity and manifold nuance of the schools of thoughts overviewed in *The Origins* and the individual economists assessed in *The Pioneers* at times suggest that the classical/orthodox – development/heterodox distinction can be overly crude, it nevertheless remains a useful distinction for the reader who wishes to understand fundamental intellectual conflicts in the history of economics and how these debates have shaped the field of development economics as it exists today. Economic scholarship derived from classical economic thought remains based on abstraction and controversial *a priori* assumptions, to its detriment when attempting answers to empirical questions regarding development in a world of states and regions in which historical processes have produced radically divergent socio-economic dynamics and developments. The heterodox school of economic thought, with its emphasis on historical record and empirical reality, remains at times excessively dependent on case-specific context, at the expense of being able to generalise findings beyond the cases and contexts in which they are initially found.

This trade-off between ‘broad’ vs. ‘deep’ understanding is an unavoidable feature of all approaches to development, and indeed to all scientific study of social phenomena. Therefore it is not very useful to suggest that one approach is superior to the other, although the implication in both of these volumes is clearly that the historical, heterodox approach is more useful to development economist wishing to understand the dilemmas faced by countries in the global south today. The most constructive way forward is not to disparage either approach, as being empirically ‘irrelevant’ (classical economics) or theoretically and methodologically unsophisticated (heterodox economics), but rather to make a strong case for the ability of each school of thought to provide a unique understanding of particular aspects of economics. A proper understanding of the strengths and limitations of each approach provides the aspiring development economics with the best equipped conceptual and theoretical ‘toolbox’ for investigating the pressing economic and political puzzles of our day.

The food we buy and eat can tell powerful stories. It may seem better to simply enjoy its many culinary varieties than to think much about where it comes from, its ingredients or who produces it and how. However both our taste buds and our brain cells need a strong stimulus in order to recognize the complexities of food’s political economy. Tony Weis, professor at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, presents a highly informative narrative on these complexities in layman’s terms. Published just months prior to the eruption of this year’s global food crisis, his pocket-size book provides abundant fact-based arguments to confidently engage in political dialogue on the driving forces of a food system seemingly in perpetual crisis.

From preface to concluding chapter five, Weis disputes claims of inevitability of today’s dominant food economy. His purpose is to unsettle illusions that it is impossible to fundamentally overhaul existing conditions of agricultural production, consumption and trade. Today’s modes of high-input farming, based on a system of industrialized grain-livestock production result in a tremendously deep environmental footprint. Yet Weis demonstrates that regardless of its costs, the current food system is incapable of attaining food security on a global scale. His well-narrated assessment unveils not only the output-level dilemmas and contradictions of a system in deep crisis; it also focuses on the institutional arrangements and power-relations, predominantly of the World Trade Organization (WTO), responsible for a status quo that translates into poor nutrition, poverty and hunger for millions around the globe. WTO efforts to reinforce abstract competitive advantages of nation states by regulating trade regimes for agricultural products are seen as completely divorced from food security concerns of the global poor.

Claims made by proponents of the status quo that markets can succeed at ensuring reliable and affordable supply of nutritious food if only allowed to operate freely and with minimal state intervention, are forcefully dismissed by Weis as being ideological and catering to profit interests of transnational companies and parasitic political elites.

For Weis, the obscenity of simultaneous poles of obesity and hunger in a market-driven food economy cannot be ignored, nor is it ethically acceptable: in terms of quantity more than enough food for all is produced globally. However the purchasing power to access that food is unevenly distributed within and between countries to the extreme. As an example, the farm subsidy regimes in OECD countries cost six times as much as all OECD development aid in any given year. Indeed, it is more than shameful that ‘the average EU subsidy per cow was roughly the same (US$2) as the poverty level on which billions barely exist’. Transnational agroconglomerates, unconcerned about notions of social and cultural significance of food and associated traditions, continuously promote a global convergence of food consumption and diet patterns (such as meat-rich diets) without much concern for long-term health consequences for consumers.

Small farmers and food-security minded decision-makers in developing countries frequently find themselves short-changed with regard to viable production or policy options. As the process of global integration of national and regional food economies has intensified so has its dependence on the ‘chemical and fossil energy treadmill’. Unable to keep up, especially rural populations whose livelihoods heavily rely upon low-input,
small-scale agriculture have been squeezed out of markets and fallen below narrow poverty lines. Ultimately there seems to be little doubt, at least in the author’s mind, that the food system as we know it, is heading for a fall. Weis’ analysis allows the reader to see this year’s food crisis as an acceleration of a combination of worrisome trends underlying the global food economy. We have witnessed sharp price hikes in supermarkets in affluent societies as well as in village markets in low-income developing countries. Unsurprisingly, the poor have been affected most, many millions of whom are slipping back into food insecurity from which they only recently had seemingly freed themselves. Food riots have erupted in various places and high-level political activism, from the 2008 Food Summit in Rome, the G8 meeting in Japan to the recent Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana have all sought to present meaningful responses to the crisis at hand.

Most certainly none of these events have attempted to explore the sub-title of Weis’ book, namely, ‘The battle for the future of farming’. If they had referred to this guide to understanding and reimagining the global food economy, they may have found that solutions to the endemic crisis of agricultural production in the global economy lie with those who are waging the battle for sustainable alternatives: the farmers, consumers and activists of civil society in North and South. Secondary responses to the recurring failures of the global food system, even commendable relief and project-level responses to the immediate hardships faced by food-insecure populations, perhaps allow for some temporary reprieve from an ongoing, livelihoods debilitating crisis. Yet root causes of the crisis are hardly touched in the process. There is little to be gained by trying to dissect such causes into their multiple, interwoven constituent factors, even though factors such as bio-fuel production, increased global demand for meat products (especially in newly affluent parts of Asia), climate change or rising fuel costs all play a role. Debate on tomorrow’s food system that is organized as a fundamental departure from the uncertainties inherent in the food economy of today, is best to be based on a firm critical analysis and factual footing. With his important book on this vital topic, Tony Weis has provided nothing less than a solid departure point for such debate.

Editor’s Note: ROAPE would like to take up the challenge in this review, that is ‘the battle for farming in Africa’. If you are interested in working with us, please get in touch with me, Jan Burgess – editor@roape.org

Erratum

‘Child Poverty in Africa’ by Meredith Turshen in ROAPE No. 117, September 2008. Apologies to the author and Dharam Ghai for a mis-quoted sentence (page 499). It should read as follows: ‘Urban Jonsson, former senior advisor to UNICEF on Human Rights Based Approach to Programming, pointed out that Africa has changed since 1960; there is more peace, more efforts for democracy, an end to apartheid. AIDS has crushed many dreams.’ A corrected online version will appear in December 2008.

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Book Reviews


Mainstream development theory argues that countries develop through their own actions: freeing trade and investment, establishing legal institutions conducive to private investment, liberalising markets, educating in a particular way, eliminating wasteful state spending and improving governance. The history of developed countries is cited as an appropriate template. Poor countries wishing to catch up are advised to immerse themselves in the fair and benign international economy.

Ray Bush’s Poverty and Liberalism is a blistering, heterodox critique of each item of this current orthodoxy. Poverty arises, he maintains, not from the failure of countries and groups to incorporate themselves in the world economy but from the fact that they are incorporated in it, but in an unequal and misshapen way. Poverty ‘is not about being left behind but about being actively excluded from an unjust and unequal system of wealth creation’. This system, especially in the countries where poverty is most persistent, predominantly takes the form of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ – David Harvey’s useful renaming of Marx’s primitive or primary accumulation, so strongly emphasised by Rosa Luxemburg. The progressive commoditisation of a growing number of human activities frequently, as Bush explains, results in the accumulation of poverty. History, far from being a template for the future, explains how the globalisation of capitalist accumulation produced and produces some convergence and but also much polarisation.

After an initial chapter setting out this theoretical perspective and discussing the interconnection between African impoverishment and the post-1980 neoliberal tsunami, Bush uses the ideas as the backbone of a well-structured set of chapters, each on one crucial issue in the study of development. The first is about international aid – in particular Tony Blair’s and the G8’s plans to ‘rescue’ Africa (in which another frequent theme – the egregious hypocrisy of donors – rightly receives several mentions). This is followed by chapters on migration, land, mining and resources (including the ‘resource curse’), and food and famine. Each of these attacks mainstream approaches and counters with an analysis based on the guiding idea of the book – that the problem is not simple and quantitative (how much integration in the system?) but complex and qualitative (what kind of integration and what kind of system?). His conclusion about the land question is typical of others: ‘the problem is not weak tenure or that producers are insufficiently integrated or are part of imperfect markets: the problem is the market itself and the commoditization of everyday life’.

All this is helpfully illustrated with historical and contemporary empirical material about debt cancellation, migrants’ remittances, land reform in Egypt and Zimbabwe, mining in Africa – themes which all echo Rosa Luxemburg writing a century ago – as well as a narrative about the relationship between
the development of the oil industry, land struggles and sectarian conflicts in Sudan. Telling instances are also taken from the experience of Middle East and North African countries which the author has particularly studied.

In the final chapter Bush sets out many ideas around which resistance to persistent poverty might be organised. Here are mentions or echoes of Marx, Luxemburg, the narodniks, anarchism, feminism, the defence of indigenous peoples and the importance of ‘infrapolitics’ – the everyday resistance of ordinary individuals, households and neighbourhoods. Ray Bush’s conviction that this spirit of resistance is not extinct means that a gloomy story does not lead to a pessimistic prognosis. Some readers might view this chapter as insufficiently programmatic but I found it refreshingly eclectic. It also contains a needed broadside against the neoliberal ‘governance’ formula (transparency, reducing corruption by lowering the importance of the state and more ‘civil society’, conceived as a proliferation of NGOs).

Late 2007 should be a good moment for the publication of this book. Neoliberalism is being discredited by poor results, especially in Africa, and morally weakened by the grotesque hypocrisy with which it is applied (the same Western governments which increase protection for agriculture or cover up bribery in selling arms to Saudi Arabia preach free trade and anti-corruption to African countries). Its high priests are losing their nerve, fearing that the increasing inequality it generates will destroy political support. Financial liberalisation is causing chaos in the markets and threatening more economic damage; the October 2007 IMF annual meetings were summarised by a New York Times headline as ‘The tables turned: Poor countries wag fingers at rich countries’; and the OECD recently admitted that the facts suggest that ‘globalisation is creating opportunities for a small elite of workers and investors to pull away from everyone else’. While neoliberals advise yet more of the same, the left has to go beyond its own clichés and provide a coherent answer to the scandal of persistent mass poverty in a rich world. Ray Bush’s clear, thoughtful and provocative contribution to that task is a valuable resource for those concerned with poverty and development, especially in Africa.


The concept of the prison as a place of detention was introduced to sub-Saharan Africa by colonial powers in the 19th century, largely as a means of subduing the indigenous populations. This legacy remains obvious today in the fortress style of many of the prisons in the region, such as that in the Rwandan town of Cyangugu, built by the Belgians in the 1930s, which is on the cover of Carina Terstakian’s disturbing book. In Rwanda the rate of imprisonment is about 979 per 100,000 of the population. This is the highest in the world, ahead even of the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This means that about one person in every hundred of the population is in prison. This book explains why this is so and describes in stark detail what the consequences are for the prisoners.

Carina Tertsakian is very well placed to write a book such as this, having been directly involved in Rwanda for a decade with international NGOs. At the core of the book is an amazing series of
interviews which she undertook with men and women languishing in the country’s prisons. For anyone who knows prisons in Africa, these interviews ring true in the way that they capture the humanity which can exist in the midst of extreme adversity and the acceptance of inevitable reality. The author helpfully sketches the national context which is all too well known, but this is not a book about the tragedy of Rwanda. It is primarily a record of the experience of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Tertsakian is clearly a sympathetic listener who allows the prisoners to speak in their own words. In most cases, she passes no judgement on what they are saying about the reasons which have brought them to prison. Instead, she quotes directly from the tortuous experiences which they have had, in many cases while they wait to be charged over a period of many years.

‘The suffering which continued silently in the prisons year after year was of a particularly inconvenient kind: these men and women dying of overcrowding, disease and ill-treatment were not the usual innocent victims. The vast majority were accused of genocide and there was little sympathy for their plight. The fact that most of them had not even been tried or charged – and that many therefore may have been innocent – did not seem to matter. Thus, over the years, the prison situation became an accepted feature of post-genocide Rwanda’ (p.16).

The prison system simply could not cope with the number of prisoners, which peaked at around 130,000 in 1998. Overcrowding in the prisons of Western Europe usually means two or at most three prisoners crammed into a cell designed to hold one. In Rwanda it meant that prisoners had forty centimetres of personal space in which to sleep, eat, sit and live. The ‘chateau’ of the title does not refer to the castellated prison buildings. It is the ironic name given by the fortunate prisoners who have two planks of wood as their own personal space. The less fortunate live and sleep on the ground, in corridors, in toilets or shower spaces, on top of septic tanks or in the open air.

In one of the most moving chapters the author describes the scene when families come to visit:

The first group of prisoners, around 50 of them, emerges from the gate and sits down on the nearest row of long benches … A guard whistles and the first group of visitors lunges forward to take their seats on the second row of benches … There is a frantic exchange of provisions and full and empty containers, and a frantic exchange of words … Suddenly, one of the guards blows his whistle again and the visitors have to leave … from the first whistle to the second whistle, the visit has lasted less than two minutes (p.250).

In unemotional language, often through the voices of the prisoners, Tertsakian describes the added difficulties for women prisoners, for minors, for the elderly, for the sick and for those sentenced to death. She also notes the complete lack of support for prisoners who are eventually released, as well as the lack of concern from the international community:

The crisis in the prisons – which would have provoked outrage had it occurred in almost any other country – elicited barely any response from foreign governments (p.353).

There is little evidence that this nightmare is coming to an end. When Tertsakian conducted her research, the prison population stood at around 85,000. She ends the book by reporting that in May 2007 it stood around 92,000. This powerful book places a spotlight on the continuing tragedy of prisons in Rwanda, which remain a blot on humanity. It deserves to be widely read and to act as a spur for international action.
Théodore Trefon, who directs the ‘Contemporary History’ section of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Brussels, has written a fascinating, rich, lively and overall superb book on the resilience of the Congolese administrative apparatus in a time of state failure. The book is based on in-depth case studies of the interactions between individuals in different social universes and administrative branches of the state in the town of Lubumbashi, Congo’s second largest city with about 1.5m people, in the province of Katanga. It details the daily routines and state-induced vexations of a charcoal transporter, a baker, a construction material salesman, a taxi driver, a retired civil servant, a paralegal restaurant owner, a widow housewife and mother of 11, a preacher, a street foreign exchange broker, and a cyber-café manager.

In addition to the unique empirical material of the book, one of Trefon’s main contributions is the theoretical introduction, which provides analytical context and conceptual structure to the case studies. To the question of ‘why the administration persists’ (p.13) despite its deliquescence in providing the Congolese with the services it was intended for, Trefon offers a triply layered answer. The Congolese administration persists because it is instrumentalised by political elites for their own advantage (particularly as a source of revenue); because it is privatised by public officials as part of their own strategies of personal survival; and because individual citizens still need the administration, even when they largely substitute themselves to it in providing services. This latter point is particularly interesting. For example, parents pool their resources to pay the salaries of public teachers, largely abandoned by the state, and thereby facilitate the reproduction of the public education system. They do so, rather than starting new alternative private schools, because they value the state diploma which they see as giving their children access to formal employment.

Although the introduction alone provides a thorough and rigorous contribution to the topic and is worthy of publication on its own, it is the empirical material in the subsequent case studies, or individual vignettes, which is most stunning, informative and original. It also often makes for captivating reading. Most striking are the innumerable layers of administration and control enforced upon the Congolese and the equally numerous taxes and levies which administrative agencies impose. Starting with ministers, the administration expands downwards through secretaries-general, directors, division chiefs, bureau chiefs, chiefs of provincial divisions, provincial bureau chiefs, section chiefs, cell chiefs, chiefs of urban services, chiefs of sub-sections and sub-cells, mayors, burgomasters, chiefs of neighborhood and street chiefs (pp. 143-147), illustrating in the process the universality and decentralization of ‘Big Man’ politics. As for taxes, the city and communes of Lubumbashi alone inflict no less than 26 taxes on its residents (p. 149). And state agents invent many more.

The resulting totalitarianism (my word, not Trefon’s) of the weak state makes peoples’ lives miserable. The story of the retired railroad worker hanging on to his official documents for dear life (pp. 85-93) is poignant, as is the vulnerability of the charcoal trader in the face of public harassment (pp. 47-54) and that of the widow struggling to secure water and electricity for her household of 11 children (pp.101-112).
The book’s methodology also deserves mention. Trefon has collaborated with Bathazar Ngoy of the University of Lubumbashi and with the latter’s students in political science who were trained in questionnaire administration and managed the surveys in the Lubumbashi neighborhoods, which produced the case studies. Trefon’s book is politique par le bas at its best. The Congolese state repeatedly comes to life for the reader in all its daily Kafkaesque arbitrariness at the grassroots. The resulting picture is one where there seems to be no greater impediment to life than the state itself. Yet, people have learned to live with it. In fact, the resilience of citizens in the face of a relentlessly exploitative administration is probably as remarkable as the resilience of the state itself. Moreover, the book clearly illustrates how the very actions of citizens, driven by necessity, often help reproduce the administration.

If Trefon’s book is to have a weakness (at least for the Anglophone reader), it will be that is written in French (although there is an excellent English summary of the main argument at the beginning). Its contribution to the study of the African state in general and Congo in particular is so significant that an English version cannot come too soon.


This book addresses the interface which exists between the often quite disparate disciplines of philosophy and literature, and does so within the context of the African conditions of poverty, corruption, and state ineptitude. It talks to the contrasting scenarios and explanatory frameworks of two of the continent’s outstanding novelists – Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o – whose books likely constitute Africa’s most familiar and stimulating texts of the post-independence period. However, I finished reading Okolo with a mixed reaction. As she states in the introduction, her study provides ‘an intellectual and analytic framework within which the African experience can be conceptualized, interpreted and reorganized’ (p.2); here she investigates the relationship between literature and society. This is undertaken by considering the political components of Achebe’s Anthills of the Savanna (1987) and Ngugi’s Petals of Blood (1977). The former sees Africa’s problems as a result of ‘internal’ corruption, state failure, ineptitude, and the privatisation of the public resources, while the latter points to leadership, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism as the basic sources. The foundation of Okolo’s analysis is political philosophy (providing a worldview and critical reflection) upon which the writings of the two authors are considered (first in general by investigating their several other novels, then in detail for Anthills and Petals). As the analysis develops, the writings of some additional novelists such as Soyinka, Sembene, and Armah are interrogated. She finalises her study by comparing the authors in terms of their perspectives on the African condition and on possible social reconstruction. Therein resides
the work’s strength; it is rendered powerful and insightful by her selection of authors. The chosen authors speak to the causes in thoughtful and contrasting manners. Their works ‘provok[e] people into assessing and criticizing’ (p.28). Here, she categorises the comments in terms of themes important in the understanding of the African condition in several social science disciplines: alienation, power, gender, ideology, leadership, and citizenship.

However, the text suffers from a ‘deja vu’ reading. These texts by Ngugi and Achebe will be quite familiar to most readers of this journal; it is quite well-known that they depicted both Africa’s ills and their causes. Further, the philosophical framework presented by Okolo is elementary (and largely ‘western’, other than Gandhi – where are Africa’s thinkers?). And, the reader asks: Where are the novel insights resulting from political philosophy? And so too, her Marxism adds little that has not already been stated or analysed by others. In fact, the originality of the issues raised was a basic concern – many have commented on these texts previously, and so the author’s critique is especially thoughtful – but it is mostly a revisit, a synthetic essay which collates what others have indicated previously.

An issue not found in Okolo’s otherwise thoughtful, well-organised, and profound LitCrit relates to the silences of these novels – to the fundamental issues not discussed in these books. They disregard certain aspects which are fundamental to the understanding of the African condition and its possible solution: I expected the author to indicate these. They include ethnicity, religion, urbanisation, regionalism, redistribution, population growth, civil wars, diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, the transition from an economy of affection to neo-liberalism – and (especially in a Marxist critique) the articulation of the modes of production. These are matters which are of critical importance in understanding the African condition. We are told what the novels say, but not what they omit.

The difficulty that this analysis illustrates is unfortunately one that affects our brother and sister scholars in Africa. University libraries on the continent are sadly deficient. Research funds are scarce or unavailable. Besides, with huge classes and the demands of family and kin, few find time for original research. As well, there is an important temporal dimension in that today’s scholars were raised under these same conditions which their mentors faced. It is unfortunately indexed in journals on Africa published in Canada, the UK, the US, and elsewhere in the First World: there are few African authors from the continent because of matters of timing, quality, writing, and novelty. There are notable exceptions to this generality, but this condition is a sad reality.

The voices of the novels provide an initial understanding of Africa’s social, political, and economic contexts. The issue addressed by Okolo’s investigation are important; the ‘voices’ of literature speak to the African condition. Much can be learned from what they tell us, and also from what they do not say. However, it is unfortunate that the present text is largely a re-visit of writers of 20-30 years ago, and that both the realm of African philosophy is ignored, as are the messages of contemporary writers.
This book is about colonial and post-colonial statecraft and the rural resource governance issues at the centre of a still unfolding socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. Divided into eight well researched, detailed and analytically sound chapters, the book deals with the complexities of statecraft played out in the contentious land question. The first four chapters talk to pre-1980 settler colonial dynamics with the next four looking at the post-colonial state after 1980 and into the post-February 2000 crisis.

Writing about colonial Zimbabwe and the histories of dispossession is always a challenge as this is now a well trodden path. Any new book tackling this area has the challenge of bringing something new to the story. The first four chapters of this book manage to do this by talking to the broader discourses of colonial statecraft viewed from the local social histories in Insiza and Chimanimani, the case study areas. Through detailed and well sourced narratives Chapter 1 takes us through the unsettled politics of pre-colonial Zimbabwe showing in both case study areas how shifting allegiances, contested loyalties and the fluid politics of rural governance find local expression. Above all else this section highlights an often overlooked fact which is that in spite of the settler colonial state being united in its conquest of land and desire to dominate, there was internal dissonance within the settler state and colonial administrators on the ground often faced a reality removed from the ideals of the settler colonial project. In each of the case study areas we are also

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introduced to the nascent local social movements and their local efforts to resist the settler colonial project. For example by giving local expression to the ‘Native Self Conscious Society’ in Chimanimani, not only do we get a sense of the role of these local movements in mobilising against the local reach of the settler state but also their varied methods to suit circumstances.

Chapters two, three and four take us through the main ground level expressions of settler colonial policy and practice on land and local governance. Through detailed local social histories, local expressions of development interventions like the NLHA and Community Development are used to show case the complexity of conquest and resistance. By focusing on the relationship between chiefs and land Chapter five draws into focus the extent to which the local social and political outcomes in these encounters depended on the characters and relationship of the two main actors at the local level- the district commissioner and the local chief. The book characterises the outcomes as one of or a combination of collaboration, co-option and falling out. All three outcomes are given currency in the two case study areas but more crucially characterise some of the learned behaviours that helped shape and define post-colonial relationship between the state and traditional authority. In a way the first five chapters showcase why the complete history of the settler colonial statecraft, especially its impact on local people and their responses, can only be fully understood from the bottom up and attempts to draw generalisations or national patterns often fail to capture the variegated responses that this book highlights.

Two key issues feature prominently as defining post-colonial statecraft are articulated in Chapters five and six. First is the state’s strategic ambivalence toward traditional institutions. On one hand these are seen as ‘compromised’ and...
unsuitable for the new democratic dispensation due to their perceived collusion with the settler colonial state. On the other hand they play a hugely symbolic role of identity and autochthony that both the settler state and the post-colonial state find useful in rural local governance. It is clear from contemporary discourses featured in Chapters seven and eight that the rehabilitation of the role of chiefs in rural local governance is complete. Traditional chiefs became in essence bureaucratised while some politicised their role. From the book one gets a sense here of continuity rather than change in the ab(use) of the traditional chiefs. What the book does not say however is that post-colonial statecraft was to an extent influenced by the institutional inertia of the settler state it succeeded.

Second, and related to the above is what the book correctly observes as the persistence of a technocentric streak to rural policy making. A typical example of this is the attempts to re-organise the communal areas through the CLDP and the land resettlement programme both of which bore striking resemblance to some of the programmes that the settler state attempted to implement. Because of this link and other local factors CLDP was moribund right from inception while the resettlement scheme was fraught with implementation bottlenecks. For example top down technocentric approaches in a context of the muddied politics of the early post-colonial period in Matabeleland affected resettlement in Insiza. Similarly in Chimanimani difficulties of implementing state programmes is put down to a ‘rejection of state claims to technocratic authority over land in favour of local versions of nationalism, histories of eviction, chiefly claims and need’ (p. 153), and sums up the aversion that locals had to developmental populism that paid little heed to local realities.

Through the first seven chapters we clearly see the unresolved nature rural local governance through the land question and can almost understand why by the time of the farm invasions in February 2000 there was a sense of waning statecraft. This is followed through in Chapter eight which shows the systematic build up of issues leading to the Jambanja drawing on broader national economic and political discourses and practices. There is no attempt to give them local expression in the case study areas, and for this reason this chapter reads differently from the first seven. This book’s strength lies in showing variable responses to statecraft from locality to locality yet there is almost a sense in which this chapter suggests there was one set of conditions that led to the invasions across the country. We do not get to know about the specific experiences of Chimanimani and Insiza. One can guess that invasions where given local traction by existing local relations and these varied from place to place. Questions that come to mind as one reads this section include: Was there an underlying local logic to the invasions apart from the national contextual issues? Why where some farms invaded and others not? To be fair to the book logistical and political conditions on the ground are not conducive for such detailed work and this may well be a challenge for the future.

Overall this is an excellent addition to the discourses on rural local governance and land in Zimbabwe, and more specifically to our local knowledge on the variability of responses to statecraft in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. It is a good resource for students of history as much as it is for development studies and, because it is very clearly written it appeals broadly to those interested in Zimbabwe.

This is the published version of a 2003 Leiden doctorate focusing on the problems faced by Ghanaian riverine communities living downstream from the Volta (also known as Akosombo) Dam since its construction in the early 1960s and its official opening by President Nkrumah in 1966. There is much here of interest, in particular, detailed empirical information on livelihoods in the communities and their migrant extensions around the lake, and also material from locally sourced interviews with retired Volta River Authority (VRA) personnel. However, in terms of a published work it could have benefited from judicious pruning.

After a detailed discussion of concepts and methodological approaches, the next almost 150 pages deal with the history and politics of the dam’s funding, construction and plans for resettlement of displaced communities and environmental impacts. While there is a very great deal of detail given here, the analysis and discussion is limited: perhaps greater reference to, use and critique of Ronnie Graham’s 1982 book would have enabled the author both to foreground crucial broader political factors relevant to the dam’s planning and funding, at the same time, allowing cuts through the use of cross-referencing. What we are presented with is a welter of minute detail, relevant in terms of thesis background, but not reader-friendly.

However, the stated focus of the work are the fates of members of the Tongu Ewe communities downstream from the dam and also of communities, mostly originally derived from Tongu, who migrated upstream, either seasonally or for longer periods, in the years before the dam was built, and whose descendants are now members of lakeside communities. While the author sets out and critiques the VRA’s plans (and their implementation) for resettlement and compensation for community sites and lands inundated by the lake, she points out that the communities downstream that are the subjects of her study effectively received no compensation. What has happened in the years since the dam’s construction is a falling of overall river levels and the cessation of the annual floods just after the rainy season which have meant a series of changes for the worse in overall income (for example, the demise of the clam picking/ cultivation industry), and in health hazards as pollutants remain in the soil and have built up over the years. The author shows very effectively and in a gender sensitive way how these and other factors have affected lives and livelihoods of the downstream communities.

When she turns to look at the Volta Lakeside communities that have developed since the inundation, however, the dynamics of relationships between Tongu members of these communities and those downstream are less clear. The same kinds of meticulous and gender aware data are presented but the strengths and significances of links with ‘home’ areas are fuzzier. While, in pre-dam days, fishing upstream was a lucrative stage in many young men’s lives, either annually, or on a more permanent basis, now the seasonality prompting the move upstream is non-existent: the basis for forging and maintaining links between the lakeside and downstream communities has been suborned. There are so much empirical data presented in the four penultimate chapters that it is impossible to do justice to them. What seems to be happening is that the downstream communities are now indistinguishable from most other impoverished rural riverine communities, while those
upstream still depend on fishing supplemented by subsistence farming, and in some cases seem to be being left behind by more recent arrivals from coastal fishing groups. Any implications from this data are not effectively drawn out in the four chapters and the concluding chapter is, in the classic ‘social-science-dissertation’ sense of the term, simply a summary of key points.

Overall it is not really possible to present a summary review of the book: it engages with issues on too many fronts. While I think that a more politically nuanced discussion of all aspects of the dam would be of greater benefit, it really wouldn’t fit here. This is not the main thrust of the book, rather a kind of huge tangent that takes us into another direction, a direction that Graham has already accessed and which could well be incorporated here. Where it does well is in the empirical data collection and presentation, but apart from the admittedly crucial fact that the building of the dam caused massive and life-changing (and uncompensated) changes for Tongu people, the dam could recede into the background. This would allow the consequences and implications from the data to emerge and to be framed, perhaps in terms of the livelihoods framework set out in the first chapter, and contribute more effectively to the sociological/anthropological analysis and understanding of contemporary Ghana and beyond.


Jomo has successfully edited two balanced and well-rounded volumes (one with Reinert) of considerable interest to scholars of development and African politics alike. Both volumes chart the evolution of development economics. The Pioneers of Development Economics focuses on continuities in schools of economic thought from the Renaissance onward whereas The Origins of Development Economics explains how particular individuals, some economists with a recognised and central role in the field (e.g., Friedrich List and Raúl Prebisch) and others more marginal (William Petty), have produced the diverse body of scholarship – an intellectual heritage based on insights from a range of disciplines – on which development economists, and scholars of development more generally, draw today. Both volumes essentially aim to reorient the scope of economics proper by placing the question of development – how less developed societies may achieve the same transition that produced developed, industrialised societies in the past – at the heart of the discipline.

This ‘Other Canon’ stands in contrast to the abstract, theoretical approach of classical economics based on controversial a priori assumptions regarding competition, information and equilibrium. Rejecting the ‘total fixation on their own previous work’ that characterises contemporary, orthodox (neo-classical) econ-

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nomic thought (*The Pioneers*, p. vii), the editors emphasise a longer and broader view on economic thinking and scholarship. A main purpose of *The Origins* is to ‘demonstrate the continuity in thinking on economic development’ from the pre-Smithian era to post-World War Two development economics (p. vii).

*The Origins* begins with an outline of broad historical approaches to development. Chapters on ‘Mercantilism’ (E. & S. Reinert) and ‘the Italian Tradition in Political Economy’ (S. Reinert) trace the development of economics as *praxis* to the Renaissance and to concerns about how to produce national development (Tudor England), avoid economic failure (Spain) and reverse semi-peripheralisation in declining Italian city states. A chapter on ‘German Economics’, including the historical school (E. Reinert) suggests a largely coherent tradition of thought from the seventeenth century until the World War Two. A chapter on ‘Capitalist Transformation’ (Khan) critiques the narrow classical economic emphasis on institutions such as stable property rights *of whatever kind* (i.e. it does not matter what property is protected and for whom, as long as property is protected) in the transition of a small number of (East Asian) developing countries to developed country status, noting instead the importance of a broad set of social and institutional factors in producing state capacity to transform.

Methodologically sophisticated chapters on ‘Growth Theory’ (Ros) and ‘International Trade’ (Dutt) explain the role of theoretical debates on growth and trade for modern development economics. Ros argues that early development economics provides a better explanation for development than does the endogenous growth literature, and that early approaches are ‘more empirically promising’ than either old or new growth Theory (p. 82). Dutt reviews contributions by Rosenstein-Rodan, Nurkse, Lewis and Myrdal to trade theory and the implications thereof for developing countries. A chapter on {Latin American Structuralism and Dependency Theory} (Saad-Filho) outlines the key contributions (as well as important limitations) to the development literature by post-war structuralists and *dependistas*, notably the former’s rejection of linear assumptions about development in orthodox theories of development and the latter’s insistence on the impossibility of development under capitalism. Finally, ‘Development in the History of Economics’ (Szentes) outlines key contours of development economics and how it becomes a distinct field of study in the post-war era.

Relying on a standard criticism of classical economics as inevitably hampered by its abstractions and existence in a ‘ahistorical vacuum’, the authors contrast this dominant approach with the historically conscious and pragmatic approach of economic thought from the Italian tradition and the German school to structuralism, dependency theory and modern development economics. The main distinction between orthodox (neo/classical) and heterodox (development-oriented) schools of economic thought is defined in *The Origins* (p. vii) as the difference between social theory built on abstraction and deductive reasoning as in classical economics and that built from historical reality and inductive reasoning from the bottom up, as in the approaches from which (heterodox) modern development economics derive. Classical economics is a system of thought based on metaphors from physics, notably the enlightenment ‘mechanization of the world picture’ on which Smith’s concept of the ‘invisible hand’ was based and the 1880s physics’ emphasis on equilibrium. Development economics rely on metaphors from biology, namely references to the human body that are present in economic writings from Greek and Roman times through the Renaissance and late nineteenth-century
German economics and on ideas transplanted from Darwinian and Lamarckian evolution in the economic writings of Veblen and in Schumpeter's 'evolutionary economics' (p. ix).

*The Pioneers* charts a history of economic thought as it relates to development by focusing in each chapter on contributions to the field by a particular individual, economist or otherwise. A companion to *The Origins*, this volume provides additional historical context to the thematically organised, theoretically and conceptually rich, approach of the former. Why 'Development Economics'? (P. Patnaik) introduces the book by the purpose and central concerns of the field. Chapters on William Petty (Goodacre) and David Ricardo (U. Patnaik) emphasise the origins of economic thought in the historical experience of imperialism. Chapters on Friedrich List (Shafaeddin), Karl Marx (P. Patnaik), Vladimir Lenin (U. Patnaik), Alfred Marshall (Prendergast), Michal Kalecki (Ghosh), John Maynard Keynes (Toye), Keynes and Nicholas Kaldor (Kumar Bagchi), Karl Polanyi (Polanyi Levitt) and Alexander Gerschenkron (Chandrasekhar) highlight contributions to the field by scholars not normally identified as pioneers of development economics. Finally, chapters on Raúl Prebisch and Arthur Lewis (Polanyi Levitt) and Hans Singer (Raffer) outline 'principal heterodox economic implications' of recognised pioneers of development economics (p. viii).

While the intellectual complexity and manifold nuance of the schools of thoughts overviewed in *The Origins* and the individual economists assessed in *The Pioneers* at times suggest that the classical/orthodox – development/heterodox distinction can be overly crude, it nevertheless remains a useful distinction for the reader who wishes to understand fundamental intellectual conflicts in the history of economics and how these debates have shaped the field of development economics as it exists today. Economic scholarship derived from classical economic thought remains based on abstraction and controversial *a priori* assumptions, to its detriment when attempting answers to empirical questions regarding development in a world of states and regions in which historical processes have produced radically divergent socio-economic dynamics and developments. The heterodox school of economic thought, with its emphasis on historical record and empirical reality, remains at times excessively dependent on case-specific context, at the expense of being able to generalise findings beyond the cases and contexts in which they are initially found.

This trade-off between 'broad' vs. 'deep' understanding is an unavoidable feature of all approaches to development, and indeed to all scientific study of social phenomena. Therefore it is not very useful to suggest that one approach is superior to the other, although the implication in both of these volumes is clearly that the historical, heterodox approach is more useful to development economist wishing to understand the dilemmas faced by countries in the global south today. The most constructive way forward is not to disparage either approach, as being empirically 'irrelevant' (classical economics) or theoretically and methodologically unsophisticated (heterodox economics), but rather to make a strong case for the ability of each school of thought to provide a unique understanding of particular aspects of economics. A proper understanding of the strengths and limitations of each approach provides the aspiring development economics with the best equipped conceptual and theoretical 'tool box' for investigating the pressing economic and political puzzles of our day.

The food we buy and eat can tell powerful stories. It may seem better to simply enjoy its many culinary varieties than to think much about where it comes from, its ingredients or who produces it and how. However both our taste buds and our brain cells need a strong stimulus in order to recognize the complexities of food’s political economy. Tony Weis, professor at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, presents a highly informative narrative on these complexities in layman’s terms. Published just months prior to the eruption of this year’s global food crisis, his pocket-size book provides abundant fact-based arguments to confidently engage in political dialogue on the driving forces of a food system seemingly in perpetual crisis.

From preface to concluding chapter five, Weis disputes claims of inevitability of today’s dominant food economy. His purpose is to unsettle illusions that it is impossible to fundamentally overhaul existing conditions of agricultural production, consumption and trade. Today’s modes of high-input farming, based on a system of industrialized grain-livestock production result in a tremendously deep environmental footprint. Yet Weis demonstrates that regardless of its costs, the current food system is incapable of attaining food security on a global scale. His well-narrated assessment unveils not only the output-level dilemmas and contradictions of a system in deep crisis; it also focuses on the institutional arrangements and power-relations, predominantly of the World Trade Organization (WTO), responsible for a status quo that translates into poor nutrition, poverty and hunger for millions around the globe. WTO efforts to reinforce abstract competitive advantages of nation states by regulating trade regimes for agricultural products are seen as completely divorced from food security concerns of the global poor.

Claims made by proponents of the status quo that markets can succeed at ensuring reliable and affordable supply of nutritious food if only allowed to operate freely and with minimal state intervention, are forcefully dismissed by Weis as being ideological and catering to profit interests of transnational companies and parasitic political elites.

For Weis, the obscenity of simultaneous poles of obesity and hunger in a market-driven food economy cannot be ignored, nor is it ethically acceptable: in terms of quantity more than enough food for all is produced globally. However the purchasing power to access that food is unevenly distributed within and between countries to the extreme. As an example, the farm subsidy regimes in OECD countries cost six times as much as all OECD development aid in any given year. Indeed, it is more than shameful that ‘the average EU subsidy per cow was roughly the same (US$2) as the poverty level on which billions barely exist’. Transnational agroconglomerates, unconcerned about notions of social and cultural significance of food and associated traditions, continuously promote a global convergence of food consumption and diet patterns (such as meat-rich diets) without much concern for long-term health consequences for consumers.

Small farmers and food-security minded decision-makers in developing countries frequently find themselves short-changed with regard to viable production or policy options. As the process of global integration of national and regional food economies has intensified so has its dependence on the ‘chemical and fossil energy treadmill’. Unable to keep up, especially rural populations whose livelihoods heavily rely upon low-input,
small-scale agriculture have been squeezed out of markets and fallen below narrow poverty lines. Ultimately there seems to be little doubt, at least in the author’s mind, that the food system as we know it, is heading for a fall. Weis’ analysis allows the reader to see this year’s food crisis as an acceleration of a combination of worrisome trends underlying the global food economy. We have witnessed sharp price hikes in supermarkets in affluent societies as well as in village markets in low-income developing countries. Unsurprisingly, the poor have been affected most, many millions of whom are slipping back into food insecurity from which they only recently had seemingly freed themselves. Food riots have erupted in various places and high-level political activism, from the 2008 Food Summit in Rome, the G8 meeting in Japan to the recent Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana have all sought to present meaningful responses to the crisis at hand.

Most certainly none of these events have attempted to explore the sub-title of Weis’ book, namely, ‘The battle for the future of farming’. If they had referred to this guide to understanding and reimagining the global food economy, they may have found that solutions to the endemic crisis of agricultural production in the global economy lie with those who are waging the battle for sustainable alternatives: the farmers, consumers and activists of civil society in North and South. Secondary responses to the recurring failures of the global food system, even commendable relief and project-level responses to the immediate hardships faced by food-insecure populations, perhaps allow for some temporary respite from an ongoing, livelihoods debilitating crisis. Yet root causes of the crisis are hardly touched in the process. There is little to be gained by trying to dissect such causes into their multiple, interwoven constituent factors, even though factors such as bio-fuel production, increased global demand for meat products (especially in newly affluent parts of Asia), climate change or rising fuel costs all play a role. Debate on tomorrow’s food system that is organized as a fundamental departure from the uncertainties inherent in the food economy of today, is best to be based on a firm critical analysis and factual footing. With his important book on this vital topic, Tony Weis has provided nothing less than a solid departure point for such debate.

Editor’s Note: ROAPE would like to take up the challenge in this review, that is ‘the battle for farming in Africa’. If you are interested in working with us, please get in touch with me, Jan Burgess – editor@roape.org

Erratum
‘Child Poverty in Africa’ by Meredith Turshen in ROAPE No. 117, September 2008. Apologies to the author and Dharam Ghai for a mis-quoted sentence (page 499). It should read as follows: ‘Urban Jonsson, former senior advisor to UNICEF on Human Rights Based Approach to Programming, pointed out that Africa has changed since 1960; there is more peace, more efforts for democracy, an end to apartheid. AIDS has crushed many dreams.’ A corrected online version will appear in December 2008.

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Many thanks and goodbye to Rita Abrahamsen for taking this much-neglected Book Reviews section and making it the ‘must read’ of the journal – according to our subscribers who are very impressed! You’ll also note that we are now including both film and theatre reviews – is there anything else you’d like to see here? If so, get in touch with Branwen Gruffydd-Jones who takes over from Rita in 2009. Her e-mail address is: b.gruffydd-jones@gold.ac.uk

Mainstream development theory argues that countries develop through their own actions: freeing trade and investment, establishing legal institutions conducive to private investment, liberalising markets, educating in a particular way, eliminating wasteful state spending and improving governance. The history of developed countries is cited as an appropriate template. Poor countries wishing to catch up are advised to immerse themselves in the fair and benign international economy.

Ray Bush’s Poverty and Liberalism is a blistering, heterodox critique of each item of this current orthodoxy. Poverty arises, he maintains, not from the failure of countries and groups to incorporate themselves in the world economy but from the fact that they are incorporated in it, but in an unequal and misshapen way. Poverty ‘is not about being left behind but about being actively excluded from an unjust and unequal system of wealth creation’. This system, especially in the countries where poverty is most persistent, predominantly takes the form of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ – David Harvey’s useful renaming of Marx’s primitive or primary accumulation, so strongly emphasised by Rosa Luxemburg. The progressive commoditisation of a growing number of human activities frequently, as Bush explains, results in the accumulation of poverty. History, far from being a template for the future, explains how the globalisation of capitalist accumulation produced and produces some convergence and produces some convergence and much polarisation.

After an initial chapter setting out this theoretical perspective and discussing the interconnection between African impoverishment and the post-1980 neoliberal tsunami, Bush uses the ideas as the backbone of a well-structured set of chapters, each on one crucial issue in the study of development. The first is about international aid – in particular Tony Blair’s and the G8’s plans to ‘rescue’ Africa (in which another frequent theme – the egregious hypocrisy of donors – rightly receives several mentions). This is followed by chapters on migration, land, mining and resources (including the ‘resource curse’), and food and famine. Each of these attacks mainstream approaches and counters with an analysis based on the guiding idea of the book – that the problem is not simple and quantitative (how much integration in the system?) but complex and qualitative (what kind of integration and what kind of system?). His conclusion about the land question is typical of others: ‘the problem is not weak tenure or that producers are insufficiently integrated or are part of imperfect markets: the problem is the market itself and the commoditization of everyday life’.

All this is helpfully illustrated with historical and contemporary empirical material about debt cancellation, migrants’ remittances, land reform in Egypt and Zimbabwe, mining in Africa – themes which all echo Rosa Luxemburg writing a century ago – as well as a narrative about the relationship between
the development of the oil industry, land struggles and sectarian conflicts in Sudan. Telling instances are also taken from the experience of Middle East and North African countries which the author has particularly studied.

In the final chapter Bush sets out many ideas around which resistance to persistent poverty might be organised. Here are mentions or echoes of Marx, Luxemburg, the narodniks, anarchism, feminism, the defence of indigenous peoples and the importance of ‘infracititics’ – the everyday resistance of ordinary individuals, households and neighbourhoods. Ray Bush’s conviction that this spirit of resistance is not extinct means that a gloomy story does not lead to a pessimistic prognosis. Some readers might view this chapter as insufficiently programmatic but I found it refreshingly eclectic. It also contains a needed broadside against the neoliberal ‘governance’ formula (transparency, reducing corruption by lowering the importance of the state and more ‘civil society’, conceived as a proliferation of NGOs).


The concept of the prison as a place of detention was introduced to sub-Saharan Africa by colonial powers in the 19th century, largely as a means of subduing the indigenous populations. This legacy remains obvious today in the fortress style of many of the prisons in the region, such as that in the Rwandan town of Cyangugu, built by the Belgians in the 1930s, which is on the cover of Carina Terstakian’s disturbing book. In Rwanda the rate of imprisonment is about 979 per 100,000 of the population. This is the highest in the world, ahead even of the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This means that about one person in every hundred of the population is in prison. This book explains why this is so and describes in stark detail what the consequences are for the prisoners.

Carina Tertsakian is very well placed to write a book such as this, having been directly involved in Rwanda for a decade with international NGOs. At the core of the book is an amazing series of

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interviews which she undertook with men and women languishing in the country’s prisons. For anyone who knows prisons in Africa, these interviews ring true in the way that they capture the humanity which can exist in the midst of extreme adversity and the acceptance of inevitable reality. The author helpfully sketches the national context which is all too well known, but this is not a book about the tragedy of Rwanda. It is primarily a record of the experience of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Tertsakian is clearly a sympathetic listener who allows the prisoners to speak in their own words. In most cases, she passes no judgement on what they are saying about the reasons which have brought them to prison. Instead, she quotes directly from the tortuous experiences which they have had, in many cases while they wait to be charged over a period of many years.

The suffering which continued silently in the prisons year after year was of a particularly inconvenient kind: these men and women dying of over-crowding, disease and ill-treatment were not the usual innocent victims. The vast majority were accused of genocide and there was little sympathy for their plight. The fact that most of them had not even been tried or charged – and that many therefore may have been innocent – did not seem to matter. Thus, over the years, the prison situation became an accepted feature of post-genocide Rwanda’ (p.16).

The prison system simply could not cope with the number of prisoners, which peaked at around 130,000 in 1998. Over-crowding in the prisons of Western Europe usually means two or at most three prisoners crammed into a cell designed to hold one. In Rwanda it meant that prisoners had forty centimetres of personal space in which to sleep, eat, sit and live. The ‘château’ of the title does not refer to the castellated prison buildings. It is the ironic name given by the fortunate prisoners who have two planks of wood as their own personal space. The less fortunate live and sleep on the ground, in corridors, in toilets or shower spaces, on top of septic tanks or in the open air.

In one of the most moving chapters the author describes the scene when families come to visit:

The first group of prisoners, around 50 of them, emerges from the gate and sits down on the nearest row of long benches … A guard whistles and the first group of visitors lunges forward to take their seats on the second row of benches … There is a frantic exchange of provisions and full and empty containers, and a frantic exchange of words … Suddenly, one of the guards blows his whistle again and the visitors have to leave … from the first whistle to the second whistle, the visit has lasted less than two minutes (p.250).

In unemotional language, often through the voices of the prisoners, Tertsakian describes the added difficulties for women prisoners, for minors, for the elderly, for the sick and for those sentenced to death. She also notes the complete lack of support for prisoners who are eventually released, as well as the lack of concern from the international community:

The crisis in the prisons – which would have provoked outrage had it occurred in almost any other country – elicited barely any response from foreign governments (p.353).

There is little evidence that this nightmare is coming to an end. When Tertsakian conducted her research, the prison population stood at around 85,000. She ends the book by reporting that in May 2007 it stood around 92,000. This powerful book places a spotlight on the continuing tragedy of prisons in Rwanda, which remain a blot on humanity. It deserves to be widely read and to act as a spur for international action.

Théodore Trefon, who directs the ‘Contemporary History’ section of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Brussels, has written a fascinating, rich, lively and overall superb book on the resilience of the Congolese administrative apparatus in a time of state failure. The book is based on in-depth case studies of the interactions between individuals in different social universes and administrative branches of the state in the town of Lubumbashi, Congo’s second largest city with about 1.5m people, in the province of Katanga. It details the daily routines and state-induced vexations of a charcoal transporter, a baker, a construction material salesman, a taxi driver, a retired civil servant, a paralegal restaurant owner, a widow housewife and mother of 11, a preacher, a street foreign exchange broker, and a cyber-café manager.

In addition to the unique empirical material of the book, one of Trefon’s main contributions is the theoretical introduction, which provides analytical context and conceptual structure to the case studies. To the question of ‘why the administration persists’ (p.13) despite its deliquescence in providing the Congolese with the services it was intended for, Trefon offers a triply layered answer. The Congolese administration persists because it is instrumentalised by political elites for their own advantage (particularly as a source of revenue); because it is privatised by public officials as part of their own strategies of personal survival; and because individual citizens still need the administration, even when they largely substitute themselves to it in providing services. This latter point is particularly interesting. For example, parents pool their resources to pay the salaries of public teachers, largely abandoned by the state, and thereby facilitate the reproduction of the public education system. They do so, rather than starting new alternative private schools, because they value the state diploma which they see as giving their children access to formal employment.

Although the introduction alone provides a thorough and rigorous contribution to the topic and is worthy of publication on its own, it is the empirical material in the subsequent case studies, or individual vignettes, which is most stunning, informative and original. It also often makes for captivating reading. Most striking are the innumerable layers of administration and control enforced upon the Congolese and the equally numerous taxes and levies which administrative agencies impose. Starting with ministers, the administration expands downwards through secretaries-general, directors, division chiefs, bureau chiefs, chiefs of provincial divisions, provincial bureau chiefs, section chiefs, cell chiefs, chiefs of urban services, chiefs of sub-sections and sub-cells, mayors, burgomasters, chiefs of neighborhood and street chiefs (pp. 143-147), illustrating in the process the universality and decentralization of ‘Big Man’ politics. As for taxes, the city and communes of Lubumbashi alone inflicts no less than 26 taxes on its residents (p. 149). And state agents invent many more.

The resulting totalitarianism (my word, not Trefon’s) of the weak state makes peoples’ lives miserable. The story of the retired railroad worker hanging on to his official documents for dear life (pp. 85-93) is poignant, as is the vulnerability of the charcoal trader in the face of public harassment (pp. 47-54) and that of the widow struggling to secure water and electricity for her household of 11 children (pp.101-112).
The book’s methodology also deserves mention. Trefon has collaborated with Bathazar Ngoy of the University of Lubumbashi and with the latter’s students in political science who were trained in questionnaire administration and managed the surveys in the Lubumbashi neighborhoods, which produced the case studies. Trefon’s book is politique par le bas at its best. The Congolese state repeatedly comes to life for the reader in all its daily Kafkaesque arbitrariness at the grassroots. The resulting picture is one where there seems to be no greater impediment to life than the state itself. Yet, people have learned to live with it. In fact, the resilience of citizens in the face of a relentlessly exploitative administration is probably as remarkable as the resilience of the state itself. Moreover, the book clearly illustrates how the very actions of citizens, driven by necessity, often help reproduce the administration.

If Trefon’s book is to have a weakness (at least for the Anglophone reader), it will be that is written in French (although there is an excellent English summary of the main argument at the beginning). Its contribution to the study of the African state in general and Congo in particular is so significant that an English version cannot come too soon.


This book addresses the interface which exists between the often quite disparate disciplines of philosophy and literature, and does so within the context of the African conditions of poverty, corruption, and state ineptitude. It talks to the contrasting scenarios and explanatory frameworks of two of the continent’s outstanding novelists – Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiongo – whose books likely constitute Africa’s most familiar and stimulating texts of the post-Independence period. However, I finished reading Okolo with a mixed reaction.

As she states in the introduction, her study provides ‘an intellectual and analytic framework within which the African experience can be conceptualized, interpreted and reorganized’ (p.2); here she investigates the relationship between literature and society. This is undertaken by considering the political components of Achebe’s Anthills of the Savanna (1987) and Ngugi’s Petals of Blood (1977). The former sees Africa’s problems as a result of ‘internal’ corruption, state failure, ineptitude, and the privatisation of the public resources, while the latter points to leadership, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism as the basic sources. The foundation of Okolo’s analysis is political philosophy (providing a worldview and critical reflection) upon which the writings of the two authors are considered (first in general by investigating their several other novels, then in detail for Anthills and Petals). As the analysis develops, the writings of some additional novelists such as Soyinka, Sembene, and Armah are interrogated. She finalises her study by comparing the authors in terms of their perspectives on the African condition and on possible social reconstruction. Therein resides

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the work’s strength; it is rendered powerful and insightful by her selection of authors. The chosen authors speak to the causes in thoughtful and contrasting manners. Their works ‘provoke people into assessing and criticizing’ (p.28).

Here, she categorises the comments in terms of themes important in the understanding of the African condition in several social science disciplines: alienation, power, gender, ideology, leadership, and citizenship.

However, the text suffers from a ‘deja vu’ reading. These texts by Ngugi and Achebe will be quite familiar to most readers of this journal; it is quite well-known that they depicted both Africa’s ills and their causes. Further, the philosophical framework presented by Okolo is elementary (and largely ‘western’, other than Gandhi – where are Africa’s thinkers?). And, the reader asks: Where are the novel insights resulting from political philosophy? And so too, her Marxism adds little that has not already been stated or analysed by others. In fact, the originality of the issues raised was a basic concern – many have commented on these texts previously, and so the author’s critique is especially thoughtful – but it is mostly a revisit, a synthetic essay which collates what others have indicated previously.

An issue not found in Okolo’s otherwise thoughtful, well-organised, and profound LitCrit relates to the silences of these novels – to the fundamental issues not discussed in these books. They disregard certain aspects which are fundamental to the understanding of the African condition and its possible solution: I expected the author to indicate these. They include ethnicity, religion, urbanisation, regionalism, redistribution, population growth, civil wars, diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, the transition from an economy of affection to neo-liberalism – and (especially in a Marxist critique) the articulation of the modes of production. These are matters which are of critical importance in understanding the African condition. We are told what the novels say, but not what they omit.

The difficulty that this analysis illustrates is unfortunately one that affects our brother and sister scholars in Africa. University libraries on the continent are sadly deficient. Research funds are scarce or unavailable. Besides, with huge classes and the demands of family and kin, few find time for original research. As well, there is an important temporal dimension in that today’s scholars were raised under these same conditions which their mentors faced. It is unfortunately indexed in journals on Africa published in Canada, the UK, the US, and elsewhere in the First World: there are few African authors from the continent because of matters of timing, quality, writing, and novelty. There are notable exceptions to this generality, but this condition is a sad reality.

The voices of the novels provide an initial understanding of Africa’s social, political, and economic contexts. The issue addressed by Okolo’s investigation are important; the ‘voices’ of literature speak to the African condition. Much can be learned from what they tell us, and also from what they do not say. However, it is unfortunate that the present text is largely a re-visit of writers of 20-30 years ago, and that both the realm of African philosophy is ignored, as are the messages of contemporary writers.

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This book is about colonial and post-colonial statecraft and the rural resource governance issues at the centre of a still unfolding socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. Divided into eight well researched, detailed and analytically sound chapters, the book deals with the complexities of statecraft played out in the contentious land question. The first four chapters talk to pre-1980 settler colonial dynamics with the next four looking at the post-colonial state after 1980 and into the post-February 2000 crisis.

Writing about colonial Zimbabwe and the histories of dispossession is always a challenge as this is now a well trodden path. Any new book tackling this area has the challenge of bringing something new to the story. The first four chapters of this book manage to do this by talking to the broader discourses of colonial statecraft viewed from the local social histories in Insiza and Chimanimani, the case study areas. Through detailed and well sourced narratives Chapter 1 takes us through the unsettled politics of pre-colonial Zimbabwe showing in both case study areas how shifting allegiances, contested loyalties and the fluid politics of rural governance find local expression. Above all else this section highlights an often overlooked fact which is that in spite of the settler colonial state being united in its conquest of land and desire to dominate, there was internal dissonance within the settler state and colonial administrators on the ground often faced a reality removed from the ideals of the settler colonial project. In each of the case study areas we are also introduced to the nascent local social movements and their local efforts to resist the settler colonial project. For example by giving local expression to the ‘Native Self Conscious Society’ in Chimanimani, not only do we get a sense of the role of these local movements in mobilising against the local reach of the settler state but also their varied methods to suit circumstances.

Chapters two, three and four take us through the main ground level expressions of settler colonial policy and practice on land and local governance. Through detailed local social histories, local expressions of development interventions like the NLHA and Community Development are used to show case the complexity of conquest and resistance. By focusing on the relationship between chiefs and land Chapter five draws into focus the extent to which the local social and political outcomes in these encounters depended on the characters and relationship of the two main actors at the local level- the district commissioner and the local chief. The book characterises the outcomes as one of or a combination of collaboration, co-option and falling out. All three outcomes are given currency in the two case study areas but more crucially characterise some of the learned behaviours that helped shape and define post-colonial relationship between the state and traditional authority. In a way the first five chapters showcase why the complete history of the settler colonial statecraft, especially its impact on local people and their responses, can only be fully understood from the bottom up and attempts to draw generalisations or national patterns often fail to capture the variegated responses that this book highlights.

Two key issues feature prominently as defining post-colonial statecraft are articulated in Chapters five and six. First is the state’s strategic ambivalence toward traditional institutions. On one hand these are seen as ‘compromised’ and...
unsuitable for the new democratic dispensation due to their perceived collusion with the settler colonial state. On the other hand they play a hugely symbolic role of identity and autochthony that both the settler state and the post-colonial state find useful in rural local governance. It is clear from contemporary discourses featured in Chapters seven and eight that the rehabilitation of the role of chiefs in rural local governance is complete. Traditional chiefs became in essence bureaucratised while some politicised their role. From the book one gets a sense here of continuity rather than change in the abuse of the traditional chiefs. What the book does not say however is that post-colonial statecraft was to an extent influenced by the institutional inertia of the settler state it succeeded.

Second, and related to the above is what the book correctly observes as the persistence of a technocentric streak to rural policy making. A typical example of this is the attempts to re-organise the communal areas through the CLDP and the land resettlement programme both of which bore striking resemblance to some of the programmes that the settler state attempted to implement. Because of this link and other local factors CLDP was moribund right from inception while the resettlement scheme was fraught with implementation bottlenecks. For example top down technocentric approaches in a context of the muddied politics of the early post-colonial period in Matabeleland affected resettlement in Insiza. Similarly in Chimanimani difficulties of implementing state programmes is put down to a rejection of state claims to technocratic authority over land in favour of local versions of nationalism, histories of eviction, chiefly claims and need (p. 153), and sums up the aversion that locals had to developmental populism that paid little heed to local realities.

Through the first seven chapters we clearly see the unresolved nature rural local governance through the land question and can almost understand why by the time of the farm invasions in February 2000 there was a sense of waning statecraft. This is followed through in Chapter eight which shows the systematic build up of issues leading to the Jambanja drawing on broader national economic and political discourses and practices. There is no attempt to give them local expression in the case study areas, and for this reason this chapter reads differently from the first seven. This book’s strength lies in showing variable responses to statecraft from locality to locality yet there is almost a sense in which this chapter suggests there was one set of conditions that led to the invasions across the country. We do not get to know about the specific experiences of Chimanimani and Insiza. One can guess that invasions where given local traction by existing local relations and these varied from place to place. Questions that come to mind as one reads this section include: Was there an underlying local logic to the invasions apart from the national contextual issues? Why where some farms invaded and others not? To be fair to the book logistical and political conditions on the ground are not conducive for such detailed work and this may well be a challenge for the future.

Overall this is an excellent addition to the discourses on rural local governance and land in Zimbabwe, and more specifically to our local knowledge on the variability of responses to statecraft in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. It is a good resource for students of history as much as it is for development studies and, because it is very clearly written it appeals broadly to those interested in Zimbabwe.

This is the published version of a 2003 Leiden doctorate focusing on the problems faced by Ghanaian riverine communities living downstream from the Volta (also known as Akosombo) Dam since its construction in the early 1960s and its official opening by President Nkrumah in 1966. There is much here of interest, in particular, detailed empirical information on livelihoods in the communities and their migrant extensions around the lake, and also material from locally sourced interviews with retired Volta River Authority (VRA) personnel. However, in terms of a published work it could have benefited from judicious pruning.

After a detailed discussion of concepts and methodological approaches, the next almost 150 pages deal with the history and politics of the dam’s funding, construction and plans for resettlement of displaced communities and environmental impacts. While there is a very great deal of detail given here, the analysis and discussion is limited: perhaps greater reference to, use and critique of Ronnie Graham’s 1982 book would have enabled the author both to foreground crucial broader political factors relevant to the dam’s planning and funding, at the same time, allowing cuts through the use of cross-referencing. What we are presented with is a welter of minute detail, relevant in terms of thesis background, but not reader-friendly.

However, the stated focus of the work are the fates of members of the Tongu Ewe communities downstream from the dam and also of communities, mostly originally derived from Tongu, who migrated upstream, either seasonally or for longer periods, in the years before the dam was built, and whose descendants are now members of lakeside communities. While the author sets out and critiques the VRA’s plans (and their implementation) for resettlement and compensation for community sites and lands inundated by the lake, she points out that the communities downstream that are the subjects of her study effectively received no compensation. What has happened in the years since the dam’s construction is a falling of overall river levels and the cessation of the annual floods just after the rainy season which have meant a series of changes for the worse in overall income (for example, the demise of the clam picking/ cultivation industry), and in health hazards as pollutants remain in the soil and have built up over the years. The author shows very effectively and in a gender sensitive way how these and other factors have affected lives and livelihoods of the downstream communities.

When she turns to look at the Volta Lakeside communities that have developed since the inundation, however, the dynamics of relationships between Tongu members of these communities and those downstream are less clear. The same kinds of meticulous and gender aware data are presented but the strengths and significances of links with ‘home’ areas are fuzzier. While, in pre-dam days, fishing upstream was a lucrative stage in many young men’s lives, either annually, or on a more permanent basis, now the seasonality prompting the move upstream is non-existent: the basis for forging and maintaining links between the lakeside and downstream communities has been suborned. There are so much empirical data presented in the four penultimate chapters that it is impossible to do justice to them. What seems to be happening is that the downstream communities are now indistinguishable from most other impoverished rural riverine communities, while those...
upstream still depend on fishing supplemented by subsistence farming, and in some cases seem to be being left behind by more recent arrivals from coastal fishing groups. Any implications from this data are not effectively drawn out in the four chapters and the concluding chapter is, in the classic ‘social-science-dissertation’ sense of the term, simply a summary of key points.

Overall it is not really possible to present a summary review of the book: it engages with issues on too many fronts. While I think that a more politically nuanced discussion of all aspects of the dam would be of greater benefit, it really wouldn’t fit here. This is not the main thrust of the book, rather a kind of huge tangent that takes us into another direction, a direction that Graham has already accessed and which could well be incorporated here. Where it does well is in the empirical data collection and presentation, but apart from the admittedly crucial fact that the building of the dam caused massive and life-changing (and uncompensated) changes for Tongu people, the dam could recede into the background. This would allow the consequences and implications from the data to emerge and to be framed, perhaps in terms of the livelihoods framework set out in the first chapter, and contribute more effectively to the sociological/anthropological analysis and understanding of contemporary Ghana and beyond.


Jomo has successfully edited two balanced and well-rounded volumes (one with Reinert) of considerable interest to scholars of development and African politics alike. Both volumes chart the evolution of development economics. The Pioneers of Development Economics focuses on continuities in schools of economic thought from the Renaissance onward whereas The Origins of Development Economics explains how particular individuals, some economists with a recognised and central role in the field (e.g., Friedrich List and Raúl Prebisch) and others more marginal (William Petty), have produced the diverse body of scholarship – an intellectual heritage based on insights from a range of disciplines – on which development economists, and scholars of development more generally, draw today. Both volumes essentially aim to reorient the scope of economics proper by placing the question of development – how less developed societies may achieve the same transition that produced developed, industrialised societies in the past – at the heart of the discipline.

This ‘Other Canon’ stands in contrast to the abstract, theoretical approach of classical economics based on controversial a priori assumptions regarding competition, information and equilibrium. Rejecting the ‘total fixation on their own previous work’ that characterises contemporary, orthodox (neo-classical) econ-

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nomic thought (The Pioneers, p. vii), the editors emphasise a longer and broader view on economic thinking and scholarship. A main purpose of The Origins is to ‘demonstrate the continuity in thinking on economic development’ from the pre-Smithian era to post-World War Two development economics (p. vii).

The Origins begins with an outline of broad historical approaches to development. Chapters on ‘Mercantilism’ (E. & S. Reinert) and ‘the Italian Tradition in Political Economy’ (S. Reinert) trace the development of economics as praxis to the Renaissance and to concerns about how to produce national development (Tudor England), avoid economic failure (Spain) and reverse semi-peripheralisation in declining Italian city states. A chapter on ‘German Economics’, including the historical school (E. Reinert) suggests a largely coherent tradition of thought from the seventeenth century until the World War Two. A chapter on ‘Capitalist Transformation’ (Khan) critiques the narrow classical economic emphasis on institutions such as stable property rights of whatever kind (i.e. it does not matter what property is protected and for whom, as long as property is protected) in the transition of a small number of (East Asian) developing countries to developed country status, noting instead the importance of a broad set of social and institutional factors in producing state capacity to transform.

Methodologically sophisticated chapters on ‘Growth Theory’ (Ros) and ‘International Trade’ (Dutt) explain the role of theoretical debates on growth and trade for modern development economics. Ros argues that early development economics provides a better explanation for development than does the endogenous growth literature, and that early approaches are ‘more empirically promising’ than either old or new growth theory (p. 82). Dutt reviews contributions by Rosenstein-Rodan, Nurkse, Lewis and Myrdal to trade theory and the implications thereof for developing countries. A chapter on {Latin American Structuralism and Dependency Theory} (Saad-Filho) outlines the key contributions (as well as important limitations) to the development literature by post-war structuralists and dependistas, notably the former’s rejection of linear assumptions about development in orthodox theories of development and the latter’s insistence on the impossibility of development under capitalism. Finally, ‘Development in the History of Economics’ (Szentes) outlines key contours of development economics and how it becomes a distinct field of study in the post-war era.

Relying on a standard criticism of classical economics as inevitably hampered by its abstractions and existence in a ‘ahistorical vacuum’, the authors contrast this dominant approach with the historically conscious and pragmatic approach of economic thought from the Italian tradition and the German school to structuralism, dependency theory and modern development economics. The main distinction between orthodox (neo/classical) and heterodox (development-oriented) schools of economic thought is defined in The Origins (p. vii) as the difference between social theory built on abstraction and deductive reasoning as in classical economics and that built from historical reality and inductive reasoning from the bottom up, as in the approaches from which (heterodox) modern development economics derive. Classical economics is a system of thought based on metaphors from physics, notably the enlightenment ‘mechanization of the world picture’ on which Smith’s concept of the ‘invisible hand’ was based and the 1880s physics’ emphasis on equilibrium. Development economics rely on metaphors from biology, namely references to the human body that are present in economic writings from Greek and Roman times through the Renaissance and late nineteenth-century
German economics and on ideas transplanted from Darwinian and Lamarckian evolution in the economic writings of Veblen and in Schumpeter’s ‘evolutionary economics’ (p. ix).

The Pioneers charts a history of economic thought as it relates to development by focusing in each chapter on contributions to the field by a particular individual, economist or otherwise. A companion to The Origins, this volume provides additional historical context to the thematically organised, theoretically and conceptually rich, approach of the former. Why ‘Development Economics’? (P. Patnaik) introduces the book by the purpose and central concerns of the field. Chapters on William Petty (Goodacre) and David Ricardo (U. Patnaik) emphasise the origins of economic thought in the historical experience of imperialism. Chapters on Friedrich List (Shafaeddin), Karl Marx (P. Patnaik), Vladimir Lenin (U. Patnaik), Alfred Marshall (Prendergast), Michal Kalecki (Ghosh), John Maynard Keynes (Toye), Keynes and Nicholas Kaldor (Kumar Bagchi), Karl Polanyi (Polanyi Levitt) and Alexander Gerschenkron (Chandrasekhar) highlight contributions to the field by scholars not normally identified as pioneers of development economics. Finally, chapters on Raúl Prebisch and Arthur Lewis (Polanyi Levitt) and Hans Singer (Raffer) outline ‘principal heterodox economic implications’ of recognised pioneers of development economics (p. viii).

While the intellectual complexity and manifold nuance of the schools of thoughts overviewed in The Origins and the individual economists assessed in The Pioneers at times suggest that the classical/orthodox – development/heterodox distinction can be overly crude, it nevertheless remains a useful distinction for the reader who wishes to understand fundamental intellectual conflicts in the history of economics and how these debates have shaped the field of development economics as it exists today. Economic scholarship derived from classical economic thought remains based on abstraction and controversial a priori assumptions, to its detriment when attempting answers to empirical questions regarding development in a world of states and regions in which historical processes have produced radically divergent socio-economic dynamics and developments. The heterodox school of economic thought, with its emphasis on historical record and empirical reality, remains at times excessively dependent on case-specific context, at the expense of being able to generalise findings beyond the cases and contexts in which they are initially found.

This trade-off between ‘broad’ vs. ‘deep’ understanding is an unavoidable feature of all approaches to development, and indeed to all scientific study of social phenomena. Therefore it is not very useful to suggest that one approach is superior to the other, although the implication in both of these volumes is clearly that the historical, heterodox approach is more useful to development economist wishing to understand the dilemmas faced by countries in the global south today. The most constructive way forward is not to disparage either approach, as being empirically ‘irrelevant’ (classical economics) or theoretically and methodologically unsophisticated (heterodox economics), but rather to make a strong case for the ability of each school of thought to provide a unique understanding of particular aspects of economics. A proper understanding of the strengths and limitations of each approach provides the aspiring development economics with the best equipped conceptual and theoretical ‘tool box’ for investigating the pressing economic and political puzzles of our day.

The food we buy and eat can tell powerful stories. It may seem better to simply enjoy its many culinary varieties than to think much about where it comes from, its ingredients or who produces it and how. However both our taste buds and our brain cells need a strong stimulus in order to recognize the complexities of food’s political economy. Tony Weis, professor at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, presents a highly informative narrative on these complexities in layman’s terms. Published just months prior to the eruption of this year’s global food crisis, his pocket-size book provides abundant fact-based arguments to confidently engage in political dialogue on the driving forces of a food system seemingly in perpetual crisis.

From preface to concluding chapter five, Weis disputes claims of inevitability of today’s dominant food economy. His purpose is to unsettle illusions that it is impossible to fundamentally overhaul existing conditions of agricultural production, consumption and trade. Today’s modes of high-input farming, based on a system of industrialized grain-livestock production result in a tremendously deep environmental footprint. Yet Weis demonstrates that regardless of its costs, the current food system is incapable of attaining food security on a global scale. His well-narrated assessment unveils not only the output-level dilemmas and contradictions of a system in deep crisis; it also focuses on the institutional arrangements and power-relations, predominantly of the World Trade Organization (WTO), responsible for a status quo that translates into poor nutrition, poverty and hunger for millions around the globe. WTO efforts to reinforce abstract competitive advantages of nation states by regulating trade regimes for agricultural products are seen as completely divorced from food security concerns of the global poor.

Claims made by proponents of the status quo that markets can succeed at ensuring reliable and affordable supply of nutritious food if only allowed to operate freely and with minimal state intervention, are forcefully dismissed by Weis as being ideological and catering to profit interests of transnational companies and parasitic political elites.

For Weis, the obscenity of simultaneous poles of obesity and hunger in a market-driven food economy cannot be ignored, nor is it ethically acceptable: in terms of quantity more than enough food for all is produced globally. However the purchasing power to access that food is unevenly distributed within and between countries to the extreme. As an example, the farm subsidy regimes in OECD countries cost six times as much as all OECD development aid in any given year. Indeed, it is more than shameful that ‘the average EU subsidy per cow was roughly the same (US$2) as the poverty level on which billions barely exist’. Transnational agroconglomerates, unconcerned about notions of social and cultural significance of food and associated traditions, continuously promote a global convergence of food consumption and diet patterns (such as meat-rich diets) without much concern for long-term health consequences for consumers.

Small farmers and food-security minded decision-makers in developing countries frequently find themselves short-changed with regard to viable production or policy options. As the process of global integration of national and regional food economies has intensified so has its dependence on the ‘chemical and fossil energy treadmill’. Unable to keep up, especially rural populations whose livelihoods heavily rely upon low-input,
small-scale agriculture have been squeezed out of markets and fallen below narrow poverty lines. Ultimately there seems to be little doubt, at least in the author’s mind, that the food system as we know it, is heading for a fall. Weis’ analysis allows the reader to see this year’s food crisis as an acceleration of a combination of worrisome trends underlying the global food economy. We have witnessed sharp price hikes in supermarkets in affluent societies as well as in village markets in low-income developing countries. Unsurprisingly, the poor have been affected most, many millions of whom are slipping back into food insecurity from which they only recently had seemingly freed themselves. Food riots have erupted in various places and high-level political activism, from the 2008 Food Summit in Rome, the G8 meeting in Japan to the recent Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana have all sought to present meaningful responses to the crisis at hand.

Most certainly none of these events have attempted to explore the sub-title of Weis’ book, namely, ‘The battle for the future of farming’. If they had referred to this guide to understanding and re-imagining the global food economy, they may have found that solutions to the endemic crisis of agricultural production in the global economy lie with those who are waging the battle for sustainable alternatives: the farmers, consumers and activists of civil society in North and South. Secondary responses to the recurring failures of the global food system, even commendable relief and project-level responses to the immediate hardships faced by food-insecure populations, perhaps allow for some temporary reprieve from an ongoing, livelihoods debilitating crisis. Yet root causes of the crisis are hardly touched in the process. There is little to be gained by trying to dissect such causes into their multiple, interwoven constituent factors, even though factors such as bio-fuel production, increased global demand for meat products (especially in newly affluent parts of Asia), climate change or rising fuel costs all play a role. Debate on tomorrow’s food system that is organized as a fundamental departure from the uncertainties inherent in the food economy of today, is best to be based on a firm critical analysis and factual footing. With his important book on this vital topic, Tony Weis has provided nothing less than a solid departure point for such debate.

Editor’s Note: ROAPE would like to take up the challenge in this review, that is ‘the battle for farming in Africa’. If you are interested in working with us, please get in touch with me, Jan Burgess – editor@roape.org

Many thanks and goodbye to Rita Abrahamsen for taking this much-neglected Book Reviews section and making it the ‘must read’ of the journal – according to our subscribers who are very impressed! You’ll also note that we are now including both film and theatre reviews – is there anything else you’d like to see here? If so, get in touch with Branwen Gruffydd-Jones who takes over from Rita in 2009. Her e-mail address is: b.gruffydd-jones@gold.ac.uk

Erratum
‘Child Poverty in Africa’ by Meredith Turshen in ROAPE No. 117, September 2008. Apologies to the author and Dharam Ghai for a mis-quoted sentence (page 499). It should read as follows: ‘Urban Jonsson, former senior advisor to UNICEF on Human Rights Based Approach to Programming, pointed out that Africa has changed since 1960; there is more peace, more efforts for democracy, an end to apartheid. AIDS has crushed many dreams.’ A corrected online version will appear in December 2008.

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Mainstream development theory argues that countries develop through their own actions: freeing trade and investment, establishing legal institutions conducive to private investment, liberalising markets, educating in a particular way, eliminating wasteful state spending and improving governance. The history of developed countries is cited as an appropriate template. Poor countries wishing to catch up are advised to immerse themselves in the fair and benign international economy.

Ray Bush’s *Poverty and Liberalism* is a blistering, heterodox critique of each item of this current orthodoxy. Poverty arises, he maintains, not from the failure of countries and groups to incorporate themselves in the world economy but from the fact that they are incorporated in it, but in an unequal and misshapen way. Poverty ‘is not about being left behind but about being actively excluded from an unjust and unequal system of wealth creation’. This system, especially in the countries where poverty is most persistent, predominantly takes the form of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ – David Harvey’s useful renaming of Marx’s primitive or primary accumulation, so strongly emphasised by Rosa Luxemburg. The progressive commoditisation of a growing number of human activities frequently, as Bush explains, results in the accumulation of poverty. History, far from being a template for the future, explains how the globalisation of capitalist accumulation produced and produces some convergence but also much polarisation.

After an initial chapter setting out this theoretical perspective and discussing the interconnection between African impoverishment and the post-1980 neoliberal tsunami, Bush uses the ideas as the backbone of a well-structured set of chapters, each on one crucial issue in the study of development. The first is about international aid – in particular Tony Blair’s and the G8’s plans to ‘rescue’ Africa (in which another frequent theme – the egregious hypocrisy of donors – rightly receives several mentions). This is followed by chapters on migration, land, mining and resources (including the ‘resource curse’), and food and famine. Each of these attacks mainstream approaches and counters with an analysis based on the guiding idea of the book – that the problem is not simple and quantitative (how much integration in the system?) but complex and qualitative (what kind of integration and what kind of system?). His conclusion about the land question is typical of others: ‘the problem is not weak tenure or that producers are insufficiently integrated or are part of imperfect markets: the problem is the market itself and the commoditization of everyday life’.

All this is helpfully illustrated with historical and contemporary empirical material about debt cancellation, migrants’ remittances, land reform in Egypt and Zimbabwe, mining in Africa – themes which all echo Rosa Luxemburg writing a century ago – as well as a narrative about the relationship between
of workers and investors to pull away from everyone else’. While neoliberals advise yet more of the same, the left has to go beyond its own clichés and provide a coherent answer to the scandal of persistent mass poverty in a rich world. Ray Bush’s clear, thoughtful and provocative contribution to that task is a valuable resource for those concerned with poverty and development, especially in Africa.


The concept of the prison as a place of detention was introduced to sub-Saharan Africa by colonial powers in the 19th century, largely as a means of subduing the indigenous populations. This legacy remains obvious today in the fortress style of many of the prisons in the region, such as that in the Rwandan town of Cyangugu, built by the Belgians in the 1930s, which is on the cover of Carina Tertstakian’s disturbing book. In Rwanda the rate of imprisonment is about 979 per 100,000 of the population. This is the highest in the world, ahead even of the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This means that about one person in every hundred of the population is in prison. This book explains why this is so and describes in stark detail what the consequences are for the prisoners.

Carina Tertsakian is very well placed to write a book such as this, having been directly involved in Rwanda for a decade with international NGOs. At the core of the book is an amazing series of
interviews which she undertook with men and women languishing in the country’s prisons. For anyone who knows prisons in Africa, these interviews ring true in the way that they capture the humanity which can exist in the midst of extreme adversity and the acceptance of inevitable reality. The author helpfully sketches the national context which is all too well known, but this is not a book about the tragedy of Rwanda. It is primarily a record of the experience of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Tertsakian is clearly a sympathetic listener who allows the prisoners to speak in their own words. In most cases, she passes no judgement on what they are saying about the reasons which have brought them to prison. Instead, she quotes directly from the tortuous experiences which they have had, in many cases while they wait to be charged over a period of many years.

‘The suffering which continued silently in the prisons year after year was of a particularly inconvenient kind: these men and women dying of overcrowding, disease and ill-treatment were not the usual innocent victims. The vast majority were accused of genocide and there was little sympathy for their plight. The fact that most of them had not even been tried or charged – and that many therefore may have been innocent – did not seem to matter. Thus, over the years, the prison situation became an accepted feature of post-genocide Rwanda’ (p.16).

The prison system simply could not cope with the number of prisoners, which peaked at around 130,000 in 1998. Overcrowding in the prisons of Western Europe usually means two or at most three prisoners crammed into a cell designed to hold one. In Rwanda it meant that prisoners had forty centimetres of personal space in which to sleep, eat, sit and live. The ‘château’ of the title does not refer to the castellated prison buildings. It is the ironic name given by the fortunate prisoners who have two planks of wood as their own personal space. The less fortunate live and sleep on the ground, in corridors, in toilets or shower spaces, on top of septic tanks or in the open air.

In one of the most moving chapters the author describes the scene when families come to visit:

The first group of prisoners, around 50 of them, emerges from the gate and sits down on the nearest row of long benches … A guard whistles and the first group of visitors lunges forward to take their seats on the second row of benches … There is a frantic exchange of provisions and full and empty containers, and a frantic exchange of words … Suddenly, one of the guards blows his whistle again and the visitors have to leave … from the first whistle to the second whistle, the visit has lasted less than two minutes (p.250).

In unemotional language, often through the voices of the prisoners, Tertsakian describes the added difficulties for women prisoners, for minors, for the elderly, for the sick and for those sentenced to death. She also notes the complete lack of support for prisoners who are eventually released, as well as the lack of concern from the international community:

The crisis in the prisons – which would have provoked outrage had it occurred in almost any other country – elicited barely any response from foreign governments (p.353).

There is little evidence that this nightmare is coming to an end. When Tertsakian conducted her research, the prison population stood at around 85,000. She ends the book by reporting that in May 2007 it stood around 92,000. This powerful book places a spotlight on the continuing tragedy of prisons in Rwanda, which remain a blot on humanity. It deserves to be widely read and to act as a spur for international action.
Théodore Trefon, who directs the ‘Contemporary History’ section of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Brussels, has written a fascinating, rich, lively and overall superb book on the resilience of the Congolese administrative apparatus in a time of state failure. The book is based on in-depth case studies of the interactions between individuals in different social universes and administrative branches of the state in the town of Lubumbashi, Congo’s second largest city with about 1.5m people, in the province of Katanga. It details the daily routines and state-induced vexations of a charcoal transporter, a baker, a construction material salesman, a taxi driver, a retired civil servant, a paralegal restaurant owner, a widow housewife and mother of 11, a preacher, a street foreign exchange broker, and a cyber-café manager.

In addition to the unique empirical material of the book, one of Trefon’s main contributions is the theoretical introduction, which provides analytical context and conceptual structure to the case studies. To the question of ‘why the administration persists’ (p.13) despite its deliquescence in providing the Congolese with the services it was intended for, Trefon offers a triply layered answer. The Congolese administration persists because it is instrumentalised by political elites for their own advantage (particularly as a source of revenue); because it is privatised by public officials as part of their own strategies of personal survival; and because individual citizens still need the administration, even when they largely substitute themselves to it in providing services. This latter point is particularly interesting. For example, parents pool their resources to pay the salaries of public teachers, largely abandoned by the state, and thereby facilitate the reproduction of the public education system. They do so, rather than starting new alternative private schools, because they value the state diploma which they see as giving their children access to formal employment.

Although the introduction alone provides a thorough and rigorous contribution to the topic and is worthy of publication on its own, it is the empirical material in the subsequent case studies, or individual vignettes, which is most stunning, informative and original. It also often makes for captivating reading. Most striking are the innumerable layers of administration and control enforced upon the Congolese and the equally numerous taxes and levies which administrative agencies impose. Starting with ministers, the administration expands downwards through secretaries-general, directors, division chiefs, bureau chiefs, chiefs of provincial divisions, provincial bureau chiefs, section chiefs, cell chiefs, chiefs of urban services, chiefs of sub-sections and sub-cells, mayors, burgomasters, chiefs of neighborhood and street chiefs (pp. 143-147), illustrating in the process the universality and decentralization of ‘Big Man’ politics. As for taxes, the city and communes of Lubumbashi alone inflict no less than 26 taxes on its residents (p. 149). And state agents invent many more.

The resulting totalitarianism (my word, not Trefon’s) of the weak state makes peoples’ lives miserable. The story of the retired railroad worker hanging on to his official documents for dear life (pp. 85-93) is poignant, as is the vulnerability of the charcoal trader in the face of public harassment (pp. 47-54) and that of the widow struggling to secure water and electricity for her household of 11 children (pp.101-112).
The book’s methodology also deserves mention. Trefon has collaborated with Bathazar Ngoy of the University of Lubumbashi and with the latter’s students in political science who were trained in questionnaire administration and managed the surveys in the Lubumbashi neighborhoods, which produced the case studies. Trefon’s book is *politique par le bas* at its best. The Congolese state repeatedly comes to life for the reader in all its daily Kafkaesque arbitrariness at the grassroots. The resulting picture is one where there seems to be no greater impediment to life than the state itself. Yet, people have learned to live with it. In fact, the resilience of citizens in the face of a relentlessly exploitative administration is probably as remarkable as the resilience of the state itself. Moreover, the book clearly illustrates how the very actions of citizens, driven by necessity, often help reproduce the administration.

If Trefon’s book is to have a weakness (at least for the Anglophone reader), it will be that it is written in French (although there is an excellent English summary of the main argument at the beginning). Its contribution to the study of the African state in general and Congo in particular is so significant that an English version cannot come too soon.


This book addresses the interface which exists between the often quite disparate disciplines of philosophy and literature, and does so within the context of the African conditions of poverty, corruption, and state ineptitude. It talks to the contrasting scenarios and explanatory frameworks of two of the continent’s outstanding novelists – Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o – whose books likely constitute Africa’s most familiar and stimulating texts of the post-Independence period. However, I finished reading Okolo with a mixed reaction.

As she states in the introduction, her study provides ‘an intellectual and analytic framework within which the African experience can be conceptualized, interpreted and reorganized’ (p.2); here she investigates the relationship between literature and society. This is undertaken by considering the political components of Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savanna* (1987) and Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood* (1977). The former sees Africa’s problems as a result of ‘internal’ corruption, state failure, ineptitude, and the privatization of the public resources, while the latter points to leadership, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism as the basic sources. The foundation of Okolo’s analysis is political philosophy (providing a worldview and critical reflection) upon which the writings of the two authors are considered (first in general by investigating their several other novels, then in detail for *Anthills* and *Petals*). As the analysis develops, the writings of some additional novelists such as Soyinka, Sembene, and Armah are interrogated. She finalises her study by comparing the authors in terms of their perspectives on the African condition and on possible social reconstruction. Therein resides

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the work’s strength; it is rendered powerful and insightful by her selection of authors. The chosen authors speak to the causes in thoughtful and contrasting manners. Their works ‘provoke people into assessing and criticizing’ (p.28).

Here, she categorises the comments in terms of themes important in the understanding of the African condition in several social science disciplines: alienation, power, gender, ideology, leadership, and citizenship.

However, the text suffers from a ‘deja vu’ reading. These texts by Ngugi and Achebe will be quite familiar to most readers of this journal; it is quite well-known that they depicted both Africa’s ills and their causes. Further, the philosophical framework presented by Okolo is elementary (and largely ‘western’, other than Gandhi – where are Africa’s thinkers?). And, the reader asks: Where are the novel insights resulting from political philosophy? And so too, her Marxism adds little that has not already been stated or analysed by others. In fact, the originality of the issues raised was a basic concern – many have commented on these texts previously, and so the author’s critique is especially thoughtful – but it is mostly a revisit, a synthetic essay which collates what others have indicated previously.

An issue not found in Okolo’s otherwise thoughtful, well-organised, and profound LitCrit relates to the silences of these novels – to the fundamental issues not discussed in these books. They disregard certain aspects which are fundamental to the understanding of the African condition and its possible solution: I expected the author to indicate these. They include ethnicity, religion, urbanisation, regionalism, redistribution, population growth, civil wars, diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, the transition from an economy of affection to neo-liberalism – and (especially in a Marxist critique) the articulation of the modes of production. These are matters

which are of critical importance in understanding the African condition. We are told what the novels say, but not what they omit.

The difficulty that this analysis illustrates is unfortunately one that affects our brother and sister scholars in Africa. University libraries on the continent are sadly deficient. Research funds are scarce or unavailable. Besides, with huge classes and the demands of family and kin, few find time for original research. As well, there is an important temporal dimension in that today’s scholars were raised under these same conditions which their mentors faced. It is unfortunately indexed in journals on Africa published in Canada, the UK, the US, and elsewhere in the First World: there are few African authors from the continent because of matters of timing, quality, writing, and novelty. There are notable exceptions to this generality, but this condition is a sad reality.

The voices of the novels provide an initial understanding of Africa’s social, political, and economic contexts. The issue addressed by Okolo’s investigation are important; the ‘voices’ of literature speak to the African condition. Much can be learned from what they tell us, and also from what they do not say. However, it is unfortunate that the present text is largely a re-visit of writers of 20-30 years ago, and that both the realm of African philosophy is ignored, as are the messages of contemporary writers.

__________________________
This book is about colonial and post-colonial statecraft and the rural resource governance issues at the centre of a still unfolding socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. Divided into eight well researched, detailed and analytically sound chapters, the book deals with the complexities of statecraft played out in the contentious land question. The first four chapters talk to pre-1980 settler colonial dynamics with the next four looking at the post-colonial state after 1980 and into the post-February 2000 crisis.

Writing about colonial Zimbabwe and the histories of dispossession is always a challenge as this is now a well trodden path. Any new book tackling this area has the challenge of bringing something new to the story. The first four chapters of this book manage to do this by talking to the broader discourses of colonial statecraft viewed from the local social histories in Insiza and Chimanimani, the case study areas. Through detailed and well sourced narratives Chapter 1 takes us through the unsettled politics of pre-colonial Zimbabwe showing in both case study areas how shifting allegiances, contested loyalties and the fluid politics of rural governance find local expression. Above all else this section highlights an often overlooked fact which is that in spite of the settler colonial state being united in its conquest of land and desire to dominate, there was internal dissonance within the settler state and colonial administrators on the ground often faced a reality removed from the ideals of the settler colonial project. In each of the case study areas we are also introduced to the nascent local social movements and their local efforts to resist the settler colonial project. For example by giving local expression to the ‘Native Self Conscious Society’ in Chimanimani, not only do we get a sense of the role of these local movements in mobilising against the local reach of the settler state but also their varied methods to suit circumstances.

Chapters two, three and four take us through the main ground level expressions of settler colonial policy and practice on land and local governance. Through detailed local social histories, local expressions of development interventions like the NLHA and Community Development are used to show case the complexity of conquest and resistance. By focusing on the relationship between chiefs and land Chapter five draws into focus the extent to which the local social and political outcomes in these encounters depended on the characters and relationship of the two main actors at the local level-the district commissioner and the local chief. The book characterises the outcomes as one of or a combination of collaboration, co-option and falling out. All three outcomes are given currency in the two case study areas but more crucially characterise some of the learned behaviours that helped shape and define post-colonial relationship between the state and traditional authority. In a way the first five chapters showcase why the complete history of the settler colonial statecraft, especially its impact on local people and their responses, can only be fully understood from the bottom up and attempts to draw generalisations or national patterns often fail to capture the variegated responses that this book highlights.

Two key issues feature prominently as defining post-colonial statecraft are articulated in Chapters five and six. First is the state’s strategic ambivalence toward traditional institutions. On one hand these are seen as ‘compromised’ and...
unsuitable for the new democratic dispensation due to their perceived collusion with the settler colonial state. On the other hand they play a hugely symbolic role of identity and autochthony that both the settler state and the post-colonial state find useful in rural local governance. It is clear from contemporary discourses featured in Chapters seven and eight that the rehabilitation of the role of chiefs in rural local governance is complete. Traditional chiefs became in essence bureaucratised while some politicised their role. From the book one gets a sense here of continuity rather than change in the ab(use) of the traditional chiefs. What the book does not say however is that post-colonial statecraft was to an extent influenced by the institutional inertia of the settler state it succeeded.

Second, and related to the above is what the book correctly observes as the persistence of a technocentric streak to rural policy making. A typical example of this is the attempts to re-organise the communal areas through the CLDP and the land resettlement programme both of which bore striking resemblance to some of the programmes that the settler state attempted to implement. Because of this link and other local factors CLDP was moribund right from inception while the resettlement scheme was fraught with implementation bottlenecks. For example top down technocentric approaches in a context of the muddied politics of the early post-colonial period in Matabeleland affected resettlement in Insiza. Similarly in Chimanimani difficulties of implementing state programmes is put down to a 'rejection of state claims to technocratic authority over land in favour of local versions of nationalism, histories of eviction, chiefly claims and need' (p. 153), and sums up the aversion that locals had to developmental populism that paid little heed to local realities.

Through the first seven chapters we clearly see the unresolved nature rural local governance through the land question and can almost understand why by the time of the farm invasions in February 2000 there was a sense of waning statecraft. This is followed through in Chapter eight which shows the systematic build up of issues leading to the Jambanja drawing on broader national economic and political discourses and practices. There is no attempt to give them local expression in the case study areas, and for this reason this chapter reads differently from the first seven. This book's strength lies in showing variable responses to statecraft from locality to locality yet there is almost a sense in which this chapter suggests there was one set of conditions that led to the invasions across the country. We do not get to know about the specific experiences of Chimanimani and Insiza. One can guess that invasions where given local traction by existing local relations and these varied from place to place. Questions that come to mind as one reads this section include: Was there an underlying local logic to the invasions apart from the national contextual issues? Why where some farms invaded and others not? To be fair to the book logistical and political conditions on the ground are not conducive for such detailed work and this may well be a challenge for the future.

Overall this is an excellent addition to the discourses on rural local governance and land in Zimbabwe, and more specifically to our local knowledge on the variability of responses to statecraft in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. It is a good resource for students of history as much as it is for development studies and, because it is very clearly written it appeals broadly to those interested in Zimbabwe.

This is the published version of a 2003 Leiden doctorate focusing on the problems faced by Ghanaian riverine communities living downstream from the Volta (also known as Akosombo) Dam since its construction in the early 1960s and its official opening by President Nkrumah in 1966. There is much here of interest, in particular, detailed empirical information on livelihoods in the communities and their migrant extensions around the lake, and also material from locally sourced interviews with retired Volta River Authority (VRA) personnel. However, in terms of a published work it could have benefited from judicious pruning.

After a detailed discussion of concepts and methodological approaches, the next almost 150 pages deal with the history and politics of the dam’s funding, construction and plans for resettlement of displaced communities and environmental impacts. While there is a very great deal of detail given here, the analysis and discussion is limited: perhaps greater reference to, use and critique of Ronnie Graham’s 1982 book would have enabled the author both to foreground crucial broader political factors relevant to the dam’s planning and funding, at the same time, allowing cuts through the use of cross-referencing. What we are presented with is a welter of minute detail, relevant in terms of thesis background, but not reader-friendly.

However, the stated focus of the work are the fates of members of the Tongu Ewe communities downstream from the dam and also of communities, mostly originally derived from Tongu, who migrated upstream, either seasonally or for longer periods, in the years before the dam was built, and whose descendants are now members of lakeside communities. While the author sets out and critiques the VRA’s plans (and their implementation) for resettlement and compensation for community sites and lands inundated by the lake, she points out that the communities downstream that are the subjects of her study effectively received no compensation. What has happened in the years since the dam’s construction is a falling of overall river levels and the cessation of the annual floods just after the rainy season which have meant a series of changes for the worse in overall income (for example, the demise of the clam picking/cultivation industry), and in health hazards as pollutants remain in the soil and have built up over the years. The author shows very effectively and in a gender sensitive way how these and other factors have affected lives and livelihoods of the downstream communities.

When she turns to look at the Volta Lakeside communities that have developed since the inundation, however, the dynamics of relationships between Tongu members of these communities and those downstream are less clear. The same kinds of meticulous and gender aware data are presented but the strengths and significances of links with ‘home’ areas are fuzzier. While, in pre-dam days, fishing upstream was a lucrative stage in many young men’s lives, either annually, or on a more permanent basis, now the seasonality prompting the move upstream is non-existent: the basis for forging and maintaining links between the lakeside and downstream communities has been suborned. There are so much empirical data presented in the four penultimate chapters that it is impossible to do justice to them. What seems to be happening is that the downstream communities are now indistinguishable from most other impoverished rural riverine communities, while those

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upstream still depend on fishing supplemented by subsistence farming, and in some cases seem to be being left behind by more recent arrivals from coastal fishing groups. Any implications from this data are not effectively drawn out in the four chapters and the concluding chapter is, in the classic ‘social-science-dissertation’ sense of the term, simply a summary of key points.

Overall it is not really possible to present a summary review of the book: it engages with issues on too many fronts. While I think that a more politically nuanced discussion of all aspects of the dam would be of greater benefit, it really wouldn’t fit here. This is not the main thrust of the book, rather a kind of huge tangent that takes us into another direction, a direction that Graham has already accessed and which could well be incorporated here. Where it does well is in the empirical data collection and presentation, but apart from the admittedly crucial fact that the building of the dam caused massive and life-changing (and uncompensated) changes for Tongu people, the dam could recede into the background. This would allow the consequences and implications from the data to emerge and to be framed, perhaps in terms of the livelihoods framework set out in the first chapter, and contribute more effectively to the sociological/anthropological analysis and understanding of contemporary Ghana and beyond.


Jomo has successfully edited two balanced and well-rounded volumes (one with Reinert) of considerable interest to scholars of development and African politics alike. Both volumes chart the evolution of development economics. The Pioneers of Development Economics focuses on continuities in schools of economic thought from the Renaissance onward whereas The Origins of Development Economics explains how particular individuals, some economists with a recognised and central role in the field (e.g., Friedrich List and Raúl Prebisch) and others more marginal (William Petty), have produced the diverse body of scholarship – an intellectual heritage based on insights from a range of disciplines – on which development economists, and scholars of development more generally, draw today. Both volumes essentially aim to reorient the scope of economics proper by placing the question of development – how less developed societies may achieve the same transition that produced developed, industrialised societies in the past – at the heart of the discipline.

This ‘Other Canon’ stands in contrast to the abstract, theoretical approach of classical economics based on controversial a priori assumptions regarding competition, information and equilibrium. Rejecting the ‘total fixation on their own previous work’ that characterises contemporary, orthodox (neo-classical) eco-
nomic thought (The Pioneers, p. vii), the editors emphasise a longer and broader view on economic thinking and scholarship. A main purpose of The Origins is to ‘demonstrate the continuity in thinking on economic development’ from the pre-Smithian era to post-World War Two development economics (p. vii).

The Origins begins with an outline of broad historical approaches to development. Chapters on ‘Mercantilism’ (E. & S. Reinert) and ‘the Italian Tradition in Political Economy’ (S. Reinert) trace the development of economics as praxis to the Renaissance and to concerns about how to produce national development (Tudor England), avoid economic failure (Spain) and reverse semi-peripheralisation in declining Italian city states. A chapter on ‘German Economics’, including the historical school (E. Reinert) suggests a largely coherent tradition of thought from the seventeenth century until the World War Two. A chapter on ‘Capitalist Transformation’ (Khan) critiques the narrow classical economic emphasis on institutions such as stable property rights of whatever kind (i.e. it does not matter what property is protected and for whom, as long as property is protected) in the transition of a small number of (East Asian) developing countries to developed country status, noting instead the importance of a broad set of social and institutional factors in producing state capacity to transform.

Methodologically sophisticated chapters on ‘Growth Theory’ (Ros) and ‘International Trade’ (Dutt) explain the role of theoretical debates on growth and trade for modern development economics. Ros argues that early development economics provides a better explanation for development than does the endogenous growth literature, and that early approaches are ‘more empirically promising’ than either old or new growth Theory (p. 82). Dutt reviews contributions by Rosenstein-Rodan, Nurkse, Lewis and Myrdal to trade theory and the implications thereof for developing countries. A chapter on {Latin American Structuralism and Dependency Theory} (Saad-Filho) outlines the key contributions (as well as important limitations) to the development literature by post-war structuralists and dependistas, notably the former’s rejection of linear assumptions about development in orthodox theories of development and the latter’s insistence on the impossibility of development under capitalism. Finally, ‘Development in the History of Economics’ (Szentes) outlines key contours of development economics and how it becomes a distinct field of study in the post-war era.

Relying on a standard criticism of classical economics as inevitably hampered by its abstractions and existence in a ‘ahistorical vacuum’, the authors contrast this dominant approach with the historically conscious and pragmatic approach of economic thought from the Italian tradition and the German school to structuralism, dependency theory and modern development economics. The main distinction between orthodox (neo/ classical) and heterodox (development-oriented) schools of economic thought is defined in The Origins (p. vii) as the difference between social theory built on abstraction and deductive reasoning as in classical economics and that built from historical reality and inductive reasoning from the bottom up, as in the approaches from which (heterodox) modern development economics derive. Classical economics is a system of thought based on metaphors from physics, notably the enlightenment ‘mechanization of the world picture’ on which Smith’s concept of the ‘invisible hand’ was based and the 1880s physics’ emphasis on equilibrium. Development economics rely on metaphors from biology, namely references to the human body that are present in economic writings from Greek and Roman times through the Renaissance and late nineteenth-century
German economics and on ideas transplanted from Darwinian and Lamarckian evolution in the economic writings of Veblen and in Schumpeter’s ‘evolutionary economics’ (p. ix).

*The Pioneers* charts a history of economic thought as it relates to development by focusing in each chapter on contributions to the field by a particular individual, economist or otherwise. A companion to *The Origins*, this volume provides additional historical context to the thematically organised, theoretically and conceptually rich, approach of the former. Why ‘Development Economics’? (P. Patnaik) introduces the book by the purpose and central concerns of the field. Chapters on William Petty (Goodacre) and David Ricardo (U. Patnaik) emphasise the origins of economic thought in the historical experience of imperialism. Chapters on Friedrich List (Shafaeddin), Karl Marx (P. Patnaik), Vladimir Lenin (U. Patnaik), Alfred Marshall (Prendergast), Michal Kalecki (Ghosh), John Maynard Keynes (Toye), Keynes and Nicholas Kaldor (Kumar Bagchi), Karl Polanyi (Polanyi Levitt) and Alexander Gerschenkron (Chandrasekhar) highlight contributions to the field by scholars not normally identified as pioneers of development economics. Finally, chapters on Raúl Prebisch and Arthur Lewis (Polanyi Levitt) and Hans Singer (Raffer) outline ‘principal heterodox economic implications’ of recognised pioneers of development economics (p. viii).

While the intellectual complexity and manifold nuance of the schools of thoughts overviewed in *The Origins* and the individual economists assessed in *The Pioneers* at times suggest that the classical/orthodox – development/heterodox distinction can be overly crude, it nevertheless remains a useful distinction for the reader who wishes to understand fundamental intellectual conflicts in the history of economics and how these debates have shaped the field of development economics as it exists today. Economic scholarship derived from classical economic thought remains based on abstraction and controversial *a priori* assumptions, to its detriment when attempting answers to empirical questions regarding development in a world of states and regions in which historical processes have produced radically divergent socio-economic dynamics and developments. The heterodox school of economic thought, with its emphasis on historical record and empirical reality, remains at times excessively dependent on case-specific context, at the expense of being able to generalise findings beyond the cases and contexts in which they are initially found.

This trade-off between ‘broad’ vs. ‘deep’ understanding is an unavoidable feature of all approaches to development, and indeed to all scientific study of social phenomena. Therefore it is not very useful to suggest that one approach is superior to the other, although the implication in both of these volumes is clearly that the historical, heterodox approach is more useful to development economist wishing to understand the dilemmas faced by countries in the global south today. The most constructive way forward is not to disparage either approach, as being empirically ‘irrelevant’ (classical economics) or theoretically and methodologically unsophisticated (heterodox economics), but rather to make a strong case for the ability of each school of thought to provide a unique understanding of particular aspects of economics. A proper understanding of the strengths and limitations of each approach provides the aspiring development economics with the best equipped conceptual and theoretical ‘tool box’ for investigating the pressing economic and political puzzles of our day.

The food we buy and eat can tell powerful stories. It may seem better to simply enjoy its many culinary varieties than to think much about where it comes from, its ingredients or who produces it and how. However both our taste buds and our brain cells need a strong stimulus in order to recognize the complexities of food’s political economy. Tony Weis, professor at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, presents a highly informative narrative on these complexities in layman’s terms. Published just months prior to the eruption of this year’s global food crisis, his pocket-size book provides abundant fact-based arguments to confidently engage in political dialogue on the driving forces of a food system seemingly in perpetual crisis.

From preface to concluding chapter five, Weis disputes claims of inevitability of today’s dominant food economy. His purpose is to unsettle illusions that it is impossible to fundamentally overhaul existing conditions of agricultural production, consumption and trade. Today’s modes of high-input farming, based on a system of industrialized grain-livestock production result in a tremendously deep environmental footprint. Yet Weis demonstrates that regardless of its costs, the current food system is incapable of attaining food security on a global scale. His well-narrated assessment unveils not only the output-level dilemmas and contradictions of a system in deep crisis; it also focuses on the institutional arrangements and power-relations, predominantly of the World Trade Organization (WTO), responsible for a status quo that translates into poor nutrition, poverty and hunger for millions around the globe. WTO efforts to reinforce abstract competitive advantages of nation states by regulating trade regimes for agricultural products are seen as completely divorced from food security concerns of the global poor.

Claims made by proponents of the status quo that markets can succeed at ensuring reliable and affordable supply of nutritious food if only allowed to operate freely and with minimal state intervention, are forcefully dismissed by Weis as being ideological and catering to profit interests of transnational companies and parasitic political elites.

For Weis, the obscenity of simultaneous poles of obesity and hunger in a market-driven food economy cannot be ignored, nor is it ethically acceptable: in terms of quantity more than enough food for all is produced globally. However the purchasing power to access that food is unevenly distributed within and between countries to the extreme. As an example, the farm subsidy regimes in OECD countries cost six times as much as all OECD development aid in any given year. Indeed, it is more than shameful that ‘the average EU subsidy per cow was roughly the same (US$2) as the poverty level on which billions barely exist’. Transnational agro-conglomerates, unconcerned about notions of social and cultural significance of food and associated traditions, continuously promote a global convergence of food consumption and diet patterns (such as meat-rich diets) without much concern for long-term health consequences for consumers.

Small farmers and food-security minded decision-makers in developing countries frequently find themselves short-changed with regard to viable production or policy options. As the process of global integration of national and regional food economies has intensified so has its dependence on the ‘chemical and fossil energy treadmill’. Unable to keep up, especially rural populations whose livelihoods heavily rely upon low-input,
small-scale agriculture have been squeezed out of markets and fallen below narrow poverty lines. Ultimately there seems to be little doubt, at least in the author’s mind, that the food system as we know it, is heading for a fall. Weis’ analysis allows the reader to see this year’s food crisis as an acceleration of a combination of worrisome trends underlying the global food economy. We have witnessed sharp price hikes in supermarkets in affluent societies as well as in village markets in low-income developing countries. Unsurprisingly, the poor have been affected most, many millions of whom are slipping back into food insecurity from which they only recently had seemingly freed themselves. Food riots have erupted in various places and high-level political activism, from the 2008 Food Summit in Rome, the G8 meeting in Japan to the recent Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana have all sought to present meaningful responses to the crisis at hand.

Most certainly none of these events have attempted to explore the sub-title of Weis’ book, namely, ‘The battle for the future of farming’. If they had referred to this guide to understanding and reimagining the global food economy, they may have found that solutions to the endemic crisis of agricultural production in the global economy lie with those who are waging the battle for sustainable alternatives: the farmers, consumers and activists of civil society in North and South. Secondary responses to the recurring failures of the global food system, even commendable relief and project-level responses to the immediate hardships faced by food-insecure populations, perhaps allow for some temporary respite from an ongoing, livelihoods debilitating crisis. Yet root causes of the crisis are hardly touched in the process. There is little to be gained by trying to dissect such causes into their multiple, interwoven constituent factors, even though factors such as bio-fuel production, increased global demand for meat products (especially in newly affluent parts of Asia), climate change or rising fuel costs all play a role. Debate on tomorrow’s food system that is organized as a fundamental departure from the uncertainties inherent in the food economy of today, is best to be based on a firm critical analysis and factual footing. With his important book on this vital topic, Tony Weis has provided nothing less than a solid departure point for such debate.

Editor’s Note: ROAPE would like to take up the challenge in this review, that is ‘the battle for farming in Africa’. If you are interested in working with us, please get in touch with me, Jan Burgess – editor@roape.org

Erratum

‘Child Poverty in Africa’ by Meredith Turshen in ROAPE No. 117, September 2008. Apologies to the author and Dharam Ghi for a mis-quoted sentence (page 499). It should read as follows: Urban Jonsson, former senior advisor to UNICEF on Human Rights Based Approach to Programming, pointed out that Africa has changed since 1960; there is more peace, more efforts for democracy, an end to apartheid. AIDS has crushed many dreams.’ A corrected online version will appear in December 2008.

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Book Reviews


Mainstream development theory argues that countries develop through their own actions: freeing trade and investment, establishing legal institutions conducive to private investment, liberalising markets, educating in a particular way, eliminating wasteful state spending and improving governance. The history of developed countries is cited as an appropriate template. Poor countries wishing to catch up are advised to immerse themselves in the fair and benign international economy.

Ray Bush’s Poverty and Liberalism is a blistering, heterodox critique of each item of this current orthodoxy. Poverty arises, he maintains, not from the failure of countries and groups to incorporate themselves in the world economy but from the fact that they are incorporated in it, but in an unequal and misshapen way. Poverty ‘is not about being left behind but about being actively excluded from an unjust and unequal system of wealth creation’. This system, especially in the countries where poverty is most persistent, predominantly takes the form of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ – David Harvey’s useful renaming of Marx’s primitive or primary accumulation, so strongly emphasised by Rosa Luxemburg. The progressive commoditisation of a growing number of human activities frequently, as Bush explains, results in the accumulation of poverty. History, far from being a template for the future, explains how the globalisation of capitalist accumulation produced and produces some convergence but also much polarisation.

After an initial chapter setting out this theoretical perspective and discussing the interconnection between African impoverishment and the post-1980 neoliberal tsunami, Bush uses the ideas as the backbone of a well-structured set of chapters, each on one crucial issue in the study of development. The first is about international aid – in particular Tony Blair’s and the G8’s plans to ‘rescue’ Africa (in which another frequent theme – the egregious hypocrisy of donors – rightly receives several mentions). This is followed by chapters on migration, land, mining and resources (including the ‘resource curse’), and food and famine. Each of these attacks mainstream approaches and counters with an analysis based on the guiding idea of the book – that the problem is not simple and quantitative (how much integration in the system?) but complex and qualitative (what kind of integration and what kind of system?). His conclusion about the land question is typical of others: ‘the problem is not weak tenure or that producers are insufficiently integrated or are part of imperfect markets: the problem is the market itself and the commoditization of everyday life’.

All this is helpfully illustrated with historical and contemporary empirical material about debt cancellation, migrants’ remittances, land reform in Egypt and Zimbabwe, mining in Africa – themes which all echo Rosa Luxemburg writing a century ago – as well as a narrative about the relationship between
the development of the oil industry, land struggles and sectarian conflicts in Sudan. Telling instances are also taken from the experience of Middle East and North African countries which the author has particularly studied.

In the final chapter Bush sets out many ideas around which resistance to persistent poverty might be organised. Here are mentions or echoes of Marx, Luxemburg, the narodniks, anarchism, feminism, the defence of indigenous peoples and the importance of ‘infrapolitics’ – the everyday resistance of ordinary individuals, households and neighbourhoods. Ray Bush’s conviction that this spirit of resistance is not extinct means that a gloomy story does not lead to a pessimistic prognosis. Some readers might view this chapter as insufficiently programmatic but I found it refreshingly eclectic. It also contains a needed broadside against the neoliberal ‘governance’ formula (transparency, reducing corruption by lowering the importance of the state and more ‘civil society’, conceived as a proliferation of NGOs).

Late 2007 should be a good moment for the publication of this book. Neoliberalism is being discredited by poor results, especially in Africa, and morally weakened by the grotesque hypocrisy with which it is applied (the same Western governments which increase protection for agriculture or cover up bribery in selling arms to Saudi Arabia preach free trade and anti-corruption to African countries). Its high priests are losing their nerve, fearing that the increasing inequality it generates will destroy political support. Financial liberalisation is causing chaos in the markets and threatening more economic damage; the October 2007 IMF annual meetings were summarised by a New York Times headline as ‘The tables turned: Poor countries wag fingers at rich countries’; and the OECD recently admitted that the facts suggest that ‘globalisation is creating opportunities for a small elite of workers and investors to pull away from everyone else’. While neoliberals advise yet more of the same, the left has to go beyond its own clichés and provide a coherent answer to the scandal of persistent mass poverty in a rich world. Ray Bush’s clear, thoughtful and provocative contribution to that task is a valuable resource for those concerned with poverty and development, especially in Africa.


The concept of the prison as a place of detention was introduced to sub-Saharan Africa by colonial powers in the 19th century, largely as a means of subduing the indigenous populations. This legacy remains obvious today in the fortress style of many of the prisons in the region, such as that in the Rwandan town of Cyangugu, built by the Belgians in the 1930s, which is on the cover of Carina Terstakian’s disturbing book. In Rwanda the rate of imprisonment is about 979 per 100,000 of the population. This is the highest in the world, ahead even of the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This means that about one person in every hundred of the population is in prison. This book explains why this is so and describes in stark detail what the consequences are for the prisoners.

Carina Tertsakian is very well placed to write a book such as this, having been directly involved in Rwanda for a decade with international NGOs. At the core of the book is an amazing series of
interviews which she undertook with men and women languishing in the country’s prisons. For anyone who knows prisons in Africa, these interviews ring true in the way that they capture the humanity which can exist in the midst of extreme adversity and the acceptance of inevitable reality. The author helpfully sketches the national context which is all too well known, but this is not a book about the tragedy of Rwanda. It is primarily a record of the experience of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Tertsakian is clearly a sympathetic listener who allows the prisoners to speak in their own words. In most cases, she passes no judgement on what they are saying about the reasons which have brought them to prison. Instead, she quotes directly from the tortuous experiences which they have had, in many cases while they wait to be charged over a period of many years.

‘The suffering which continued silently in the prisons year after year was of a particularly inconvenient kind: these men and women dying of over-crowding, disease and ill-treatment were not the usual innocent victims. The vast majority were accused of genocide and there was little sympathy for their plight. The fact that most of them had not even been tried or charged – and that many therefore may have been innocent – did not seem to matter. Thus, over the years, the prison situation became an accepted feature of post-genocide Rwanda’ (p.16).

The prison system simply could not cope with the number of prisoners, which peaked at around 130,000 in 1998. Over-crowding in the prisons of Western Europe usually means two or at most three prisoners crammed into a cell designed to hold one. In Rwanda it meant that prisoners had forty centimetres of personal space in which to sleep, eat, sit and live. The ‘chateau’ of the title does not refer to the castellated prison buildings. It is the ironic name given by the fortunate prisoners who have two planks of wood as their own personal space. The less fortunate live and sleep on the ground, in corridors, in toilets or shower spaces, on top of septic tanks or in the open air.

In one of the most moving chapters the author describes the scene when families come to visit:

The first group of prisoners, around 50 of them, emerges from the gate and sits down on the nearest row of long benches … A guard whistles and the first group of visitors lunges forward to take their seats on the second row of benches … There is a frantic exchange of provisions and full and empty containers, and a frantic exchange of words … Suddenly, one of the guards blows his whistle again and the visitors have to leave … from the first whistle to the second whistle, the visit has lasted less than two minutes (p.250).

In unemotional language, often through the voices of the prisoners, Tertsakian describes the added difficulties for women prisoners, for minors, for the elderly, for the sick and for those sentenced to death. She also notes the complete lack of support for prisoners who are eventually released, as well as the lack of concern from the international community:

The crisis in the prisons – which would have provoked outrage had it occurred in almost any other country – elicited barely any response from foreign governments (p.353).

There is little evidence that this nightmare is coming to an end. When Tertsakian conducted her research, the prison population stood at around 85,000. She ends the book by reporting that in May 2007 it stood around 92,000. This powerful book places a spotlight on the continuing tragedy of prisons in Rwanda, which remain a blot on humanity. It deserves to be widely read and to act as a spur for international action.
Théodore Trefon, who directs the ‘Contemporary History’ section of the Royal
Museum for Central Africa in Brussels, has written a fascinating, rich, lively and
overall superb book on the resilience of the Congolese administrative apparatus
in a time of state failure. The book is based on in-depth case studies of the
interactions between individuals in different social universes and administrative
branches of the state in the town of Lubumbashi, Congo’s second largest city
with about 1.5m people, in the province of Katanga. It details the daily routines
and state-induced vexations of a charcoal transporter, a baker, a construction
material salesman, a taxi driver, a retired civil servant, a paralegal restaurant
owner, a widow housewife and mother of 11, a preacher, a street foreign ex-
change broker, and a cyber-café manager.

In addition to the unique empirical mate-
rial of the book, one of Trefon’s main contributions is the theoretical introd-
cution, which provides analytical context and conceptual structure to the case
studies. To the question of ‘why the administration persists’ (p.13) despite its
deliquescence in providing the Congolese with the services it was intended for,
Trefon offers a triply layered answer. The Congolese administration persists
because it is instrumentalised by politi-
cal elites for their own advantage (par-
ticularly as a source of revenue); because
it is privatised by public officials as part of
their own strategies of personal sur-
vival; and because individual citizens
still need the administration, even when
they largely substitute themselves to it in

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providing services. This latter point is
particularly interesting. For example, par-
ents pool their resources to pay the
salaries of public teachers, largely aban-
doned by the state, and thereby facilitate
the reproduction of the public education
system. They do so, rather than starting
new alternative private schools, because
they value the state diploma which they
see as giving their children access to
formal employment.

Although the introduction alone pro-
vides a thorough and rigorous contribu-
tion to the topic and is worthy of
publication on its own, it is the empirical
material in the subsequent case studies,
or individual vignettes, which is most
stunning, informative and original. It
also often makes for captivating reading.
Most striking are the innumerable layers
of administration and control enforced
upon the Congolese and the equally
numerous taxes and levies which ad-
ministrative agencies impose. Starting
with ministers, the administration ex-
pands downwards through secretaries-
general, directors, division chiefs, bureau
chiefs, chiefs of provincial divisions,
provincial bureau chiefs, section chiefs,
cell chiefs, chiefs of urban services, chiefs
of sub-sections and sub-cells, mayors,
burgomasters, chiefs of neighborhood
and street chiefs (pp. 143-147), illustrat-
ing in the process the universality and
decentralization of ‘Big Man’ politics. As
for taxes, the city and communes of
Lubumbashi alone inflict no less than
26 taxes on its residents (p. 149). And
state agents invent many more.

The resulting totalitarianism (my word,
not Trefon’s) of the weak state makes
peoples’ lives miserable. The story of the
retired railroad worker hanging on to his
official documents for dear life (pp. 85-
93) is poignant, as is the vulnerability of
the charcoal trader in the face of public
harassment (pp. 47-54) and that of the
widow struggling to secure water and
electricity for her household of 11 chil-
dren (pp.101-112).
The book’s methodology also deserves mention. Trefon has collaborated with Bathazar Ngoy of the University of Lubumbashi and with the latter’s students in political science who were trained in questionnaire administration and managed the surveys in the Lubumbashi neighborhoods, which produced the case studies. Trefon’s book is *politique par le bas* at its best. The Congolese state repeatedly comes to life for the reader in all its daily Kafkaesque arbitrariness at the grassroots. The resulting picture is one where there seems to be no greater impediment to life than the state itself. Yet, people have learned to live with it. In fact, the resilience of citizens in the face of a relentlessly exploitative administration is probably as remarkable as the resilience of the state itself. Moreover, the book clearly illustrates how the very actions of citizens, driven by necessity, often help reproduce the administration.

If Trefon’s book is to have a weakness (at least for the Anglophone reader), it will be that is written in French (although there is an excellent English summary of the main argument at the beginning). Its contribution to the study of the African state in general and Congo in particular is so significant that an English version cannot come too soon.


This book addresses the interface which exists between the often quite disparate disciplines of philosophy and literature, and does so within the context of the African conditions of poverty, corruption, and state ineptitude. It talks to the contrasting scenarios and explanatory frameworks of two of the continent’s outstanding novelists – Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o – whose books likely constitute Africa’s most familiar and stimulating texts of the post-Independence period. However, I finished reading Okolo with a mixed reaction.

As she states in the introduction, her study provides ‘an intellectual and analytic framework within which the African experience can be conceptualized, interpreted and reorganized’ (p.2); here she investigates the relationship between literature and society. This is undertaken by considering the political components of Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savanna* (1987) and Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood* (1977). The former sees Africa’s problems as a result of ‘internal’ corruption, state failure, ineptitude, and the privatisation of the public resources, while the latter points to leadership, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism as the basic sources. The foundation of Okolo’s analysis is political philosophy (providing a worldview and critical reflection) upon which the writings of the two authors are considered (first in general by investigating their several other novels, then in detail for *Anthills* and *Petals*). As the analysis develops, the writings of some additional novelists such as Soyinka, Sembene, and Armah are interrogated. She finalises her study by comparing the authors in terms of their perspectives on the African condition and on possible social reconstruction. Therein resides

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the work’s strength; it is rendered powerful and insightful by her selection of authors. The chosen authors speak to the causes in thoughtful and contrasting manners. Their works ‘provoke people into assessing and criticizing’ (p.28). Here, she categorises the comments in terms of themes important in the understanding of the African condition in several social science disciplines: alienation, power, gender, ideology, leadership, and citizenship.

However, the text suffers from a ‘deja vu’ reading. These texts by Ngugi and Achebe will be quite familiar to most readers of this journal; it is quite well-known that they depicted both Africa’s ills and their causes. Further, the philosophical framework presented by Okolo is elementary (and largely ‘western’, other than Gandhi – where are Africa’s thinkers?). And, the reader asks: Where are the novel insights resulting from political philosophy? And so too, her Marxism adds little that has not already been stated or analysed by others. In fact, the originality of the issues raised was a basic concern – many have commented on these texts previously, and so the author’s critique is especially thoughtful – but it is mostly a revisit, a synthetic essay which collates what others have indicated previously.

An issue not found in Okolo’s otherwise thoughtful, well-organised, and profound LitCrit relates to the silences of these novels – to the fundamental issues not discussed in these books. They disregard certain aspects which are fundamental to the understanding of the African condition and its possible solution: I expected the author to indicate these. They include ethnicity, religion, urbanisation, regionalism, redistribution, population growth, civil wars, diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, the transition from an economy of affection to neo-liberalism – and (especially in a Marxist critique) the articulation of the modes of production. These are matters which are of critical importance in understanding the African condition. We are told what the novels say, but not what they omit.

The difficulty that this analysis illustrates is unfortunately one that affects our brother and sister scholars in Africa. University libraries on the continent are sadly deficient. Research funds are scarce or unavailable. Besides, with huge classes and the demands of family and kin, few find time for original research. As well, there is an important temporal dimension in that today’s scholars were raised under these same conditions which their mentors faced. It is unfortunately indexed in journals on Africa published in Canada, the UK, the US, and elsewhere in the First World: there are few African authors from the continent because of matters of timing, quality, writing, and novelty. There are notable exceptions to this generality, but this condition is a sad reality.

The voices of the novels provide an initial understanding of Africa’s social, political, and economic contexts. The issue addressed by Okolo’s investigation are important; the ‘voices’ of literature speak to the African condition. Much can be learned from what they tell us, and also from what they do not say. However, it is unfortunate that the present text is largely a re-visit of writers of 20-30 years ago, and that both the realm of African philosophy is ignored, as are the messages of contemporary writers.

This book is about colonial and post-colonial statecraft and the rural resource governance issues at the centre of a still unfolding socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. Divided into eight well researched, detailed and analytically sound chapters, the book deals with the complexities of statecraft played out in the contentious land question. The first four chapters talk to pre-1980 settler colonial dynamics with the next four looking at the post-colonial state after 1980 and into the post-February 2000 crisis.

Writing about colonial Zimbabwe and the histories of dispossession is always a challenge as this is now a well trodden path. Any new book tackling this area has the challenge of bringing something new to the story. The first four chapters of this book manage to do this by talking to the broader discourses of colonial statecraft viewed from the local social histories in Insiza and Chimanimani, the case study areas. Through detailed and well sourced narratives Chapter 1 takes us through the unsettled politics of pre-colonial Zimbabwe showing in both case study areas how shifting allegiances, contested loyalties and the fluid politics of rural governance find local expression. Above all else this section highlights an often overlooked fact which is that in spite of the settler colonial state being united in its conquest of land and desire to dominate, there was internal dissonance within the settler state and colonial administrators on the ground often faced a reality removed from the ideals of the settler colonial project. In each of the case study areas we are also introduced to the nascent local social movements and their local efforts to resist the settler colonial project. For example by giving local expression to the ‘Native Self Conscious Society’ in Chimanimani, not only do we get a sense of the role of these local movements in mobilising against the local reach of the settler state but also their varied methods to suit circumstances.

Chapters two, three and four take us through the main ground level expressions of settler colonial policy and practice on land and local governance. Through detailed local social histories, local expressions of development interventions like the NLHA and Community Development are used to show case the complexity of conquest and resistance. By focusing on the relationship between chiefs and land Chapter five draws into focus the extent to which the local social and political outcomes in these encounters depended on the characters and relationship of the two main actors at the local level- the district commissioner and the local chief. The book characterises the outcomes as one of or a combination of collaboration, co-option and falling out. All three outcomes are given currency in the two case study areas but more crucially characterise some of the learned behaviours that helped shape and define post-colonial relationship between the state and traditional authority. In a way the first five chapters showcase why the complete history of the settler colonial statecraft, especially its impact on local people and their responses, can only be fully understood from the bottom up and attempts to draw generalisations or national patterns often fail to capture the variegated responses that this book highlights.

Two key issues feature prominently as defining post-colonial statecraft are articulated in Chapters five and six. First is the state’s strategic ambivalence toward traditional institutions. On one hand these are seen as ‘compromised’ and

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unsuitable for the new democratic dispensation due to their perceived collusion with the settler colonial state. On the other hand they play a hugely symbolic role of identity and autochthony that both the settler state and the post-colonial state find useful in rural local governance. It is clear from contemporary discourses featured in Chapters seven and eight that the rehabilitation of the role of chiefs in rural local governance is complete. Traditional chiefs became in essence bureaucratised while some politicised their role. From the book one gets a sense here of continuity rather than change in the ab(use) of the traditional chiefs. What the book does not say however is that post-colonial statecraft was to an extent influenced by the institutional inertia of the settler state it succeeded.

Second, and related to the above is what the book correctly observes as the persistence of a technocratic streak to rural policy making. A typical example of this is the attempts to re-organise the communal areas through the CLDP and the land resettlement programme both of which bore striking resemblance to some of the programmes that the settler state attempted to implement. Because of this link and other local factors CLDP was moribund right from inception while the resettlement scheme was fraught with implementation bottlenecks. For example top down technocratic approaches in a context of the muddied politics of the early post-colonial period in Matabeleland affected resettlement in Insiza. Similarly in Chimanimani difficulties of implementing state programmes is put down to a ‘rejection of state claims to technocratic authority over land in favour of local versions of nationalism, histories of eviction, chiefly claims and need’ (p. 153), and sums up the aversion that locals had to developmental populism that paid little heed to local realities.

Through the first seven chapters we clearly see the unresolved nature rural local governance through the land question and can almost understand why by the time of the farm invasions in February 2000 there was a sense of waning statecraft. This is followed through in Chapter eight which shows the systematic build up of issues leading to the Jambanja drawing on broader national economic and political discourses and practices. There is no attempt to give them local expression in the case study areas, and for this reason this chapter reads differently from the first seven. This book’s strength lies in showing variable responses to statecraft from locality to locality yet there is almost a sense in which this chapter suggests there was one set of conditions that led to the invasions across the country. We do not get to know about the specific experiences of Chimanimani and Insiza. One can guess that invasions where given local traction by existing local relations and these varied from place to place. Questions that come to mind as one reads this section include: Was there an underlying local logic to the invasions apart from the national contextual issues? Why where some farms invaded and others not? To be fair to the book logistical and political conditions on the ground are not conducive for such detailed work and this may well be a challenge for the future.

Overall this is an excellent addition to the discourses on rural local governance and land in Zimbabwe, and more specifically to our local knowledge on the variability of responses to statecraft in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. It is a good resource for students of history as much as it is for development studies and, because it is very clearly written it appeals broadly to those interested in Zimbabwe.

This is the published version of a 2003 Leiden doctorate focusing on the problems faced by Ghanaian riverine communities living downstream from the Volta (also known as Akosombo) Dam since its construction in the early 1960s and its official opening by President Nkrumah in 1966. There is much here of interest, in particular, detailed empirical information on livelihoods in the communities and their migrant extensions around the lake, and also material from locally sourced interviews with retired Volta River Authority (VRA) personnel. However, in terms of a published work it could have benefited from judicious pruning.

After a detailed discussion of concepts and methodological approaches, the next almost 150 pages deal with the history and politics of the dam’s funding, construction and plans for resettlement of displaced communities and environmental impacts. While there is a very great deal of detail given here, the analysis and discussion is limited: perhaps greater reference to, use and critique of Ronnie Graham’s 1982 book would have enabled the author both to foreground crucial broader political factors relevant to the dam’s planning and funding, at the same time, allowing cuts through the use of cross-referencing. What we are presented with is a welter of minute detail, relevant in terms of thesis background, but not reader-friendly.

However, the stated focus of the work are the fates of members of the Tongu Ewe communities downstream from the dam and also of communities, mostly originally derived from Tongu, who migrated upstream, either seasonally or for longer periods, in the years before the dam was built, and whose descendants are now members of lakeside communities. While the author sets out and critiques the VRA’s plans (and their implementation) for resettlement and compensation for community sites and lands inundated by the lake, she points out that the communities downstream that are the subjects of her study effectively received no compensation. What has happened in the years since the dam’s construction is a falling of overall river levels and the cessation of the annual floods just after the rainy season which have meant a series of changes for the worse in overall income (for example, the demise of the clam picking/cultivation industry), and in health hazards as pollutants remain in the soil and have built up over the years. The author shows very effectively and in a gender sensitive way how these and other factors have affected lives and livelihoods of the downstream communities.

When she turns to look at the Volta Lakeside communities that have developed since the inundation, however, the dynamics of relationships between Tongu members of these communities and those downstream are less clear. The same kinds of meticulous and gender aware data are presented but the strengths and significances of links with ‘home’ areas are fuzzier. While, in pre-dam days, fishing upstream was a lucrative stage in many young men’s lives, either annually, or on a more permanent basis, now the seasonality prompting the move upstream is non-existent: the basis for forging and maintaining links between the lakeside and downstream communities has been suborned. There are so much empirical data presented in the four penultimate chapters that it is impossible to do justice to them. What seems to be happening is that the downstream communities are now indistinguishable from most other impoverished rural riverine communities, while those
upstream still depend on fishing supplemented by subsistence farming, and in some cases seem to be being left behind by more recent arrivals from coastal fishing groups. Any implications from this data are not effectively drawn out in the four chapters and the concluding chapter is, in the classic ‘social-science-dissertation’ sense of the term, simply a summary of key points.

Overall it is not really possible to present a summary review of the book: it engages with issues on too many fronts. While I think that a more politically nuanced discussion of all aspects of the dam would be of greater benefit, it really wouldn’t fit here. This is not the main thrust of the book, rather a kind of huge tangent that takes us into another direction, a direction that Graham has already accessed and which could well be incorporated here. Where it does well is in the empirical data collection and presentation, but apart from the admittedly crucial fact that the building of the dam caused massive and life-changing (and uncompensated) changes for Tongu people, the dam could recede into the background. This would allow the consequences and implications from the data to emerge and to be framed, perhaps in terms of the livelihoods framework set out in the first chapter, and contribute more effectively to the sociological/anthropological analysis and understanding of contemporary Ghana and beyond.


Jomo has successfully edited two balanced and well-rounded volumes (one with Reinert) of considerable interest to scholars of development and African politics alike. Both volumes chart the evolution of development economics. The Pioneers of Development Economics focuses on continuities in schools of economic thought from the Renaissance onward whereas The Origins of Development Economics explains how particular individuals, some economists with a recognised and central role in the field (e.g., Friedrich List and Raúl Prebisch) and others more marginal (William Petty), have produced the diverse body of scholarship – an intellectual heritage based on insights from a range of disciplines – on which development economists, and scholars of development more generally, draw today. Both volumes essentially aim to reorient the scope of economics proper by placing the question of development – how less developed societies may achieve the same transition that produced developed, industrialised societies in the past – at the heart of the discipline.

This ‘Other Canon’ stands in contrast to the abstract, theoretical approach of classical economics based on controversial a priori assumptions regarding competition, information and equilibrium. Rejecting the ‘total fixation on their own previous work’ that characterises contemporary, orthodox (neo-classical) eco-

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economic thought (The Pioneers, p. vii), the editors emphasise a longer and broader view on economic thinking and scholarship. A main purpose of The Origins is to ‘demonstrate the continuity in thinking on economic development’ from the pre-Smithian era to post-World War Two development economics (p. vii).

The Origins begins with an outline of broad historical approaches to development. Chapters on ‘Mercantilism’ (E. & S. Reinert) and ‘the Italian Tradition in Political Economy’ (S. Reinert) trace the development of economics as praxis to the Renaissance and to concerns about how to produce national development (Tudor England), avoid economic failure (Spain) and reverse semi-peripheralisation in declining Italian city states. A chapter on ‘German Economics’, including the historical school (E. Reinert) suggests a largely coherent tradition of thought from the seventeenth century until the World War Two. A chapter on ‘Capitalist Transformation’ (Khan) critiques the narrow classical economic emphasis on institutions such as stable property rights of whatever kind (i.e. it does not matter what property is protected and for whom, as long as property is protected) in the transition of a small number of (East Asian) developing countries to developed country status, noting instead the importance of a broad set of social and institutional factors in producing state capacity to transform.

Methodologically sophisticated chapters on ‘Growth Theory’ (Ros) and ‘International Trade’ (Dutt) explain the role of theoretical debates on growth and trade for modern development economics. Ros argues that early development economics provides a better explanation for development than does the endogenous growth literature, and that early approaches are ‘more empirically promising’ than either old or new growth Theory (p. 82). Dutt reviews contributions by Rosenstein-Rodan, Nurkse, Lewis and Myrdal to trade theory and the implications thereof for developing countries. A chapter on {Latin American Structuralism and Dependency Theory} (Saad-Filho) outlines the key contributions (as well as important limitations) to the development literature by post-war structuralists and dependistas, notably the former’s rejection of linear assumptions about development in orthodox theories of development and the latter’s insistence on the impossibility of development under capitalism. Finally, ‘Development in the History of Economics’ (Szentes) outlines key contours of development economics and how it becomes a distinct field of study in the post-war era.

Relying on a standard criticism of classical economics as inevitably hampered by its abstractions and existence in a ‘ahistorical vacuum’, the authors contrast this dominant approach with the historically conscious and pragmatic approach of economic thought from the Italian tradition and the German school to structuralism, dependency theory and modern development economics. The main distinction between orthodox (neo/classical) and heterodox (development-oriented) schools of economic thought is defined in The Origins (p. vii) as the difference between social theory built on abstraction and deductive reasoning as in classical economics and that built from historical reality and inductive reasoning from the bottom up, as in the approaches from which (heterodox) modern development economics derive. Classical economics is a system of thought based on metaphors from physics, notably the enlightenment ‘mechanization of the world picture’ on which Smith’s concept of the ‘invisible hand’ was based and the 1880s physics’ emphasis on equilibrium. Development economics rely on metaphors from biology, namely references to the human body that are present in economic writings from Greek and Roman times through the Renaissance and late nineteenth-century
German economics and on ideas transplanted from Darwinian and Lamarckian evolution in the economic writings of Veblen and in Schumpeter’s ‘evolutionary economics’ (p. ix).

*The Pioneers* charts a history of economic thought as it relates to development by focusing in each chapter on contributions to the field by a particular individual, economist or otherwise. A companion to *The Origins*, this volume provides additional historical context to the thematically organised, theoretically and conceptually rich, approach of the former. Why ‘Development Economics’? (P. Patnaik) introduces the book by the purpose and central concerns of the field. Chapters on William Petty (Goodacre) and David Ricardo (U. Patnaik) emphasise the origins of economic thought in the historical experience of imperialism. Chapters on Friedrich List (Shafaeddin), Karl Marx (P. Patnaik), Vladimir Lenin (U. Patnaik), Alfred Marshall (Prendergast), Michal Kalecki (Ghosh), John Maynard Keynes (Toye), Keynes and Nicholas Kaldor (Kumar Bagchi), Karl Polanyi (Polanyi Levitt) and Alexander Gerschenkron (Chandrasekhar) highlight contributions to the field by scholars not normally identified as pioneers of development economics. Finally, chapters on Raúl Prebish and Arthur Lewis (Polanyi Levitt) and Hans Singer (Raffer) outline ‘principal heterodox economic implications’ of recognised pioneers of development economics (p. viii).

While the intellectual complexity and manifold nuance of the schools of thoughts overviewed in *The Origins* and the individual economists assessed in *The Pioneers* at times suggest that the classical/orthodox – development/heterodox distinction can be overly crude, it nevertheless remains a useful distinction for the reader who wishes to understand fundamental intellectual conflicts in the history of economics and how these debates have shaped the field of development economics as it exists today. Economic scholarship derived from classical economic thought remains based on abstraction and controversial *a priori* assumptions, to its detriment when attempting answers to empirical questions regarding development in a world of states and regions in which historical processes have produced radically divergent socio-economic dynamics and developments. The heterodox school of economic thought, with its emphasis on historical record and empirical reality, remains at times excessively dependent on case-specific context, at the expense of being able to generalise findings beyond the cases and contexts in which they are initially found.

This trade-off between ‘broad’ vs. ‘deep’ understanding is an avoidable feature of all approaches to development, and indeed to all scientific study of social phenomena. Therefore it is not very useful to suggest that one approach is superior to the other, although the implication in both of these volumes is clearly that the historical, heterodox approach is more useful to development economist wishing to understand the dilemmas faced by countries in the global south today. The most constructive way forward is not to disparage either approach, as being empirically ‘irrelevant’ (classical economics) or theoretically and methodologically unsophisticated (heterodox economics), but rather to make a strong case for the ability of each school of thought to provide a unique understanding of particular aspects of economics. A proper understanding of the strengths and limitations of each approach provides the aspiring development economics with the best equipped conceptual and theoretical ‘tool box’ for investigating the pressing economic and political puzzles of our day.

The food we buy and eat can tell powerful stories. It may seem better to simply enjoy its many culinary varieties than to think much about where it comes from, its ingredients or who produces it and how. However both our taste buds and our brain cells need a strong stimulus in order to recognize the complexities of food’s political economy. Tony Weis, professor at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, presents a highly informative narrative on these complexities in layman’s terms. Published just months prior to the eruption of this year’s global food crisis, his pocket-size book provides abundant fact-based arguments to confidently engage in political dialogue on the driving forces of a food system seemingly in perpetual crisis.

From preface to concluding chapter five, Weis disputes claims of inevitability of today’s dominant food economy. His purpose is to unsettle illusions that it is impossible to fundamentally overhaul existing conditions of agricultural production, consumption and trade. Today’s modes of high-input farming, based on a system of industrialized grain-livestock production result in a tremendously deep environmental footprint. Yet Weis demonstrates that regardless of its costs, the current food system is incapable of attaining food security on a global scale. His well-narrated assessment unveils not only the output-level dilemmas and contradictions of a system in deep crisis; it also focuses on the institutional arrangements and power-relations, predominantly of the World Trade Organization (WTO), responsible for a status quo that translates into poor nutrition, poverty and hunger for millions around the globe. WTO efforts to reinforce abstract competitive advantages of nation states by regulating trade regimes for agricultural products are seen as completely divorced from food security concerns of the global poor.

Claims made by proponents of the status quo that markets can succeed at ensuring reliable and affordable supply of nutritious food if only allowed to operate freely and with minimal state intervention, are forcefully dismissed by Weis as being ideological and catering to profit interests of transnational companies and parasitic political elites.

For Weis, the obscenity of simultaneous poles of obesity and hunger in a market-driven food economy cannot be ignored, nor is it ethically acceptable: in terms of quantity more than enough food for all is produced globally. However the purchasing power to access that food is unevenly distributed within and between countries to the extreme. As an example, the farm subsidy regimes in OECD countries cost six times as much as all OECD development aid in any given year. Indeed, it is more than shameful that ‘the average EU subsidy per cow was roughly the same (US$2) as the poverty level on which billions barely exist’. Transnational agro-conglomerates, unconcerned about notions of social and cultural significance of food and associated traditions, continuously promote a global convergence of food consumption and diet patterns (such as meat-rich diets) without much concern for long-term health consequences for consumers.

Small farmers and food-security minded decision-makers in developing countries frequently find themselves short-changed with regard to viable production or policy options. As the process of global integration of national and regional food economies has intensified so has its dependence on the ‘chemical and fossil energy treadmill’. Unable to keep up, especially rural populations whose livelihoods heavily rely upon low-input,
small-scale agriculture have been squeezed out of markets and fallen below narrow poverty lines. Ultimately there seems to be little doubt, at least in the author’s mind, that the food system as we know it, is heading for a fall. Weis’ analysis allows the reader to see this year’s food crisis as an acceleration of a combination of worrisome trends underlying the global food economy. We have witnessed sharp price hikes in supermarkets in affluent societies as well as in village markets in low-income developing countries. Unsurprisingly, the poor have been affected most, many millions of whom are slipping back into food insecurity from which they only recently had seemingly freed themselves. Food riots have erupted in various places and high-level political activism, from the 2008 Food Summit in Rome, the G8 meeting in Japan to the recent Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana have all sought to present meaningful responses to the crisis at hand.

Most certainly none of these events have attempted to explore the sub-title of Weis’ book, namely, ‘The battle for the future of farming’. If they had referred to this guide to understanding and reimagining the global food economy, they may have found that solutions to the endemic crisis of agricultural production in the global economy lie with those who are waging the battle for sustainable alternatives: the farmers, consumers and activists of civil society in North and South. Secondary responses to the recurring failures of the global food system, even commendable relief and project-level responses to the immediate hardships faced by food-insecure populations, perhaps allow for some temporary reprieve from an ongoing, livelihoods debilitating crisis. Yet root causes of the crisis are hardly touched in the process. There is little to be gained by trying to dissect such causes into their multiple, interwoven constituent factors, even though factors such as bio-fuel production, increased global demand for meat products (especially in newly affluent parts of Asia), climate change or rising fuel costs all play a role. Debate on tomorrow’s food system that is organized as a fundamental departure from the uncertainties inherent in the food economy of today, is best to be based on a firm critical analysis and factual footing. With his important book on this vital topic, Tony Weis has provided nothing less than a solid departure point for such debate.

Editor’s Note: ROAPE would like to take up the challenge in this review, that is ‘the battle for farming in Africa’. If you are interested in working with us, please get in touch with me, Jan Burgess – editor@roape.org

Many thanks and goodbye to Rita Abrahamsen for taking this much-neglected Book Reviews section and making it the ‘must read’ of the journal – according to our subscribers who are very impressed! You’ll also note that we are now including both film and theatre reviews – is there anything else you’d like to see here? If so, get in touch with Branwen Gruffydd-Jones who takes over from Rita in 2009. Her e-mail address is: b.gruffydd-jones@gold.ac.uk

Erratum

‘Child Poverty in Africa’ by Meredith Turshen in ROAPE No. 117, September 2008. Apologies to the author and Dharam Ghai for a mis-quoted sentence (page 499). It should read as follows:

‘Urban Jonsson, former senior advisor to UNICEF on Human Rights Based Approach to Programming, pointed out that Africa has changed since 1960; there is more peace, more efforts for democracy, an end to apartheid. AIDS has crushed many dreams.’ A corrected online version will appear in December 2008.

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